



Date: _____

Series: Meet the Amazing Jesus
Winter Year 3, Lesson 36

God Uses Tough Times to Help Us Grow

Primary Scripture: Hebrews 12:7-11

Key Verse: Hebrews 12:10b, "...God disciplines us for our own good so that we can become holy like him."

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Kids can go through hard times or trials just like adults. When they encounter difficult times, does that mean that God has left them or abandoned them? No. The truth is that God can use hard times to increase our dependence upon him. Difficult times can be times that we grow in trust. When we have less control, we learn to trust God, who has full control. Jesus went through training when he was tempted in the wilderness. We, too, go through training as we face hard times. When we trust God, he gives us victory!

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: In Hebrews 12:2, we read that Jesus endured the cross – the ultimate sacrifice and difficulty – for us. Through this, he purchased our salvation and is the author and perfecter of our faith.

Jesus in us: Jesus says to us that he will be with us always. This truth is especially important in times of difficulties. Through his Spirit, he dwells in us.

Jesus through us: God's grace is sufficient for us in the midst of our difficulties or challenges. His grace shines all the more clearly in the midst of the darkness of our difficulties.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Supplies: a soccer ball and a trophy

Bring the soccer ball and trophy onstage. Then say:

What do you think it would take to be so good at soccer that you won a trophy?

Encourage the kids to talk about training and practice. Then continue with:

No, I don't believe that I should ever have to practice. All I want to do is show up at the games and win the soccer trophy. Do you think that will work?

Show kids the folly of such a plan. You might even invite a child who can do special moves with the soccer ball to come forward. The child can be asked how much he practiced to learn those moves.

The key point is that to excel in soccer, it requires training.

To excel in the Christian life also takes training. Where do we go to train? Of course, we get our training in church and from studying God's word. There is another place where training sometimes happens, and it is not very fun. This is when we face difficulties or challenges. When we face difficulties that are too big for us or too hard for us, it is then that we rely on God to be our help. It is then that we trust and believe in him.

Is soccer practice easy? (No.) Do you always feel like going to practice? (No.) Sometimes soccer practice is difficult and we do not feel like going, but practice is necessary. Sometimes practice can even be painful because it requires a lot of hard work and running.

Life can be a lot like that. We should follow God even when it is hard or when we do not want to. God's word tells us in Hebrews 12:10-11, *"...God disciplines us for our own good so that we can become holy like him. We don't enjoy being disciplined. It always seems to cause more pain than joy. But later on, those who learn from that discipline have peace that comes from doing what is right."*

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Sometimes it is easier to be selfish and self-centered instead of doing the things that God would want us to do. But it is worth the hard work of serving God instead of serving ourselves.

Let's serve God right by asking for the power of his forgiveness in our lives to change us. Think about some of the things you did this week that were wrong but they seemed so easy to do. Let's name those things to God, confess them as sin, and ask for forgiveness in Jesus.

After examples have been prayed out loud, announce God's forgiveness through his Son, Jesus.

The sinless Jesus took our place on the cross so that we can be made more like him. Because of this, we can endure the challenge of doing what is right instead of what is wrong.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Before kids bring forward their offerings say:

One of the reasons it is important to give our offering is that it is like training for later in life. When we are faithful now with a little bit of money, it will be easier to be faithful as we grow and have more money.

Review the current mission project and your progress toward the goal.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

“Blindfold Catch”

Supplies needed: masking tape, three sizes of balls per pair of kids (the smaller the better) for each level of the challenge, a blindfold for each pair of kids

In advance make two parallel masking tape lines on the floor four feet apart.

Divide kids into partners with one partner putting on a blindfold and the other having a ball. *The ball could be any size, although the smaller the ball the more challenging the game.* Have partners stand behind opposite lines facing each other.

The goal of the game is for the blindfolded kids to catch the ball tossed from their partners.

It takes practice but it can be done. The game requires the blindfolded person to listen to his/her partner throwing the ball. The blindfolded child does not have much control and must depend on the kid throwing the ball.

There is a second variation of this game that helps show a progression. After the kids have success at the first level, they can go to the second level. In the second level the lines are moved farther apart or the balls are smaller. There might even be a third level so that kids can, through practice and discipline, move from one level of difficulty to the next.

The teaching point is that even though it is difficult to catch the ball, through dependence on and listening carefully to his/her partner, the blindfolded kid can meet the challenge. The blindfolded person has little control over the situation and has to depend totally on the person throwing the ball.

So it is with us. When we go through hard times, it may feel dark and scary. At these times, it might even feel like God is not near or helpful. We must listen and wait for him, though, because he is in control. Through listening and doing just what he tells us, we can grow in our trust in God. We can meet our challenge. God can then take us to an even more advanced place in our relationship with him.

Bible Presentation:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Show ten minutes of the video, *Animated Stories from the New Testament: Jesus Is Son of God*, produced by Nest Family Entertainment.

Begin the video at the beginning of Jesus' temptation immediately following his baptism. The first line of dialogue of this section is, *"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he sought wisdom . . ."*

After the video, ask the following application questions, or read Matthew 4:1-11.

Application:

Do you think that God wanted his Son, Jesus, to go through this temptation? *(Yes. The Spirit led him.)*

Do you think it was fun for Jesus to go through this trial? *(No. He obeyed the Father's will, anyway.)*

What do you think would be the hardest thing about this trial, going without food for forty days or being tempted by the devil? *(This is not a question that has a clear answer, but it invites the children to think.)*

Would God ever treat us like Jesus and let us go through hard times? Why or why not? *(God would let us go through hard times because it would be a way for us to receive training and discipline. We learn to rely more on his power and less on our own power.)*

Read Hebrews 12:7, 10-11:

“Endure your discipline. God corrects you as a father corrects his children... For a short time our fathers disciplined us as they thought best. Yet, God disciplines us for our own good so that we can become holy like him. We don’t enjoy being disciplined. It always seems to cause more pain than joy. But later on, those who learn from that discipline have peace that comes from doing what is right.”



Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Share an event in which you experienced growth while going through a tough time. Point out how the experience did not seem good at the time, but as you look back, you can see how God used that experience to increase your faith and dependence upon him.

After telling the story, ask if others would like to share incidents in which they went through times of trial or temptation. Have them talk about how, when relying upon the Lord, they found a greater victory.

Emphasize that Jesus was perfect in our place and endured temptation. He went all the way to the cross to give his life up for us so that, as we trust in him, we are saved and have his power working in our lives.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- soccer ball
- trophy

Learning Game:

- masking tape lines on the floor 4' apart
- three sizes of balls per pair (the smaller the better) for each level of the challenge
- blindfold per pair

Bible Presentation:

- the video, *Animated Stories from the New Testament: Jesus Is Son of God* produced, by Nest Family Entertainment. Order from http://www.nestfamily.com/childrens-bible-stories/store/product_detail.asp?ProductID=JGD&ProductIDF=&deptid=1&start=21&page_rec=20. Begin the video at the beginning of Jesus' temptation immediately following his baptism. The first line of dialogue of this section is, "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he sought wisdom..."

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