



GOALS

As students experience this session, they will:

- Dive deeper into the idea that God is present with us during our pain and suffering.
- Understand what the concept of Jesus being “God with us” means for our struggles.
- Consider the ways that Jesus experienced pain and suffering, and how He responded.
- Internalize Scripture that demonstrates the overlap between the troubles of this life and God’s presence.

MATERIALS: Group

- White board or Post-it easel/wall pad (the 25”x30” variety)
- A variety of markers or Sharpies for the white board or Post-it pad

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Student journal pages and Scripture sheets
- Pens/pencils
- Highlighters or colored pencils
- Bible (have extras available for students without a Bible)

OPEN

Begin with a quick review of Session 3. Ask students to jot down their top takeaways on their journal pages and then share them with the group. Here are some talking points to help you with this process.

- **Loss as well as pain and suffering are a real part of our lives. It can all be traced back to the Fall in Genesis 3.**
- **Sometimes God delivers us from our trials and the resulting pain and suffering; other times we are forced to endure them.**
- **God promises us two things about sufferings**
 1. **We never suffer in vain. God always has a purpose for our sufferings.**
 2. **We never face our trials alone. God promises to be with us in the midst of pain and suffering.**
- **Living a righteous life DOES NOT exempt us from suffering.**

Share the following with your group in your own words:

One of the big takeaways from Session 3 was that regardless of whether God delivers us from the pain and suffering of our trials, He promised to be with us in the suffering. But here is the best part, He not only promised this, He demonstrated it to us through Jesus. Jesus’ ministry shows us that we are not alone in our pain and suffering. Take a moment to read Matthew 1:22-23.

Matthew 1:22-33

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Ask your group the following questions. Invite students to respond to the first question on their journal pages before discussing. Use your white board or Post-it pad to record some of their responses to these questions.

What does Jesus coming as “God with us” imply for our trials and suffering?

In addition to His suffering on the cross, can you think of other examples in Scripture where Jesus experienced pain and loss?

In each of these cases, how does Jesus respond to pain and loss?

What can we learn from Jesus about our posture toward pain and loss?

DIGGING IN

Draw your students’ attention to the Scripture passages under Digging In on their Scripture sheets. Point out that each passage represents a point where troubles of this world intersect with power, love and grace from God. Invite students to look for the following as they read these passages:

1. **Underline anything that gives insight into trouble we might face in this world.**
2. **Circle anything that points to God’s help in our trouble.**

TAKING IT INWARD

After a few minutes, help your students internalize the passages you just read by working as a group to complete the chart below (which is also on their journal pages).

What forms of God’s power, love, and grace do you see in each passage?

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>

After completing the chart, discuss the questions below:

Which of these passages gives you the most comfort?

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

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

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

Explain that you’re going to look at a set of verses that dive a little deeper into the overlap between troubles of this world and the presence of God in our troubles. Invite students to read from their Bibles the passages noted on their journal pages under Cross Checking. (You may recognize three of the passages in that they are from the “Setting the Heart” section of your Session 3 Prep It.) As you might guess, God has plenty to say on this subject.

Invite students to look for additional insight into what we can expect from this world and from God as they read the passages.

Exodus 3:11-12

John 14:15-17

Judges 6:14-16

1 Peter 1:6-7

Jeremiah 1:4-8

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

What's the main theme you see in these 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

Ask students to think about the content of their prayers.

Then share in your own words:

If you're like most, a good portion, if not most, of your prayer time is spent asking God for a desired outcome. Of course, in parts of the Bible we are instructed to ask for the desires of our hearts. But if God has something He wants to accomplish in our lives that is far greater than granting our desires (see Ephesians 3:20-21), then we miss an entire element in interacting with God if we are praying only for our desires.

Close your time by pondering these closing questions. Share with your students that the act of "putting into practice" for this session will happen within their hearts and minds, as opposed to prompts and ideas for behavior change.

How do these passages shape (or change) your view of God's involvement in our world?

How could these passages of Scripture impact (or change) your prayer life, either in the middle of troubling circumstances, or with the possibility of troubling circumstances (awaiting medical results, navigating friendships/relationships, employment uncertainty, family issues).

How do these passages shape (or change) how you might articulate a prayer request?

Close out this session with a time of prayer. Encourage students to be mindful of the challenges that they are currently facing, but also the ways that God is helping them get through these difficult times and to pray a prayer of thanksgiving for God's presence during these times.