



GOALS

As students experience this session, they will:

- Explore how God enters into our hard circumstances
- Evaluate Scripture to determine what God is saying about trouble in our lives
- Learn to shape prayers according to Scripture and God's ways

MATERIALS: Group

- Laptop and projector (or individual smartphones) to show video
- Whiteboard/markers or large paper/markers

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Scripture sheets and journal pages for Session 4
- 2 colors of markers or highlighters
- Pens/pencils
- Bible or Bible app

OPEN

Begin the session by showing the Youtube Video “Bad Lip Reading - Seagulls” to the group. If you do not have access to a laptop and projector to show the clip, ask students to pair up or pull up the video on their phones. If you have a small group, a laptop will be sufficient.

After showing the video, say something like:

As hilarious as this video is, and there are more “bad lip reading” videos just like it, it’s interesting to see that obviously what is being said and what is being heard are two different things. In Session 3 we learned that even though we have an all-powerful and all-loving God, bad outcomes happen. These bad outcomes bring hurt and pain that can be traced all the way back to Adam and Eve! So what’s God’s response to this? Let’s look at a few verses and see if we can figure that out.

DIGGING IN

Transition into study mode with the following exercise:

As you read the passages under Digging In on your Scripture sheet, do the following:

- 1. Highlight with one color anything that gives insight into trouble we might face in this world.**
- 2. Highlight with another color anything that points to God’s help in our trouble.**

While students are exploring the passages, draw the chart below on your whiteboard (without the answers).

TAKING IT INWARD

Give students a few minutes to do the exercise in solitude, then process as a group what they found. Invite students to tell you what they found and write their responses in the chart on your board.

Your chart may look something like this:

Passage	God gives...
Genesis 3:6-7; 21	<i>Clothing, covering</i>
Genesis 9:12-16	<i>Covenant, promise, protection</i>
John 11:32-38	<i>Compassion</i>
John 16:33	<i>Power over the world</i>
2 Corinthians 1:3-5	<i>Comfort</i>
2 Corinthians 4:7-12	<i>His presence, preservation, hope</i>

Then discuss these questions:

What do these passages tell us we can expect from this world?

What do these passages tell us we can expect from God?

Which of these passages gives you the most comfort?

In John 11, the phrase “deeply moved” was a Greek word that was used to describe the snorting of a horse. It’s possible Jesus was snort crying. What insight does this give you into how Jesus views our pain and suffering?

CROSS-CHECKING

Transition from your discussion by saying something like this:

Sometimes answers come from Scripture after a bit of digging and interpreting; and other times we get a direct quote from God on our situation. The verses under Cross-Checking on your journal pages each capture a moment between God and a follower of God. In each case, God has called the follower to a task. The passage will show you the follower’s reaction and God’s response to the reaction. Find God’s response to the reaction.

Invite students to look up the verse references under Cross-Checking on their journal pages and fill in the quotes in the appropriate space. Students can do this as a group or in solitude.

Scripture	God’s Response
Exodus 3:11-12	<i>I will be with you; I am sending you.</i>
Judges 6:14-16	<i>I will be with you; I will fight for you.</i>
Jeremiah 1:4-8	<i>I am with you; I will rescue you.</i>

TAKING IT INWARD

After students have finished, use these questions to internalize the passages.

What’s the main theme you see in these three situations?

How do these passages encourage you with regard to facing hardships?

In Session 3 we explored the fact that hardship will come; even God’s most faithful followers weren’t let off the hook. How do all the passages of Session 4 answer the hard truth of Session 3?

Elicit the observation that, while God did not promise that things would be easy for us (in fact, He promised the opposite), He did promise to be with us. He hurts with us and understands our pain.

Then ask for some sharing on the subject:

Describe a time when you experienced the presence of God in hardship.

How did you know God was with you?

Which of the passages in Taking It Inward best describe how you experienced God?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

When students have finished sharing on the questions above, ask them to form four groups. If you have four students or fewer in your group, designate each student as a “group.” Assign each group a “Common Prayer Quote” which is noted on their journal pages under Putting Into Practice. Then say something like this:

Often we spend our time in prayer asking God for a desired outcome. That is actually a good thing and even in the Bible we are instructed to ask for the desires of our hearts. But if God has something else He wants to accomplish that is greater than our desires, it’s important that our prayer lives are more than simply asking God for what we want. On your journal pages you’ll see a common prayer request along with a verse that can be used to reshape the prayer request to align better with how God works. As a group, look up the “instead” Scripture and rewrite the prayer request in a way that reflects the content of your Scripture.

The exercise is below, including sample revised prayer requests, for leader reference:

1. Common Prayer Quote: “Get me out of this situation.”

Instead: Luke 22:42

⁴² *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”*

Revised Prayer Quote:

God, you know my heart and my desire. That is what I ask. But I submit to your plan and your will.

2. Common Prayer Quote: “Don’t let this bad thing happen to me.”

Instead: Daniel 3:17-18

¹⁷ *“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*

Revised Prayer Quote:

God, I know you can deliver me out of this mess. But even if you don’t, I know that you are God and You have my best interests at heart.

3. Common Prayer Quote: “Help me to excel at this (sports, academics, arts, etc.)”

Instead: Proverbs 16:3

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

Revised Prayer Quote:

God, I commit to be the best soccer player I can be. I will work hard, I will honor my coaches, I will train and drill. I will do all of this in a way that honors You.

4. Common Prayer Quote: “Please fix this in this way.”

Instead: Ephesians 3:20

²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Revised Prayer Quote:

God, I know I have a way that I’d like this problem to be fixed. But I also know you can do immeasurably more than I can ask or imagine. So I ask you to do what you imagine, not what I imagine.

After a few minutes, call for the attention of your students and ask them to share the revised prayer request that their group created. Then close your time by discussing these questions.

How can the content of this session:

- **change the way you view hard circumstances?**
- **change the way you see God in hard circumstances?**
- **change the way you pray?**