

Healing from Sexual Abuse

Quarter 5 | Lesson 10 | Life Skills

1. **Connecting:** Create human statues to illustrate characteristics of God.
2. **Teaching:** Hear the story of Tamar and learn the effects of sexual abuse and how God can heal those who have suffered abuse (2 Samuel 13; Psalm 7:6).
3. **Responding:** Replace lies with God's truth and pray for those who have been abused.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse poster
- Pencils
- Student Pages
- List of safe places to go for help after sexual abuse (see information below)

Teacher Tip: For this lesson, divide your teens into 2 groups: 1 for boys only and 1 for girls only. If possible, have a male teacher lead the boys' session and a female teacher lead the girls' session.

If possible, make a list of organizations and trusted adults teens can go to for help getting out of a sexually abusive situation. Consider churches, social service organizations, medical clinics, and other resources in your area. Make sure these are truly safe places for teens to seek help. If possible, provide a copy of the list to each teen in your class.

Teacher Devotion

He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings utter darkness into the light.
Job 12:22

Job lost everything—except his faith in God. In his deep despair, Job knew one thing with certainty: God is always sovereign, always powerful, and always righteous. Job recognized God's power even in his pain. He knew that God can bring even the darkest things to light.

Sexual abuse is a horrible shadow that may darken the lives of some of your students. It may even have darkened your life. Because it causes shame and embarrassment, sexual abuse is often hidden in the deepest parts of our hearts—the parts we think no one else ever sees. But God sees, and He knows our pain.

Think about a hurt that is hidden deep in your heart. Is it abuse? Betrayal? Rejection? Where do you need God's love to bring your deep darkness to light? Reveal your painful secrets to God, and let Him brighten

your life with His righteousness, justice, and love. And ask for His guidance as you lead your students to do the same.

Teacher Tip: In this lesson, you will encourage your teens to tell you or another trusted adult if they or someone they know is being sexually abused. Be prepared for these difficult conversations. Talk with your church or organization leadership ahead of time about the legal protocol for reporting abuse. Unfortunately, in some places, the teen may be blamed for abuse. There are also situations where the young person may be further harmed instead of receiving help. Because it is important to protect the abused teen, be aware of the situation in your community. If it is appropriate and safe for the student, inform the authorities. Be prepared to make wise decisions that will help protect your teens now and in the future.

Lesson Time

1. Connecting: Create human statues to illustrate characteristics of God.

Teacher Tip: Let the students know that today the young men and young women will learn in 2 different classes again. Tell them you will learn about sensitive topics and want to protect each person's privacy. Direct the different groups to where each will learn with the male or female teacher.

As the students arrive, invite them to share something they know about God. Encourage their positive thoughts, and remind them that God loves them and that you care about them, too. This will help them to feel more comfortable with the conversations in this lesson.

Divide the students into groups of 3.

I will read a characteristic of God. Your group will have 30 seconds to create a human statue to represent that characteristic. That is a short amount of time, so your group will need to decide quickly what to do. After you have formed your statue, stay in place for 1 minute so I can see all the statues. All 3 group members must be part of each statue. We will repeat this several times. Remember, statues do not move!

Read the first characteristic below. Give the students a minute to create their statues. Walk around and admire the statues. Tell the class what you notice and appreciate about 1 or 2 specific statues. Try to compliment every group's work at least once during the activity. Repeat the same steps for each characteristic.

1. **God is the creator.**
2. **God is a fortress.**
3. **God is a loving Father.**
4. **God is a healer.**

Gather the class back together and have the students sit down.

- **Which of these characteristics of God is most important to you? Why?**

Allow 2–3 students to share their ideas.

- **When I say, “God is healer,” what does this mean to you?**

Possible answers include that God can heal people who are physically sick or hurt. He can heal people's emotional pain. Some students may not be sure that God is able to heal. That is okay.

Allow students to share openly during this time.

Throughout the Bible, we read about God healing people's physical pain and sickness. For example, the Bible tells us about Jairus, whose 12-year-old daughter got sick and died. In faith, Jairus came to Jesus, hoping He could heal her. Jesus brought her back to life.

We also read in the Bible about God's promises to heal our deep emotional wounds as well as our bodies. Listen to this verse:

*You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy.*

Psalm 30:11

God alone can heal a heart that has been broken by something like dishonourable touch. God cares about our whole person: the body, the mind, and the heart.

Have a student read Psalm 17:7–8 aloud from the Bible. It is also printed here for you.

*Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those
who take refuge in you from their foes. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me
in the shadow of your wings.*

Psalm 17:7–8

Teacher Tip: If necessary, explain to the teens that “foes” are enemies or those who seek to harm you.

In Hebrew, the phrase “apple of your eye” describes someone who is deeply loved and cherished. This is how God feels about us! Each one of us is the apple of His eye. No matter how many times we sin, God cherishes us. No matter what someone else has done to us, He cherishes us!

- How does it make you feel to know that God cherishes you?

In our last class, we learned about the difference between honourable and dishonourable touch. Today we will learn about the difficult topic of sexual abuse. We will also talk about how God can heal those whose bodies have been dishonoured. Maybe you have been sexually abused or maybe you know someone who has been abused. This lesson can help you to heal—or it can help you to help others who need to heal. Maybe you do not know anyone who has been sexually abused. This lesson can give you information to share if you do ever hear of someone who is being abused.

Teacher Tip: It can be uncomfortable to talk about the body and sexual issues. It is very important that you create a safe environment for your teens. Here are some tips for creating a safe environment:

- Try not to show shock or discomfort no matter what your students share.
- Listen openly in a non-judgemental way.
- Let the teens know that it is okay for them to express their emotions—even anger and sadness.
- Encourage and praise students for sharing difficult feelings or experiences. Talking about abuse helps with healing.
- Tell them that you understand how they could feel the way they do. Do not say you know exactly how they feel, as every person has unique circumstances and emotions.
- Assure them that they are not alone. Other people have had similar experiences.

- Continue to repeat, "Abuse that someone does to you is never your fault."
- Focus on the teens, not the abusers. It is important for the one abused to feel supported.
- It is okay to express anger toward the abusers. God is also angry at the wrong done!
- Affirm your commitment to supporting your students and keeping them safe.
- Do not force a teen to talk about the abuse if he is not ready.

2. Teaching: Hear the story of Tamar and learn the effects of sexual abuse and how God can heal those who have suffered abuse (2 Samuel 13; Psalm 7:6).

Teacher Tip: While a lot of abuse happens against women and girls, boys and young men may also be victims of abuse. Do not assume that only females are the victims of this crime.

- **Last time we met we learned about dishonouring touch. What is dishonouring touch?**

Possible answers include being touched on private parts or being forced to touch someone's private parts. It can be forcing someone to have sexual relations or taking photos or videos of a person who is naked or doing sexual acts.

Sexual abuse is a kind of dishonouring touch. It usually involves a person's private body parts. Being touched on the private and personal parts of your body and being forced to touch someone else's private parts are forms of sexual abuse. Being forced to have sexual intercourse and participate in other types of sexual behaviour are also sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can happen to boys or girls.

Teacher Tip: Make sure your students understand that it is never the victim's fault when abuse happens.

Unfortunately, this type of abuse has been happening as long as sinful people have lived on this earth. Listen to this story of abuse that happened in King David's family.

King David had many wives and many children. Two of his sons, Amnon and Absalom, were half-brothers; they had different mothers. Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar.

Amnon saw Tamar and felt a strong attraction to her. His sexual desire for her was so strong that he believed he must be in love with her. His desire for her grew and grew until he felt he could no longer control it. A friend told Amnon to pretend to be sick and to ask for Tamar to come serve him. King David sent Tamar to cook a meal for Amnon.

When the food was prepared, Amnon commanded everyone to leave except Tamar. He asked for Tamar to come serve him in his bed. When she got close, he grabbed her and told her to have sexual relations with him. Tamar cried out in protest, telling him not to violate her. But Amnon refused to listen. He was stronger than she was, so he raped her.

After the rape, Amnon hated Tamar with a hatred that was even stronger than his attraction had been. He demanded that she leave, and he told his servant to throw Tamar out of the house. Tamar was so ashamed that she covered her head with ashes and tore her clothing as signs of her disgrace. She went away weeping.

When King David heard what happened, he was very angry, but he did not do anything. Absalom told Tamar not to tell anyone and not to take it to heart. Though Absalom hated Amnon for disgracing his sister, Amnon did nothing. Much later, Absalom killed Amnon.

What happened to Tamar was sexual abuse. When Amnon forced Tamar to have sexual relations with him, it was rape. This is a type of sexual abuse.

We are going to talk more now about the pain that comes from sexual abuse. This may feel embarrassing or painful. We are learning about this difficult topic because it can help those who are hurting to begin to heal. If you want to talk with me privately about something that has happened to you or someone you know, please see me after class.

Some of you may have experienced sexual abuse like Tamar. Some of you may have forced someone else to do something dishonouring. Some of you may know someone who has experienced sexual abuse. Some of you may not have any experience with this. It is important to learn about this so you can pray for those who have been victims of sexual abuse and watch for warning signs so you can stay safe.

Teacher Tip: Remind your students that this is a difficult topic, so they should be sensitive and support each other. They should never tease someone who has been abused, and they should not share what they hear with anyone outside the class.

Have the students find partners. Tell the students that you will read a question and they will talk about it with their partners. Then give 3–4 students a chance to share their thoughts before continuing the lesson.

- **What are some things a person who is sexually abused might think or feel?**

People who are sexually abused may show physical symptoms, including pain, headaches, and difficulty sleeping. They may develop sores on their genitals, have bruises or scrapes in their private parts, or get HIV/AIDS.

They may show changes in behaviour to try to cover up or forget about the abuse. For example, some people start taking drugs or drinking alcohol to forget about their pain. Some may try to be alone. Some may try to hurt themselves. Some may eat or sleep too little or too much. Some may touch their own or others' genitals or experiment with other types of sexual behaviour. None of these will help that person heal.

People who have been sexually abused may sometimes have flashbacks. This means they picture the abuse in their minds even when they are awake. It can feel like they are experiencing the abuse all over again.

Sometimes people who are sexually abused have emotional difficulties that may not be obvious to others. Anyone who has been hurt may also have these same emotions. I will read you a list of emotions. If you have ever felt that emotion at any time for any reason, hold up a finger. Hold up another finger for each additional emotion you have felt. For example, if I have felt 3 of these emotions, I will hold up 3 fingers.

Read this list slowly. Pause briefly after each word to allow the students to think about if they have experienced the emotion and to hold up a finger if they have.

Sadness	Fear	Ashamed	Embarrassed
Self-hated	Guilty	Dirty	Alone
Tricked	Unlovable	Emotionally numb	Hopeless
Helpless	Unsafe	Untrusting	Angry

All of us are holding up at least 1 finger because we all know what it feels like to be hurt in some way. Some of you may have experienced so many of these emotions that you do not have enough fingers to show that. Sexual abuse can be especially painful because often people do not feel

like they can share what has happened to them. They may be embarrassed or afraid as Tamar was. Sometimes they may feel like it is their fault. But when someone is sexually abused, it is never that person's fault. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused, you should tell a trusted adult, someone who can help you. Even if it is difficult, embarrassing, or frightening to share what has happened, it is important to get help.

If you were able to make a list of safe places where someone who has been abused can find help, share it with the class now. If possible, give each student a copy of the list to keep.

Teacher Tip: It is very important to set healthy boundaries, especially for students who may have experienced abuse. It is best if teachers offer verbal support to and counsel students of the same gender—female teachers with girls and male teachers with boys. It is always best to talk with students where you can be in the sight of other adults in order to provide a safe place for the teens.

If we have been dishonoured like Tamar or we know someone who has, we can talk to God about it. Even if we feel afraid or unlovable, God can help us to heal. He can give us the courage to tell the truth, even when it is difficult.

In addition to talking with God, someone who has experienced abuse should also tell a trusted adult. Even though she may feel afraid and embarrassed, talking about what happened can help in the healing process. Here are some tips to getting help:

Find a trusted adult you feel comfortable talking with. Talking about personal and painful things such as sexual abuse will not be easy. But it will be easier if it is someone you trust. Share the details about what has happened, even if it is embarrassing. Sharing times, places, and details can help that person know how to best help and protect you.

If the first person does not help, find another trusted adult to tell. It is very important to keep telling the truth about what has happened until someone helps, even if you are afraid! By telling the truth, you may prevent another teen or child from being abused. Also, your courage may help another abused teen have the courage to share what happened.

Remember that God cares about what happened to you. He loves each one of us. He will act on our behalf, either in this life or in eternity. Listen to what the writer of this verse cried out to God:

*Arise, LORD, in your anger; rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.
Psalm 7:6*

God will bring justice in this life or in eternity. Those who abuse others will answer to God for their actions.

3. Responding: Replace lies with God's truth and pray for those who have been abused.

Someone who has been sexually abused may believe lies about themselves, others, and God. Recognizing the lies and replacing them with the truth is an important step in the healing process.

Tear out the Bible verse page at the end of the lesson and separate the verses on the lines. Ask for 4 student volunteers. Give each volunteer 1 of the Bible verse cards at the end of this lesson. You will read

the lies from the list 1 at a time. After you read each lie, if the volunteers think their verse is a Bible truth that counters the lie, they will read it aloud. Several verses may apply to each lie. The verses are printed below for your reference.

Lie 1: It is my fault! I am a bad and unlovable person!

Lie 2: I am dirty and will never be clean again.

Lie 3: I cannot tell anyone this secret. I will get in trouble.

Lie 4: I will not be safe. I will never be safe again!

Optional Supplies:

If possible, make copies of the Bible verse page at the end of this lesson so every student in the class has a Bible verse. Separate the pages on the lines, and allow each of the students to choose a Bible passage. The allow 1–2 students to share why they chose the verses they did.

If you are using the Student Pages, the students can complete this activity on the page.

End of Option

Show the Memory Verse poster if you are using it.

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."

Jeremiah 31:3

Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.

Micah 7:8

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

*Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
He sent out his word and healed them;
he rescued them from the grave.*

Psalms 107:19–20

Thank your student volunteers and have them sit back down. Then discuss the following questions with the class.

- Which of the truths is most important to you? Why?
- What do all of these Bible truths have in common?

Students may answer that God loves them and can bring healing in even the most difficult and painful situations.

When someone who has been abused lets go of the lies and trusts in God's truth, the healing process will begin. It will not be easy. That person may still feel pain and sadness. That person may even still be in situations where he or she is mistreated or abused. But God will begin to heal the wounds. This person may still have scars, but as he lets God's truths replace the lies, he will begin to know God's love and healing.

Earlier we talked about difficult emotions we have all experienced. Thinking of those now, whom do you talk to about those emotions? If you or someone you know is being sexually abused, whom can you talk to? Think of as many people as possible—people you can trust.

Give the students a minute to think about people they can trust. If they are struggling to think of people who can be trusted, suggest yourself, other teachers, pastors, or church leaders.

While there may be people who hurt you, there are also helpful and trustworthy people in your life. The one we can trust the most is God! Listen to what the psalmist did and what God did in response.

Have a student read Psalm 30:2 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, use the verse printed here for you.

LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.

Psalm 30:2

Like the psalmist, we can cry out to God in prayer, and He will heal us. If someone has abused you or someone you know, He can restore you. Isaiah, a prophet in the Old Testament, told us some of the things the Messiah would do. Jesus is the Messiah, and He has fulfilled this promise. Listen to what Isaiah said.

*[God] has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them
a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*

Isaiah 61:1–3

God can comfort and provide for us. He brings beauty instead of ashes from our pain. He brings us joy instead of grief and praise instead of despair!

Let's spend a few minutes praying for those who have been abused. If someone has hurt you sexually, tell God about it. If you know someone who is being sexually abused, pray about how you can best help that person. If you do not know anyone who has experienced this, pray that God will help you share this information to help others sometime in the future.

If you do not trust God yet, think of people who can help someone who has been abused. And remember that no matter what has happened in your life, God cherishes you!

Have students spread out around the teaching area. Give them time to pray individually. As students finish praying, gather the class together. Remind students that healing can take time.

Teacher Tip: Before you close the lesson, remind the teens that you are available to talk with them if they have questions or want to share with you about situations of sexual abuse. Let them know that you will do your best to help and can be trusted to do what is best for them. It's important that you not make a promise to a teen which you cannot or will not keep. This makes you untrustworthy, and they will not trust you with their concerns.

Close class by saying this blessing based on Psalm 17:7–8 and Isaiah 61:3:

Blessing: You are the apple of God's eye, and He cherishes you. He wants to bring you beauty for ashes, oil of joy for mourning and praise for despair.

Family Connection: Encourage the teens to ask a family member, "What makes you feel better when you are hurting?" They can then share that God can bring healing even in difficult situations.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Great Are You Lord" by All Sons and Daughter: <https://youtu.be/vQLMnPYoR9k>