

Dealing with Painful Experiences

Quarter 6 | Lesson 9 | Life Skill

1. **Connecting:** Write a poem or song about a perfect world or the real world.
2. **Teaching:** Learn about painful times and how to respond to them (2 Corinthians 1:3–4; 11:24–28; 12:8–9; Psalm 69:1–3; Psalm 46:1; Genesis 50:20a).
3. **Responding:** Pray a lament and then pray about the pain of others.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Pencils
- Memory Verse Poster
- *The Action Bible*, image of Joseph and brothers
- Student Page
- Small slips of paper, 1 for each student
- Bag or bowl

Teacher Devotion

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.

Psalm 69:1–3

Everyone experiences pain. Bad things happen, even to Christians. People who love God can still be abused, persecuted, and killed. Even Christians can be trapped in sex slavery, experience violence, and suffer loss due to natural disasters. In our fallen, sinful world, we all experience pain.

Jesus warned His disciples that they would face painful situations. But He also promised that He has overcome the world, so they could have courage! Is there a painful situation in your life? Are you wondering where God is? Talk with God about it. He will listen as you lament. He loves you and knows the pain you are going through. Ask Him to bring the peace that only He can give.

Lesson Time

1. Connecting: Write a poem or song about a perfect world or the real world.

As the students arrive, ask them if they were able to practice generosity in the past week. Invite 2–3 students to share their stories with the whole group.

Teacher Tip: Some of your teens may have experienced deep pain and grief. If young people lack family support, pain and suffering can affect them even more. The lessons in this unit address difficult issues such as grief, suicide, and death. Though you cannot take away the pain your students are experiencing, you can help them to see that there is a God who loves them and is with them through the pain.

Today we are going to start some lessons about the hard things we experience in life. Before we get started, I have a couple questions for you.

- What would a perfect world be like?
- What is the real world like?

Divide the class into 2 groups of about 10 students each. Each group will write a poem or song. One group will write a poem or song about living in the perfect world. The other group will write about the real world, including the bad things that happen. Remind them to use the ideas from the discussion and to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Teacher Tip: If you have a large class, have multiple groups create each type of song. Smaller groups allow the students to work more effectively together and allow more students to participate.

Give the students 5 minutes to write their poems or songs. Then have the groups share what they wrote. Be sure to encourage the groups to clap for each other.

- Which song described a world you would like better? Why?

Most of us like to sing and listen to songs about happy things more than sad things. But pain is a real part of life. Today we will talk about painful things and how to go through them well.

2. Teaching: Learn about painful times and how to respond to them (2 Corinthians 1:3–4; 11:24–28; 12:8–9; Psalm 69:1–3; Psalm 46:1; Genesis 50:20).

When God created the world, He said that it was good. But when Adam and Eve sinned, everything changed. They lost their close relationship with God. Sickness, pain, and death entered the world.

Because of sin, our world is filled with pain. Children suffer from incurable diseases. The people we love die. Storms flood villages, and earthquakes destroy cities. People are abused, mistreated, and killed. Pain does not only affect “bad” people who have done evil things—it affects everyone.

Let’s read about some of the difficult and painful things the apostle Paul suffered. He shared God’s love wherever he went. He wrote many of the New Testament letters. Listen to some of the painful things that happened to Paul.

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

2 Corinthians 11:24–28

- What kinds of pain did Paul face?

Maybe you have not been shipwrecked, whipped, or stoned like Paul. But many of us have experienced some of the same pains he faced. Some of us have been robbed or mistreated. Many of us have experienced danger. We have been hungry or lied to. We have known what it is like to be cold or so worried that we cannot sleep.

Some of the pain in our lives comes from our own choices. Some pain is a result of living in a fallen world. Some pain is from wrong things others do to us. No matter what the cause, God cares about all of our pain!

Pain is like an alarm going off. It tells us that something is wrong. If we have physical pain from a broken leg, it tells us that our leg needs medical care in order to heal. In a similar way, emotional pain is an alarm that something is wrong and needs healing, too.

Besides the things we just read about, Paul suffered from another kind of pain. The Bible does not tell us what the pain was. Paul called it a “thorn in his flesh,” so it may have been physical, spiritual, or emotional pain. Whatever it was, it caused him great suffering. Listen to what Paul said about his pain.

Have a student read 2 Corinthians 12:8–9 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, the verses are printed here for you.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

2 Corinthians 12:8–9

The Bible has a lot to say about the pain we experience in this life. We can see from Paul’s example that it is okay to ask God to take the painful thing from us. That does not mean that God will always take it away. As we see in Paul’s life, God may remind us to trust Him. He promises to always be with us and give us strength and grace for the moment. However, if you are in a dangerous situation, seek help!

Teacher Tip: If any of your students are in dangerous situations, try to find help for them. If possible, do what you can to have them removed from these situations. Remind them that God cares for them always, even in their difficult situations.

Another thing we see in the Bible is that it is okay to be angry, cry, and mourn about our pain. It is not wrong to say that we do not want the pain. Listen to this psalm about crying out to God in our pain.

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

*Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths,
where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.
I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched.
My eyes fail, looking for my God.*
Psalm 69:1–3

This psalm is a lament, or a song of mourning. It is similar to the poem or song you wrote at the beginning of class about the problems in the world. It talks about pain and sadness in the life of the writer.

- **What emotions does this writer express?**

Students may respond that the writer felt desperation, overwhelmed, tired, hopeless, etc.

- **How did the writer of the psalm respond to his pain?**

Students may say that he cried out to God and expressed frustration that he had not yet received God's answer. He was exhausted and tired of waiting for an answer from God.

- **What do you think the writer wanted from God?**

Teacher Tip: It is important to allow the students to express their feelings about pain without feeling judged. Some may feel that God does not love or care about them because of the pain they have experienced. These emotions are a normal part of the grieving process, even for those who trust God. For more information to help your students, read the Resource Article titled "How to Help Teens through the Grieving Process," which is included just after this lesson.

When you are in pain, it is normal to feel hurt or angry. You can share these things with God, as the writer of the psalm did. God is with you always. No matter what happens in your life or what you say or do, His love for you never changes.

Another thing we can learn is that it is good to share our pain with others. Paul did not keep his pain a secret. He let others know how much he was hurting.

- **Why do you think Paul would share his pain with people he trusted?**

Students may say that he wanted comfort or sympathy.

This is what the Bible says about showing compassion to those who are hurting.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

- **Why do these verses tell us we should comfort others?**

The verses say that we should comfort others because we have received comfort from God.

Sharing our pain with others will not make it go away. Sometimes it even makes our pain seem to hurt more. But sharing our pain and receiving comfort and compassion from others can help us to begin to heal.

Paul relied on Jesus to give him the strength he needed. You can do that, too. Listen to what the Bible says about God's strength in times of difficulty.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

- **What do these verses tell us about how we can get through painful times?**

Students may answer that God can be a refuge and strength. He can help them not to fear even when their situations may be difficult.

- **Does this change how you feel about going through painful things? Why or why not?**

It may not seem like it, but pain can provide an opportunity to grow. For example, being burned by a hot cooking pot teaches us not to put our hands in the fire. Many people look back on their times of pain and realize that these were times when they learned and grew the most.

Just because we can learn and grow from pain does not mean it is easy. Pain can cause deep wounds that take a long time to heal. And though it may sometimes seem that we will always feel this pain, God does want to heal us.

*Optional: If possible, share the image from *The Action Bible*.*

Finally, God can redeem even the most awful pain and make something good from it. Think back to what we learned a while ago about Joseph in the Bible. He was sold into slavery by his brothers, taken to a foreign country, lied about, and imprisoned. Yet he said to his brothers:

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.

Genesis 50:20

The brothers had meant and done evil to their brother. Joseph suffered for a long time. Yet Joseph trusted that God was at work, even when he could not see it. Another way to explain this is that God used what was evil to do something good. God can weave even the painful things in our lives into something beautiful because He loves us so much and because He is so powerful.

- **Think of an example from real life where God used painful things for good. Share it with us.**

Be prepared to share an example from your own life or from the community. For example, maybe someone who is lame from an accident now speaks out for the disabled in your community.

- **Answer quietly to yourself: Does knowing that God can use pain for good help you when you are facing a painful situation? Why or why not?**

It is okay to wrestle with the answer to that question. It is not an easy one to answer. No one likes pain. Yet we can trust that God loves us and is with us always, even when we are going through painful things. When you are going through a painful time, it is okay to feel sad, angry, or confused. You do not have to hide those feelings. It can take time to heal. Then you can comfort others as you have received comfort.

3. Responding: Pray a lament and then pray about the pain of others.

Gather the teens in a large circle for the responding activity.

- **If you could ask God to answer a question about pain or death, what would it be?**

Be prepared to share a question you have in case no one answers. Encourage the teens to share their emotions, even the difficult ones. Remind them that they can trust God with their anger and doubt just as much as they can trust Him with other emotions.

Teacher Tip: Your students may have questions about why bad things happen. For more information and helpful Bible verses to share, read “Why Does God Allow Bad Things to Happen?” This article can be found before the sexual abuse lessons in this guide.

If you have ever experienced pain, hold a hand open in front of you.

Pause for the students to respond. Hold your own hand open in front of you, too.

Look around! As you can see, we have all experienced pain. We all understand what pain feels like.

We can respond to pain in 2 different ways. First, we can choose to hold on to our pain. We may focus on the event or person who caused the pain and harden our hearts in order to dull the pain. This may cause us to become bitter and keep us from experiencing joy and peace.

Our other choice is to begin to release the pain so we can heal. Healing may be difficult. But by slowly taking small steps, we will begin to feel better. Eventually, we may be able to grow stronger and comfort others. And this helps us to heal even more.

The first important step in healing from painful things is to express the pain. Think about something painful you have experienced. We will now express our pain through a lament. Think of your pain as you repeat these verses. You can say them aloud or silently. If you are not yet ready to cry out to God with your pain, think about what would help with your pain. Your hurt is real, and it is okay to express it. If you want, you can pound or stomp the floor to express your pain.

Teacher Tip: Be sensitive to the pain expressed by your students. If possible, speak with students who are struggling. Pray for them and share some comfort and compassion.

Say these lines from Psalm 69:1–3, 17–18, 29 aloud. Pause after each line for the teens to repeat it.

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold.

I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched.

Answer me quickly. Draw near to my soul, redeem me.

But as for me, afflicted and in pain—

May your salvation, God, protect me.

Pause to allow the teens to finish their laments privately. Offer to pray for those who want it.

Teacher Tip: If it is not appropriate in your culture for your class to join hands, you can do the rest of the activity without the students holding each other's hands.

Now take the hands of the people next to you. One thing that can help when you are experiencing painful things is to remember that you are not alone. Every person in this room has experienced pain. When you feel overwhelmed, like you are being swept away in a flood of pain, know that we can all understand how you feel. We can support and comfort one another.

Teacher Tip: Praying for the real needs of others in the group can help the students to understand that they are not alone in their pain. It will also allow them to show compassion for another person's pain. These things can help them to begin to heal.

Now think about the person on your left. Even though you do not know the pain of the person next to you, you can pray about the pain that person is experiencing.

Pause for a minute for the students to silently pray for the person on their left.

Now do the same for the person on your right.

Optional Supplies:

If you have time and supplies available, you can use this option instead of the one above. Give each of your students a small slip of paper. Tell the teens to write pain in their lives on the slip of paper. They do not have to share details, and they do not need to write their names on the papers. They could just write something such as "pain," "sorrow," or "abuse" on the paper. Have them fold their slips so no one can see what they have written. Collect the slips and mix them up in the bag or bowl. Then allow each student to choose a slip of paper from the bag with a different student's pain on it. The student will pray for that person.

End of Option

Optional: If you are using the Student Page, give the students time to complete it.

Lead the students in singing this quarter's song, if possible. "What a Beautiful Name" by Hillsong Worship: <https://youtu.be/r5L6QIAH3L4>

Close your time with a blessing over your students based on Psalm 34:18:

Blessing: May you trust our God, who promises to be near when your heart feels broken. And may you be reminded that even when it feels like hope is gone, He is mighty to save.

Family Connection: Tell the family members of your students that you are teaching a lesson about coping with painful experiences. If possible, give the families copies of the Resource Article titled "How to Help Teens through the Grieving Process." Encourage the families to talk with their teens about painful experiences their families have gone through.