



vibrantfaith

+ Generations Together

Living, Dying, Rising

Here is an intergenerational session for all members of the congregation exploring how new life can come from our struggles and disappointments. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection provides an inspirational model for how to embrace all that comes our way. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

Introduction

This session can be used any time of the year, but is best shortly before or after Easter when people are more aware of the power of the Paschal Mystery – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. When tough situations arise, we can look to mentors of faith who show how to move forward without getting discouraged. We will also learn that God cares for us like a shepherd and promises everything we need.

I. Gather

To begin the session, use the following adaptation of the activity called Why Do Bad Things Happen?

Prepare in Advance:

- YouTube music video “Hard Times” by Amy Grant: https://youtu.be/Bt0OBdaRs_4
- Mark your Bible at Matthew 6:31-33; Hebrews 11:1; and 1 Peter 5:7
- Make a printed copy of the [Story of Boy Scouts and a Tornado](#)

Activity Plan

1. Just prior to starting the session, and as people are gathering, play the YouTube music video “Hard Times” by Amy Grant: https://youtu.be/Bt0OBdaRs_4.
2. Invite all participants to gather as one large group. Ask them to respond “Bring us to new life” to the prayers below:

Leader: For the times we are broken, we pray:
For the times we are tired and weary, we pray:
For the times we feel alone, we pray:
For the times we feel unsettled and unsure, we pray:
For the times we are jealous or envious of others, we pray:
For the times we are angry and frustrated, we pray:

For the times we are overwhelmed and overworked, we pray:
For the times when we know we need to change, but find it difficult, we pray:

Risen Christ, we look to you in all things. Help us to embrace times of suffering, realizing the potential for new life that can come from them. Be with us as we gather. Bless our time together as we make ourselves open to knowing you better. Amen.

3. Invite participants to form family groups or small groups of 4-5 persons. Ask each family/small group to discuss the following questions. Encourage groups to let children respond first so they feel included:
 - Why do you think bad things happen?
 - How can we be there for each other when bad things happen?
 - When bad things happen, what happens to your faith? Why?
 - Has your faith ever changed after overcoming a major difficulty? If so, how?

4. Ask three different people to read aloud the following Scripture passages.

Hebrews 11:1: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

Matthew 6:31-33: *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

1 Peter 5:6-7: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

5. Ask family/small groups to share with each other what these scripture verses teach about living through challenging situations.
6. Read aloud the [Story of Boy Scouts and a Tornado](#). Discuss the story using the following questions:
 - What bad thing was the Boy Scout troop dealing with?
 - Do you think the members of the Boy Scout troop got discouraged? Why or why not?
 - What helped this Boy Scout troop get through that difficult situation?
 - What can we learn from the Boy Scout troop?
7. Before moving on to the next activity, pray aloud:

God, give us strength when we feel weak. Give us hope when we feel hopeless. Give us people who can be models of faithfulness when we're not sure what to do. Amen.

II. Grow

Needed: sufficient copies of the following activities:

- When I'm Disappointed (for families with children) , along with scissors for each family/group to cut the Psalm strips
- Lord, Hear My Cry (for families with teens) along with cued YouTube music video "Walk With Me": <https://youtu.be/uCIPjLJAQEI>
- Grain of Wheat (for young adults and adults)

Activity Plan

1. Invite participants to stay in their family/small groups. Tell them that you want each group to further explore the meaning of Living, Dying, and Rising, and that a special activity has been selected for

your family or group. Each family/group will receive a copy of the appropriate activity and they are instructed to do the activity together in the next 15-20 minutes.

If necessary, you can introduce each activity with the following title and text:

When I'm Disappointed (for families with children): Here's an activity using Psalms from the Bible to help us learn ways to express our feelings, talk about disappointments with caring family members, and remember that God hears and loves us at all times.

Lord, Hear My Cry (for families with teens): Before Jesus was taken to be crucified, he knelt in prayer. He called upon God in that bleak moment, and God heard Jesus' prayer. No matter what sorrow or fear we are experiencing, God listens to our prayers.

Grain of Wheat (for young adults and adults): March and April take us through the liturgical seasons of Lent and Easter. In the northern hemisphere this also corresponds to nature's season of the earth awakening from the sleep of winter to Spring's readiness to bring about new life. So too, in human relationships we sometimes have to die to ourselves to bring about new life.

2. Monitor the groups and help them along so that all can finish around the same time.

III. Go Forth

To conclude this session use the following adaptation of the activity called Everything We need.

- **Needed:**
- Bible for each family/group
- "Everything in My World" Cards printed and cut out – one set for each family/small group.
- Crayons or Markers – one set for each family/small group.

Activity Plan

1. Ask one person from each family/group to read aloud Psalm 23 to the people in his or her group. Read loud enough for each group member to hear, but not so loud to disturb other groups.
2. Show participants that each group has a stack of cards. Each card shows one way that God takes care of us. Flip over one card at a time and have someone in the family/group describe what he sees on the card. For each card, ask questions to help persons, child particularly, connect the picture with specific gifts from God in his life. For example, ask:
 - What is your favorite (*food, toy, stuffed animal*), out of all the (*food, toys, stuffed animals*) God has given you?
 - How has your doctor helped you? How is Dr. _____ a gift from God? (*Possible answers: your doctor gives you regular checkups to make sure your body is growing as it should. Your doctor finds out what's wrong when you are sick and helps you get better.*)
 - What is your favorite kind of weather? How do different kinds of weather help us? (*Possible answers: God gives sunshine to grow plants and food. Rain helps flowers grow.*)
3. Show participants the two blank "Talent" cards. Ask what skills or talents God has given your family. Talk about the skills and talents you have as a family that come from God. Draw a picture to show these.
4. If there is something else that is important to your family/group that isn't shown on the cards, use the blank card that says, "Something I want to thank God for," to write or draw that item.
5. Direct families/groups to connect the cards with the Psalm by walking them through the following steps. Look at the cards again and talk about the following:

- The Psalm starts out with “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.” That means that God will give you everything you need. You won’t be missing anything. What is one thing God has given you that you want to thank God for today? *(If the answer has a card to go with it, find that card and set it aside.)*
 - The Psalm says that the Lord leads you beside still waters and restores your soul. That means that God helps you feel peaceful. What are some ways that God helps you rest and feel refreshed? *(Possible answers and cards: the love of family and friends, a home to rest in, stuffed animals to snuggle.)*
 - The Psalm talks about walking through a dark place and how God is always with us. What are some scary things? How does God protect you from scary things? *(Possible answers and cards: family and friends, the support of a church family, a doctor to help.)*
 - The Psalm ends with “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” That means that God loves you forever and ever, no matter what!
6. Now direct families/groups to put all the cards back into one pile. Invite them to choose 2-3 cards from the stack and talk about how they can share God’s great love. How can they give to others? For example:
- Show the money card and talk about bringing an offering to church. Go get the money and put it in an envelope or set it aside so it’s ready for worship.
 - Look at the food card. Think about how you could donate food in the community. Is there a food pantry, or a homeless shelter, or another way to share food with the hungry? Put a bag of food together and decide what day you’ll deliver it.
 - Check out the toy card. For the next birthday in your family, invite that person to choose an organization where gifts could be donated. Party guests could bring something for that organization. The birthday boy or girl could help deliver all the presents that are gathered in his or her honor.
 - Clothes card: go through your closets and drawers and decide what you can give away to a younger friend or neighbor or a clothes closet in the community.
 - Talent cards: How can you share what you’re good at with people in your neighborhood, church, and community?
 - What other ways can your family come up with to share God’s overflowing gifts and love with others?
7. To conclude the session ask participants to come together as one large group. Invite a few persons to share something that they have learned or has struck them during today’s session. Invite at least one child to share first.

Finish with a prayer:

Dear God, thank you for giving us your love. Thank you for giving us all the things we’ve talked about today. You are our shepherd and we love you. Help us to be generous and share with others. Amen.

As people are leaving, play the YouTube music video “Hard Times” by Amy Grant:

https://youtu.be/Bt0OBdaRs_4

Why Do Bad Things Happen?

By Jolene Roehlkepartain



creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/ 1

When tough situations arise, look to mentors of faith who show how to move forward without getting discouraged.

For

Teen Family

Season

Winter

Needed

Bible; the [Story of Rosa Parks](#); the [Story of Mother Teresa](#); the [Story of Boy Scouts and a Tornado](#)

Prepare in Advance

Mark your Bible at Matthew 6:31-33; Hebrews 11:1; and 1 Peter 5:7.
Make a printed copy of the three stories listed in “Needed.”

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God, help us to remember that you're always there for us, especially when life gets hard. Amen.

2. As a family, discuss these questions:
 - When bad things happen, what happens to your faith? Why?
 - Has your faith ever changed after overcoming a major difficulty? If so, how?
 - Why do you think bad things happen?
 - How can we be there for each other when bad things happen?
3. Ask a family member to read aloud Hebrews 11:1; Matthew 6:31-33; and 1 Peter 5:7 from your Bible or the text below. Discuss what these scripture verses teach about living through challenging situations.

Hebrews 11:1: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

Matthew 6:31-33: *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

1 Peter 5:6-7: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

4. Have someone read aloud the [Story of Rosa Parks](#). Discuss the story using the following questions:
 - What bad thing was Rosa Parks dealing with?
 - Do you think Rosa Parks got discouraged? Why or why not?
 - What do you think helped Rosa Parks live through difficult times?
 - What can we learn from Rosa Parks?
5. Ask someone to read aloud the [Story of Mother Teresa](#). Discuss the story using the following questions:
 - What bad thing was Mother Teresa dealing with?
 - Do you think Mother Teresa got discouraged? Why or why not?
 - What helped Mother Teresa live through difficult times?
 - What can we learn from Mother Teresa?
6. Ask someone to read aloud the [Story of Boy Scouts and a Tornado](#). Discuss the story using the following questions:
 - What bad thing was the Boy Scout troop dealing with?
 - Do you think the members of the Boy Scout troop got discouraged? Why or why not?
 - What helped this Boy Scout troop get through that difficult situation?
 - What can we learn from the Boy Scout troop?
7. Pray aloud:

God, give us strength when we feel weak. Give us hope when we feel hopeless. Give us people who can be models of faithfulness when we're not sure what to do. Amen.

8. *Variation:* Consider reading the book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Harold S. Kushner. Talk about the book as a family.

When I'm Disappointed

By Paige Evers

Here's an activity using Psalms from the Bible to help us learn ways to express our feelings, talk about disappointments with caring family members, and remember that God hears and loves us at all times.

For

Young Family

Season

Spring

Needed

Bible, Psalms Slips worksheet, scissors, basket or envelope

Prepare in Advance

Make a copy of the Psalms Slips worksheet; cut apart the strips and place them in a basket or envelope.

Activity Plan

1. Gather in a comfortable place and begin by saying this prayer aloud:

Dear God, thank you for loving us when we are happy and when we are sad. Teach us to talk to you in prayer, no matter how we feel. Amen.

2. Invite each person to tell a story about a time he or she felt disappointed. It could be a time when something didn't turn out as planned, or a time of feeling sad or left out. Encourage each person to say if anything helped him or her feel better at that time and, if so, what it was.
3. Turn to the book of Psalms in your Bible. Comment that this is the longest book in the Bible, and that it is filled with prayers for sad times and for happy times. Some psalms help us talk to God when we feel disappointed. The people who wrote the psalms knew that God promises to listen to God's people when we pray and to help us.
4. Take turns pulling a verse strip from the basket or envelope. Read each verse aloud and imagine when a person might say these words as part of a prayer to God. How might it help to say these words to God when you're feeling disappointed.
5. Invite each person to choose a favorite verse and perhaps memorize it. Wonder together how these verses from God's Word may help you when you face disappointments in the future.
6. Put the slips back in the basket or envelope and keep it handy. When situations of sadness or disappointment arise, encourage one another to put your feelings into words. Pick out a verse to read aloud as part of your prayer about the situation. Remind each other that God hears you and loves you, and that the Spirit works through your family members to offer God's love and encouragement.
7. Hold hands and pray:

Gracious God, thank you for being with us when we are happy and when we are sad. Show us the way to move forward from our disappointments. Lead us to share your love each day, especially with those who need a friend. Amen.



Psalm Slips

With my voice I cry out to the Lord; with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord. (Psalm 142:1)

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope. (Psalm 130:5)

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. (Psalm 13:3)

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. (Psalm 9:1)

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:12)

O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear. (Psalm 10:17)

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior. (Psalm 17:6-7)

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. (Psalm 25:16-17)

Lord, Hear My Cry

By Audrey Cox

Before Jesus was taken to be crucified, he knelt in prayer. He called upon God in that bleak moment, and God heard Jesus' prayer. No matter what sorrow or fear we are experiencing, God listens to our prayers. Even in fear-filled moments, God is listening.

For

Teen Family

Season

Spring

Needed

Bible, computer, Internet access, cup, small pieces of paper, pens

Prepare in Advance

Go online to the video ["Walk with Me"](#) by Lecrae, and prepare to view it as a family

Activity Plan

1. Begin by praying aloud: *Be with us, God, and hear the cries of our hearts, just as you heard the cry of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*
2. Open your Bible to Luke 22:39-46 and read it aloud, or use the following text from *Luke 22:39-46*
And [Jesus] came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."
3. Give three small pieces of paper and a pen to each person. On each of his or her pieces of paper, have each person write one feeling Jesus may have had when he was at the Mount of Olives with his disciples. (This took place right before Jesus was betrayed by Judas and taken away for his trial and crucifixion.)
4. Watch the video "Walk with Me" (link given above).
5. Have each person take his or her pieces of paper and, on the blank side, write something that causes (or has caused) him or her to have those same feelings. For example, if you think Jesus may have been feeling sorrow—on the other side you might write "I am so sad Grandma died." Allow time for everyone to complete all three pieces of paper.
6. Spend a few moments in silence, allowing time for family members to pray to God about the things they wrote. After praying, have family members wad up their scraps of paper and put them in the cup.
7. Ask for a volunteer to pray this prayer: *Lord, hear our cry! Sometimes it's hard to reach out to you when the things we have to say include our most painful and fear-filled feelings. Let this cup be a reminder that you are always listening. Strengthen us to trust that you take these burdens from us each and every day. Thank you for hearing us when we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.*
8. You may want to leave the cup on your table for a few days as a reminder to take your worries to God and then dispose of the papers.

Grain of Wheat

By Susan Vogt

March and April take us through the liturgical seasons of Lent and Easter. In the northern hemisphere this also corresponds to nature's season of the earth awakening from the sleep of winter to Spring's readiness to bring about new life. So too, in human relationships we sometimes have to die to ourselves to bring about new life.

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Spring

Needed

Willingness to die to self in order to bring fuller life to one's marriage and family

Activity Plan

1. Calm your spirit and open your mind and heart to God's presence.
2. Read (either with your spouse or by yourself)
John 12:24-33 The Grain of Wheat and Jesus' Prediction of His Death
3. Ponder the sorrows, suffering, and death that are inevitable in our lives. It feels terrible when things like illness, loss of job, accidents happen. We can't always predict the time or plan to prevent it. It's hard to see how a tragedy could be God's will and bring about good. But just as a grain of wheat has to die to bear more fruit, so too must we "die to ourselves."
 - Think about a bad experience that you've had that eventually brought growth or a new opportunity.
 - Is there a sadness or difficulty that you are currently experiencing and you're not sure how you will get through it? Ask God for wisdom to see what good might eventually come from it and the patience to wait.
 - Is there any habit or way of doing things that I need to let go of in order to give myself fully to my spouse, and after my spouse, my children?
4. Recall that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice of love by surrendering his life for us on the cross. He "lost" his life, but through his death, Jesus "gave" life to those who follow him. His followers didn't understand what was happening at the time. His words were confusing, and it didn't seem right that a just man should die.
 - Is your faith based on logic and success?
 - Is there anything you need to "die to" in order to give yourself more fully to God? (Consider pride, getting your own way, shyness in telling others of your faith, self-righteousness in imposing *your* unique style of faith on another.)



John 12:24-33

The Grain of Wheat and Jesus' Prediction of His Death

“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say— ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Everything We Need

By Paige Evers

By exploring Psalm 23, children learn that God cares for them like a shepherd and gives them everything they need. A stack of cards with simple words and pictures helps connect the promises in the Psalm with the child's daily life. Together, family members plan ways they can be generous to others just as God, their shepherd, has been generous to them.

For

Young Family

Season

Fall

Needed

Bible or children's Bible (or see Psalm 23 below),
"Everything in My World" Cards, Crayons or Markers

Prepare in Advance

Print and cut out the "Everything in My World" Cards.



Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

Dear God, thank you for guiding us as a shepherd. As we read your holy Word, help us to hear how much you love us. Thank you for giving us everything we need. Amen.

2. Introduce Psalm 23. Tell your child that you'll be hearing how God is our shepherd. God takes care of us. Listen for all of the ways our shepherd takes care of us.
3. Read aloud Psalm 23.
4. Show your child the stack of cards. Tell him that each card shows one way that God takes care of him. Flip over one card at a time and have your child describe what he sees on the card. For each card, ask questions to help your child connect the picture with specific gifts from God in his life. For example, ask:
 - What is your favorite (*food, toy, stuffed animal*), out of all the (*food, toys, stuffed animals*) God has given you?
 - How has your doctor helped you? How is Dr. _____ a gift from God? (*Possible answers: your doctor gives you regular checkups to make sure your body is growing as it should. Your doctor finds out what's wrong when you are sick and helps you get better.*)
 - What is your favorite kind of weather? How do different kinds of weather help us? (*Possible answers: God gives sunshine to grow plants and food. Rain helps flowers grow.*)
5. Show your child the two blank "Talent" cards. Ask what skills or talents God has given her. Talk about the skills and talents you have as a family that come from God. Draw a picture to show these.
6. If there is something else that is important to your child that isn't shown on the cards, use the blank card that says, "Something I want to thank God for," to write or draw that item.

7. Connect the cards with the Psalm. Look at the cards again and talk about the following:
 - The Psalm starts out with “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.” That means that God will give you everything you need. You won’t be missing anything. What is one thing God has given you that you want to thank God for today? *(If the answer has a card to go with it, find that card and set it aside.)*
 - The Psalm says that the Lord leads you beside still waters and restores your soul. That means that God helps you feel peaceful. What are some ways that God helps you rest and feel refreshed? *(Possible answers and cards: the love of family and friends, a home to rest in, stuffed animals to snuggle.)*
 - The Psalm talks about walking through a dark place and how God is always with us. What are some scary things? How does God protect you from scary things? *(Possible answers and cards: family and friends, the support of a church family, a doctor to help.)*
 - The Psalm ends with “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” That means that God loves you forever and ever, no matter what!

8. Now put all the cards back in one pile. Choose 2-3 cards from the stack and talk about how you can share God’s great love. How can you give to others? For example:
 - Show your child the money card and talk about bringing an offering to church. Go get the money and put it in an envelope or set it aside so it’s ready for worship.
 - Look at the food card. Think about how you could donate food in the community. Is there a food pantry, or a homeless shelter, or another way to share food with the hungry? Put a bag of food together and decide what day you’ll deliver it.
 - Check out the toy card. For the next birthday in your family, invite that person to choose an organization where gifts could be donated. Party guests could bring something for that organization. The birthday boy or girl could help deliver all the presents that are gathered in his or her honor.
 - Clothes card: go through your closets and drawers and decide what you can give away to a younger friend or neighbor or a clothes closet in the community.
 - Talent cards: How can you share what you’re good at with people in your neighborhood, church, and community?
 - What other ways can your family come up with to share God’s overflowing gifts and love with others?

9. Finish with a prayer:

Dear God, thank you for giving us your love. Thank you for giving us all the things we’ve talked about today. You are our shepherd and we love you. Help us to be generous and share with others. Amen.





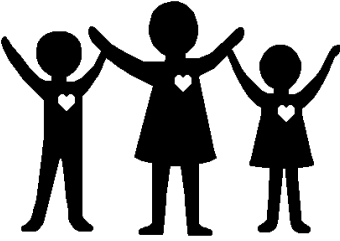



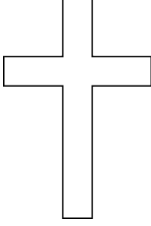



Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Everything in My World Cards

<p>Home</p> 	<p>Food</p> 	<p>Clothes</p> 
<p>Money</p> 	<p>Family</p> 	<p>Friends</p> 
<p>Teachers</p> 	<p>Stuffed Animals</p> 	<p>Church Family</p> 
<p>Toys</p> 	<p>Weather</p> 	<p>Doctor</p> 
<p>My Talent from God:</p>	<p>My Family's Talent from God:</p>	<p>Something I want to thank God for:</p>