



vibrant**faith**

+ Generations Together

## Hope

Here is an intergenerational session for all members of the congregation exploring God's promise of hope amidst our doubts and discouragement. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

### Introduction

This session will help children, teens, and adults understand that God's covenant of love gives us hope. It empowers to endure bad days, disappointments, doubts, and discouragement. In the words of Saint Paul, we know that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts" (Romans 5:3-5).

### Prepare in Advance

Gather all the necessary items as listed in each section of the session below – Gather, Grow, Go Forth.

## I. Gather

[Use the following adaptation of the activity A Bad Day]

### Needed

Suitable resources to show the following video for all participants to see: Alexander's Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day

### Activity Plan

1. Ask participants to form one large group.
2. Communicate the following to the group: We all have days when everything seems to go wrong. There's a great story called Alexander's Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day that tells about a boy who's having a very bad day. Let's watch and hear the story now.
3. Show the video: <https://youtu.be/w6HhKlpp7ok>
4. Ask participants to form family groups or small groups of 4-5 persons. In their groups, invite them to discuss these questions. Encourage children to answer the questions first, before the teens or adults.
  - When have you had a very bad day?
  - What made this day so frustrating?
  - How might you make tomorrow better?

- How might faith in God give you hope, even on the worst of days?
- What helps you feel better on a bad day? Listening to a favorite song? Going for a walk? Reading a good book? Watching a favorite movie? Being with a good friend? Talking to someone you love?

Invite some participants to share their answer to one of the questions with the whole group.

5. Say to the group: God knows that bad things happen to us, and God promises to be with us even on our worst days. Let me read Lamentations 3:19-24 aloud for you to hear, which tells about someone in a very bad situation who looks to God for hope.

Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion, "says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

6. Close this segment with the following prayer:  
*Dear God, Thank you for promising that you will never leave me. Please give me your comfort, and help to make tomorrow a better day. Amen.*

## **II. Grow**

Ask participants to form two large groups:

1. Families with young children
2. Families with teens, along with young adults and adults

### **Young Family Activity**

[use the following adaptation of the activity Blown Over with Hope]

#### **Needed:**

Index cards and pencils – one per person

#### **Activity Plan**

1. Ask participants to form family groups or small groups of no more than six persons. Have them seated at tables.
2. Give each person an index card and a pencil. Ask each one to write or draw about a time of day or daily activity that is often discouraging, an activity that makes him or her feel hopeless or “at odds” with the world. (For example, getting up in the morning, doing homework, cooking a meal, running errands, commuting to job, tying shoes, going to daycare.) Be ready to help younger children with spelling.
3. Next, have family/group members flip their cards over and write or draw about a favorite time of day or daily activity that makes them feel relaxed, happy, or confident. (For example, playing with friends, reading a story, working in the garden, eating a meal with the family, watching a sporting event.) Again, be ready to help younger children with spelling.
4. Once finished with both sides, have family members gently fold their index cards with the favorite time of day facing out. Set the folded cards on the table.

5. Have each person try to flip over his or her card by blowing on it. (It sounds easy, but it's not.) Even when blowing above or below the card, it shouldn't flip.
6. Invite family members to think about and discuss what lesson they take from this activity: What might this exercise say about living each day? (For example: Even when we feel frustrated or overwhelmed, it is temporary. The "bright side" of life can't be blown away. Jesus provides hope in many different ways, including in the form of everyday activities that we enjoy—times when we feel happy, confident, and hopeful.)  
Ask some participants to share their responses with the whole group.
7. Finish by reading aloud Psalm 86:15:  
*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Wonder together about how praying these words might improve a person's outlook on life each day.*

### Teen Family / Adult Activity

[use the following adaptation of the activity Hope Sustains Teen Life]

#### Needed:

Bible, internet-connected device, ability to project a couple of videos for all to see and hear,

#### Activity Plan

1. Ask participants to form family groups or small groups of no more than six persons. Show the video [Infinite Power of Hope](#) to help capture the power of hope as you prepare to do this activity
2. Have someone read aloud the following reflection:  
  
**Reflection on Hope.** Hope is a Christian virtue that sustains faith and life. The power of hope is often misunderstood and misrepresented in common phrases such as "I hope I win the lottery." This kind of hope is not Christian hope because it is uncertain—maybe I'll win the lottery and maybe I won't. A more authentic expression of Christian hope is captured in this statement: "I hope that all will be well, even though I can't foresee a positive outcome to this challenging situation." Hope calls us to believe that no matter how bad things may appear, God is building some kind of wonderful outcome from every challenge we face in life. Christian hope is rooted in our faith in the power of resurrection over death.
3. Movies and books often capture the theme of hope clearly. Have you ever watched a movie, knowing the outcome will be good but also wondering how the main character will even survive? Hope is the principal theme of *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Watch this short video, which captures how hope is presented in *The Hunger Games*: [Trailer for The Hunger Games](#).
4. Have groups work together to list challenges commonly faced by teens and adults today.
5. Invite each person to select one challenge from this list that is real in his or her life. Ask questions to help thoroughly understand how this situation is being played out in each person's life, but resist the temptation to offer solutions. Just try to understand.
6. Have someone read aloud Romans 5:3-5 from your Bible or from this text:  
**Romans 5:3-5**  
<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

7. Invite participants to share in their groups how the following phrases apply to his or her challenge. Nurture any signs of a solution that emerge during this discussion.
  - Suffering produces endurance.
  - Endurance produces character.
  - Character produces hope.
  - Hope does not disappoint us.
8. Decide how you might display these four statements from Romans 5 in your home as a visual reminder of hope. Here are some suggestions to consider:
  - Make a poster.
  - Engrave the words on a piece of wood.
  - Choose an inspiring photo and use editing software to add the words to it. Use it as a screen saver or wallpaper.
  - Write the phrases on an index card and tape it to the bathroom mirror.
9. Close this segment with the following prayer:
 

*We thank you, God, for the gift of Christian hope that empowers us to have courage and confidence in times of challenge. Bless this challenge we face now: (name your teen's challenge). Especially bless anyone who feels there is no hope, and inspire someone close to him or her to reach out and offer the gift of hope. We pray with resurrection faith. Amen.*

### **III. Go Forth**

[use the following adaptation of the activity Bad Days Jar]

#### **Needed:**

For each household: Bible Verses for Bad Days worksheet, scissors, a wide mouth jar, bowl or basket.

#### **Activity Plan**

1. Invite participants to gather in their family/small groups.
2. Point out that bad days have been a part of the human experience for ... well ... forever! There are lots of stories in the Bible about bad days. But there are also lots of encouraging, hopeful, helpful, and comforting messages. Explain that you will create a Bible Verses for Bad Days Jar to help you find a word of hope on bad days.
3. Invite each family/small group to read aloud the Bible Verses for Bad Days worksheet. Then instruct someone from each group to cut the worksheet into strips and place them in the jar/bowl/basket.
4. Fold or roll each verse and place it in the jar. Make a "Bad Days Jar" for each household represented in your group.
5. Tell each family to take their Bad Days Jar home. Whenever a family member is having a bad day, encourage him or her to pull a slip from the jar and read its words of comfort and hope. Remind one another you are not alone!
6. Conclude by asking someone to read aloud Romans 5:3-5
 

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
7. Conclude with this prayer:
 

*God, we need you on the good days. We need you on the bad days. And we need you every day in between! Celebrate with us. Cry with us. Be with us. Help us know we're never alone. Amen.*

## Bible Verses for Bad Days

John 16:33: I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Philippians 4:6-7: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 11:28-30: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Psalms 34:18: The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Matthew 5:4: Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Romans 5:3-5: ... We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Psalms 46:1-2a: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear ...

Romans 8:38-39: For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 14:1: Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

# A Bad Day



If you're having one of those days, this activity can help!

**For**  
Just for Kids

**Season**  
Spring

## Activity Plan

1. We all have days when everything seems to go wrong. There's a great story called *Alexander's Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day* that tells about a boy who's having a very bad day. You can hear the story read aloud at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnYW6YH\\_8w4&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnYW6YH_8w4&feature=related)
2. God knows that bad things happen to us, and God promises to be with us even on our worst days. Read Lamentations 3:19-24, which tells about someone in a very bad situation who looks to God for hope.

Talk about it with a grown-up.

- When have you had a very bad day?
- What made this day so frustrating?
- How might you make tomorrow better?
- How might faith in God give you hope, even on the worst of days?
- What helps you feel better on a bad day? Listening to a favorite song? Going for a walk? Reading a good book? Watching a favorite movie? Being with a good friend? Talking to someone you love?

3. Here's a prayer for a bad day:

Dear God,  
I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_ today. Thank you for promising that you will never leave me. Please give me your comfort, and help to make tomorrow a better day. Amen.

## Lamentations 3:19-24

Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

# Blown Over with Hope

By Julie Filby



Pairing a feeling of discouragement with one of happiness in this activity may help to demonstrate how even when a person feels overwhelmed or hopeless, Jesus is there to help. Sometimes this encouragement comes in very simple ways.

## For

Young Family

## Season

Summer

## Needed

Index cards, pencils, table

## Activity Plan

1. Gather around a table and begin by inviting family members to tell what they are most thankful for today.
2. Give each person an index card and a pencil. Ask each one to write or draw about a time of day or daily activity that is often discouraging, an activity that makes him or her feel hopeless or “at odds” with the world. (For example, getting up in the morning, doing homework, cooking a meal, running errands, commuting to job, tying shoes, going to daycare.) Be ready to help younger children with spelling.
3. Next, have family members flip their cards over and write or draw about a favorite time of day or daily activity that makes them feel relaxed, happy, or confident. (For example, playing with friends, reading a story, working in the garden, eating a meal with the family, watching a sporting event.) Again, be ready to help younger children with spelling.
4. Once finished with both sides, have family members gently fold their index cards with the favorite time of day facing out. Set the folded cards on the table.
5. Have each person try to flip over his or her card by blowing on it. (It sounds easy, but it’s not.) Even when blowing above or below the card, it shouldn’t flip.
6. Invite family members to think about what lesson they might take from this activity: What might this exercise say about living each day? (For example: Even when we feel frustrated or overwhelmed, it is temporary. The “bright side” of life can’t be blown away. Jesus provides hope in many different ways, including in the form of everyday activities that we enjoy—times when we feel happy, confident, and hopeful.)
7. Finish by reading aloud Psalm 86:15:

*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Wonder together about how praying these words might improve a person’s outlook on life each day.*

# Bad Days Jar

By Erin Davis Gibbons



Everyone has bad days. When you do, look to the Bible for hope and comfort.

## For

Teen Family

## Season

Winter

## Needed

Bible, Bible Verses for Bad Days worksheet, jar with wide mouth, scissors, computer, printer; optional: ribbon, glue, stickers, other art supplies

## Prepare in Advance

Call up the Bible Verses for Bad Days worksheet on your computer.

## Activity Plan

1. Gather family members near the computer and say this prayer aloud to begin.

*God, we need you on the good days. We need you on the bad days. And we need you every day in between! Celebrate with us. Cry with us. Be with us. Help us know we're never alone. Amen.*

2. Point out that bad days have been a part of the human experience for ... well ... forever! There are lots of stories in the Bible about bad days. But there are also lots of encouraging, hopeful, helpful, and comforting messages. Explain that you will create a Bible Verses for Bad Days Jar to help you find a word of hope on bad days.
3. Call up the Bible Verses for Bad Days worksheet on your computer and read it together. Delete any verses you don't like. Type in some of your favorite verses. (If you need some suggestions, try an Internet search for "Bible verses for hope and comfort.") Print out your finished worksheet and cut the strips apart.
4. Get a jar with a wide mouth. Optional: Decorate the jar with ribbons, stickers, or other craft materials you have on hand.
5. Fold or roll each verse and place it in the jar.
6. Whenever a family member is having a bad day, encourage him or her to pull a slip from the jar and read its words of comfort and hope. Remind one another you are not alone!



## Bible Verses for Bad Days

John 16:33: I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Philippians 4:6-7: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 11:28-30: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Psalms 34:18: The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Matthew 5:4: Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Romans 5:3-5: ... We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Psalms 46:1-2a: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear ...

Romans 8:38-39: For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 14:1: Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.
