



---

# FACILITATOR GUIDE

---

# & LESSON PLANS

---

Lesson Plans created by Ministry to Youth ([www.MinistrytoYouth.com](http://www.MinistrytoYouth.com)) – slight amendments in formatting for Nazarite Youth booklet

---

# THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

---



Introduction to the Scriptures that will be covered in the session



This is the central message to be covered during a particular session.



icebreaker

These are ideas to open the lesson, and to have the students warmed up for the lesson. The *debrief* section is a good introduction as to what the lesson will cover.



Notes to the Facilitator.

These are guidelines / questions to the facilitator to help facilitate the message or assist in facilitating the session.



**Stop and Think.**

This is an opportunity to ask questions and have the students engage with the rest of the group.



Read the scriptures identified and answer any questions

---

# WEEK 01

## DON'T LET WORRY BE A DISTRACTION

---



**Scriptures:** Psalm 46; Psalm 9:9-10; Psalm 62:8; 2 Corinthians



God is our strength, refuge and comfort in times of trouble

### icebreaker

#### In-person Game (supplies and preparation):

- cotton balls
- blindfolds, buckets
- timer

#### In-person Game (set-up):

- Split up everyone in teams of 3 if there is an odd number there can be one or two teams of 4.
- One player needs to be the blindfolded catcher.
- One player is the blindfolded cotton ball thrower.
- One player is the caller.
- Have all the blindfolded catchers stand in a row facing their blindfolded cotton ball throwers. [They should be about 12-14 feet away from each other.]
- Give each team the same amount of cotton balls about 15 is a good number.  
The callers can stand anywhere they like.

### **In-person Game (how to play):**

- The goal of the game is for the team to catch the most cotton balls, but it will be hard since both the catcher and the thrower are blindfolded.
- The caller's job is to tell the catcher and thrower how close, far, or in what direction they need to be.
- The caller can have them move as close to 6 feet from each other.
- The Leader will set a timer for 3 minutes.
- The caller needs to be creative on how to talk and explain to their team members what to do. There will be other callers so the teams must be listening to the right callers.
- If there's an extra team member there can be a second caller for that team. It doesn't always make it easier because that team now must listen to two voices.
- If a team runs out of cotton balls to throw, the caller can give directions to the thrower to pick up cotton balls on the floor to throw again.
- After the 3 minutes are up the teams count their cotton balls and the team with the most cotton balls wins.

### **Online Game (supplies):**

- Paper
- something to draw with
- blindfolds (Players can use a mask or just close their eyes)

### **Online Game (set-up):**

- Tell students in advance that they will need to have supplies with them to play the game.
- Each student will be able to play from home with their supplies.
- The Leader will need to have a prepared Drawing they either got online or did themselves. (something easy like a hamburger, dog, or flower)

### **Online Game (how to play):**

- Each student is to be blindfolded or close their eyes ready to draw with their paper.
- The Leader is not allowed to tell them what they are going to be drawing.

- The Leader is going to do their very best to explain how to draw each part of the object.
- Example for a flower: Draw a circle about the size of a quarter. Now draw 8 teardrop shapes connected to the circle. Now draw a line coming from one teardrop and add a larger teardrop to the one side of the line.
- The first student to call out (or even better put in comments) what they drew wins.
- At the end, let everyone show their pictures because it will be funny and interesting to see what they drew.

You can play multiple rounds changing up what you are going to be drawing

## LESSON:



In our game, we had to do a lot of listening.

If we weren't listening to the directions that were being given to us, we would get into trouble.

The more we listened, the easier time we would have had.

Not only did we have to listen, but we also had to avoid distractions that caused us not to be able to listen as clearly.

God is like the caller in our game.

The Caller gave the directions.

Our caller might not have been the best direction giver, but God always gives the right directions for our lives.

When we are struggling in life, we are often distracted and do not hear God's directions very clearly.

This makes us fearful in our times of trouble.

Do you ever sit in class and start daydreaming about something instead of listening to the teacher?

What happens when the teacher calls on you to answer a question and you have no clue how to answer because you were distracted?

This world is full of distractions.

When we are called to do something, or we are walking through a difficult time, it's so hard to be focused because we are so distracted by all the things going on around us.

**Psalm 46** is a particularly good example of how important it is to be still and trust God, when we are in a time of trouble, instead of being distracted by the troubles around us.

During our struggles, God is our refuge IF we allow Him to comfort and guide us.

**Psalm 9:9-10:**



*The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O Lord, do not abandon those who search for you.*

- Can you think of a time where you were in trouble and felt alone?
- Maybe you were upset that your parents were fighting.
- Maybe you were struggling in school, or you did something that you were too afraid to tell anyone.



*(Share the story or share a story you might have that goes along with this lesson)*

When Kate first moved to Delaware, she was 12 years old starting at a new school.

Kate struggled to make new friends and connecting with others.

She didn't want to tell her parents that she wasn't making any new friends because she didn't want them to know she was unhappy about the move.

Kate would pray every night that God would send her a friend.

Time went by, and she still wasn't making any friends at the new school.

She started not liking school altogether and her grades started to slip.

When Kate's parents noticed her grades slipping, they were able to see her unhappiness in her new school.

Both her parents spoke to her principal at the school and helped come up with a game plan to get Kate connecting with other kids.

Their game plan was to put her into an art club because Kate really loved art.

At the age of 12, Kate didn't see how God was orchestrating things for her, but years later she can see that God heard her prayers. He was using her parents and the school to help Kate make friends and to be happier overall.



**Psalm 62:8:**

*O, my people, trust in him always. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge.*

When you are struggling, is your natural response to stop pray and pour your heart out to God?

It isn't a natural response for many people.

Often our natural response is to be scared, angry, upset, annoyed, hurt, etc.



Do you know whose natural response was to stop pray and pour out his heart to God in times of trouble?

It is David, the same person we believe wrote **Psalm 62:8** that we just read.

David had many struggles in his life.

At one point David was hiding in the wilderness away from King Saul who was trying to kill him.

David trusted God, and God protected him.

**Back to the story...**

When Kate was struggling to find friends, she was so distracted by her troubles that she allowed it to affect her daily life.

It made her grades drop, and it made her very scared to go to school.

Even though she was praying to God for a friend, she was not trusting Him.

When we are in trouble and we are distracted by our troubles, how do we trust God and allow Him to be our shelter and refuge?

We can look at David's story and see that not only does David stay in the wilderness, but he stays calm and listens to God for all his directions.

Listening to God is a big part of trusting Him.

When we are in trouble, it is so easy to just act out and express our emotions, but God wants us to pour our hearts out and give Him our worries and our doubts.

Kate struggled to tell anyone how she was feeling, but once her parents knew she wasn't doing well in school and felt lonely, they were able to help her.

If we do not give our struggles over to God, we aren't allowing Him to work on our struggles.

In **2 Corinthians 1:3-6** Paul writes to the church of Corinth.

There has been division in their church.

Paul tells the church that God is a source of comfort in times of trouble.

He explains that when we are comforted by God, we can comfort others.

Like David, Paul also struggled.

Paul is a great example of someone who found comfort in God in times of trouble.

When he learned how to be comforted by God, he was able to comfort others.

In this passage of Scripture, he tries to comfort the church of Corinth.

Paul struggled with his persecution for being a follower of Christ.

At one point, he was even in jail.

Even when he was in jail, he was still writing letters to churches helping them.

Paul is one of the greatest leaders of the early church and a great role model for a believer.



*LET'S RECAP SOME THINGS WE NEED TO DO.*

- **One**, we need not allow worldly distractions to cause us to avoid seeking God as our refuge in times of trouble.
- **Two**, we need to give our worries over to God.
- **Three**, we need to allow God to be our Comforter.
- **Lastly**, we need to learn to comfort others.

Do not feel stressed if you aren't prepared to do all these things.

At the end of the day, we need to seek God in times of trouble.

As we grow, God will help us to mature, and one day we will be able to help comfort others.

Now that Kate's an adult and gone through that time in her life of not having friends and struggling in school.

Kate is now able to use this as a testimony to help others who are struggling.

It also helps her to be able to understand and relate to others who are struggling.

This is how she can use her testimony to comfort others.

Let's take some time to think about something we are struggling with right now in our lives.

While we are in a small group, we are going to discuss some questions and spend some time seeking God and giving our worries over to him.

---

## GROUP QUESTIONS STRUGGELS (W1)

---

1. When we were playing our game in the beginning, what is something that distracted you? Would it have been easier to play if you were not distracted?
2. Do you think that, in times of trouble, worrying can be a distraction? If yes, why?
3. What is something you are worried about? (If not everyone is comfortable sharing, let them know it's okay)
4. How can you give your worries over to God?  
Example: Prayer, visualize handing your worry to him
5. What does it mean to trust in God?
6. Do you find it easy or difficult to trust God?
7. When we are struggling, who can help us?  
Example: Parents and Pastor
8. What did Paul and David do to help them during their times of struggle?
9. Does anyone have a story about when they saw God working during a time of trouble? (be prepared with an example)
10. How can hearing testimonies help us in our times of trouble?

---

# WEEK 02

## GOD IS FAITHFUL IN THE MIDST OF OUR STRUGGELS

---



**Scriptures:** Matthew 22:37-39; Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 34:10



When life is a struggle, surrender to God. Although the situation may or may not get better, God will be faithful to show up.

**icebreaker**

### In-Person and Online Game (supplies and prep):

- Be prepared with 10 Never Have I ever questions that all your students will have done.
- Here is a list of examples, but you will want to adjust the questions to pertain to your group of students:
  - o Never have I ever attended church.
  - o Never have I ever been to youth Group
  - o Never have I ever drank water.
  - o Never have I ever watched TV.
  - o Never have I ever sat in a car.
  - o Never have I ever wore shoes.
  - o Never have I ever ate food.
  - o Never have I ever got a haircut.
  - o Never have I ever closed a door.

### In-Person and Online Game (how to play):

- Have all your students hold up all 10 fingers.
- Tell them the person with the most fingers left at the end of the game wins.
- The goal is to have everyone at the end of the game have no fingers standing up.
- One rule for this game is that nobody can lie or talk. You don't want them to talk during the game because they might start questioning your questions.
- In the small chance that someone did not do something and does have a finger left, quickly come up with a last-minute Never Have I Ever that you're sure will eliminate everyone still in the game.
- In this game you want everyone to lose.

### Game Twist:

- You can arrange the game so that one group will win, and one group will not.
- For example, if you have all the girls win and the boys lose, or all the high schoolers lose and all the middle schoolers win.
- You want to make sure it is obvious that you are letting one group win over the other group.



Probably by now, you all figured out that our game was rigged.

*I arranged it so that everyone would lose.*

Often when we play games, either a board game or a video game, the goal of the game is to win.

It feels good to win a game and usually feels lousy when we don't win.

In this game, we all lost, so it wasn't as bad.

Life isn't a board game or a video game, but we can learn a lot about who we are when we win or lose a game.

We will talk more about this throughout our lesson.



**Matthew 22:37-39:**

*Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Life is full of struggles.

When we are in a struggle, we often blame God.

We struggle to love ourselves—let alone love others around us.

But Jesus tells us in Matthew that we are to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Being a follower of Christ does not promise an easy life.

It doesn't promise that there won't be struggles, but it does promise that God will be there for you and that He will take care of us.

When we love God and have a relationship with Him, it's easier to cast our burdens onto Him and allow Him to fight our battles for us.



Why is it important to love our neighbor?

When God fills us up with all the strength, joy, peace, security, and love, we need to pour it out to others around us.

Allow God to pour His goodness into your life so that the overflow will land on those around you.

Now back to the board games and video games, how do you react when you lose a game?

Do you get visually upset and act like a sore loser, or do you lose gracefully and congratulate the winner?

There are many ways we can react to losing.

In the same way, there are many ways we can react when we are in the middle of a struggle.



**Proverbs 3:5-6:**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*

What does it mean to trust in the Lord with all your heart? It means to trust Him—not anyone else—with our lives.

Often, we rely on others for understanding and answers, but God wants us to come to Him directly for council.

Most likely the hardest part of this verse to grasp is the “do not depend on your own understanding.”

How often, while we are in the midst of the struggle, can we not see anything but that struggle?

It's hard to see through the struggle to how God is working.

God isn't asking us to put a brave face on when we are in a time of struggle, but He does want us to have a good attitude.

That attitude comes from trusting the Lord, even when we don't understand.

There are many things in our lives that we will not understand as they are happening.

Some we may never understand.

But sometimes God reveals His plan and how He is working through our struggle in His time.

There are many stories in the Bible of people who struggled.

During their struggle, they couldn't see what God's plan was, but they didn't give up trusting and relying on Him.

One of the best examples of this is Hannah's Story in **1 Samuel**.

Hannah was barren, and she could not have children.

If you want to know someone who is desperate and struggling to understand God's plan, speak to someone who is struggling with infertility.

In the midst of her struggle, Hannah didn't give up.

She continued to go to God and pray for a child.

She even told God that if He would heal her and give her a child, she would raise her child in the Lord and give him back to Him.

At one point, Hannah was praying and weeping so much that she was thought to be drunk.

While Hannah was praying and crying out to the Lord, she didn't know God's plan.

Throughout her struggle, she was trusting God and not leaning on her own understanding.

There is another woman in Hannah's story whose name is Peninnah. Peninah was also married to Hannah's husband, and she already had children with him.

Peninah would taunt and make fun of Hannah for not having children.

Peninnah had a bad attitude.

She was blessed, but instead of being gracious and kind, she was mean.

Hannah, on the other hand, had a great attitude.

Even though she hadn't been blessed with a child, she reached out to God and trusted Him.

If you know Hannah's story, you probably know that God did heal her and allowed her to have a son whose name was Samuel.

Samuel became a prophet of the Lord.

In this story, Peninnah is a sore winner.

Often, when playing games, you might hear people say, "Don't be a sore loser."



Did you know that people can also be sore winners?

It's not fun playing a game with someone who wins and acts boastful and arrogant about it.

It makes you feel like you do not want to play the game with that person again.

Win or lose, when you are in the midst of struggle and don't understand or you are on the other end of the struggle, remember to have a Godly attitude and be gracious.

God will use our struggles to teach us to trust Him.

Imagine if you spend the time during your struggle focused only on the struggle and not focused on God and seeking his guidance, you will most likely build up anger and a poor attitude towards life.

But if you focus on God and allow Him to work through your struggles, you will learn to rely on God and seek His guidance.

This will build a godly character and a strong faith.

It's kind of like when you are learning to play a new game.

At first, you're going to struggle and make mistakes, but the more you play the better you get, right?

But what if you gave up in the beginning and had a bad attitude?

You would never have built up that skill that would make you a better player.



**Psalm 34:10:**

*Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.*

Most of Psalms is believed to have been written by David.

David, who was a shepherd, knew all too well about lions.

He was even known to have killed a lion.

David lived out in the fields and would have observed the lives of lions.

David must have observed young strong lions going hungry at some point in his life.



Do you know the Bible doesn't tell us that as believers we would struggle less because we are Christians?

As believers, it is more likely that we will struggle more.

But there's a difference between being a believer who struggles and a non-believer who is struggling with the same thing.

Believers have prayer and relationship with God, who can get us through our struggles and use our struggles to help us to grow.  
Non-believers do not.

If you go through struggle and trust in the Lord, you will learn from your struggle because God will use it.

But if you struggle and do not trust in the Lord, the Devil will try to use your struggle as a reason to not trust.

In the previous verse, we read that we are to not lean on our own understanding.

If the animals like lions and birds can trust God to take care of them, then why can't we also trust God to take care of us and get us through times of struggle.



In our small group time, we will discuss more about what Hannah went through.

We will also discuss what we can do when we are struggling with something we do not understand ourselves.

---

## QUESTIONS STRUGGELS (W2)

---

1. What was going through your mind when we were playing the game?
2. What is your favorite Board Game? What is your Favorite Video Game?  
What is your Favorite Sport to play?
3. When you first started doing one of your favorite activities, were you good at it? What did you do to get better at it?
4. What do you think is worse: being a sore loser or a sore winner? Why?
5. How do you think Hannah was feeling when Peninnah was taunting her for not having a child?
6. We know through scripture how Hannah reacted in the midst of her struggle, but how do you think she felt when God answered her prayers?
7. What are some things that Hannah might have learned in her time of struggle that we also can learn in our times of struggle? Examples: waiting on God's time, strong prayer life
8. What are some things that we are struggling with that we do not have an answer for? Examples: Covid, Death, sickness
9. During this time of struggle, what are some emotions or questions that come up?  
Examples: Fear, worry, doubt. Anger
10. What can we do to help ourselves and others while they are struggling?  
Examples: Prayer, counseling, being a friend, listening to them.

---

# WEEK 03

## GOD TURNS OUR STRUGGLES INTO VICTORY

---



### Scriptures:

Quick overview of the struggles Joseph faced (Genesis 37-50)



When life doesn't turn out as expected, continue to be faithful because God is always doing something in and around you.

**icebreaker**

**IN-PERSON OPENING GAME: Adjective Scribble-ish**

**In-person Game (supplies):**

- Paper and Pencils

**In-person Game (prep and set-up):**

- Split up the group into teams of 5 or 6, depending on the size of your group. It is okay to have odd numbers in teams.
- Each team will need pencils for each player and a piece of paper. The paper can be small like a sticky note or notecard.
- Have the team sit in a circle.
- Call one person from each team to come up and get the secret Adjective.

### **In-person Game (how to play):**

- The team member with the secret Adjective will go back to their team.
- They will not tell anyone what the Adjective is and instead, will draw what it is. (No words allowed)
- Then they will pass their picture to the next player and that player will write down what they think the picture is.
- Then they will pass it to the 3rd person who will draw what Adjective was written down by the second player.
- It will continue to the last person, who will either get a word or a drawing.
- If they get a drawing, they need to write down what they think it is.
- If they get a word, they need to draw it.
- At the end of the round, the team member who had the secret Adjective will tell their team what the secret Adjective is.
- The team can look over the pictures and words and see how well they were able to figure it out.
- You can play multiple rounds of this game-changing up the secret Adjective and who goes first depending on how much time you have.
- Examples of Secret Adjectives:
  - Healthy
  - Loud
  - Happy
  - Macho
  - Funny
  - You can find more examples online.

### **ONLINE OPENING GAME: Adjective Gif Scramble**

#### **Online Game (supplies):**

- Ability to text or message one or more youth member

#### **Online Game (prep and set-up):**

- Get permission from a parent or guardian to text one youth member privately from the rest of the group on their phone or parents' phone.

#### **Online Game (how to play):**

- Text this youth member an adjective. (see list of adjectives in the in-person version)

- Then they will post a gif onto the chat area of the app or site you are using to meet.
- Then the first person to guess what the Adjective is by the gif wins.
- You can play multiple rounds of this. It's more fun if you have permission to message more than one youth, so they can all take a turn choosing the gif for the adjective.

### LESSON:



That game can get totally twisted around when you aren't in on the secret adjective, but isn't funny to see what everyone was guessing?

In the end, it's always interesting to see how the adjective got all turned around.

You know Joseph's story from the Bible is a long journey of twists and turns.

At every turn, Joseph is up against a new challenge, but he perseveres in times of trouble because he relies on God.



**Genesis 37-50** tells the story of Joseph his brothers and the very twisted journey that he goes on.

Joseph was the son of Jacob.

He was his Dad's youngest son and his favorite.

Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful coat.

Joseph's brothers were envious of their father's affection for Joseph, and they hated him.

Joseph's brother's hatred grew even worse when Joseph had two dreams.

In one dream, Joseph and his brothers were out in a field and his bundle of grain stood up.

His brother's bundles of grain bowed down before his bundle.

In the second dream the sun, moon, and stars bowed to Joseph.

Imagine how the brothers might have been feeling.

Not only does their father already favor Joseph, but based on the dreams, it seems God favors him, too.

God does love Joseph very much and has huge plans for his life because Joseph has a good heart.

Both dreams were prophecies of what God planned for Joseph's life.

Not only was Joseph the youngest but he was also not a royal.

It seems far-fetched for him to be in any role of leadership.

But that is how God works.

He often uses the underdog.

Joseph's brothers plotted to kill him, but they were worried about how their father would react.

Instead, they sold him into slavery and made it look like he was eaten by a wild animal.

Spoiler alert: This is just one of many struggles Joseph faces.

Slavery is pretty much the opposite of being a leader.

It's hard not to consider what Joseph might have first thought when he was sold.

This is the boy who was to be a leader.

When Joseph got to Egypt, he was sold to Potiphar, who was an officer of the Pharaoh.

Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph and that everything he did was successful.

Potiphar made him a personal attendant in charge of his home.

Joseph's brothers didn't know what was going on with him in Egypt, but I am pretty sure they weren't expecting Joseph to be given any position of power.



Has there been any time in your life where you felt like the underdog?

Like everyone was rooting for you to lose.

It surely does not feel good to be considered the underdog.

Be ready. Joseph's story has a plot twist.

While Joseph was attending to Potiphar's home, Potiphar's wife took an interest in Joseph.

She accused Joseph of being inappropriate with her, and Joseph was sent to jail.

Poor Joseph.

It surely seems that he's bound to stay the underdog, but God has bigger plans for Joseph's life.

While in jail, Joseph became close to the guard and the guard trusted him and placed him in charge of the whole jail.

No matter what happened to Joseph, God was at his side changing things and working on his behalf.

When we are struggling with something, we can't always see how God is working on our behalf.

This is where it takes faith and trust in God to allow Him to work on our behalf and change our struggles into victories.

During Joseph's story, Joseph couldn't see how God was working, but you can see how Joseph trusted in Him.

While Joseph was in prison, he interpreted two dreams: one for the Pharaoh's cupbearer and the other was his baker.

The cupbearer was later released from jail and one day the Pharaoh had a dream.

The cupbearer remembered Joseph and told the Pharaoh that he could interpret dreams.

The Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph interpreted the Pharaoh's dream.

The Pharaoh was very pleased, and Joseph was put in charge over Pharaoh's entire court,

Only, the Pharaoh was above him.

Joseph ruled all over Egypt, and the Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name and a wife.

Under Joseph's care and God's guidance, the land is very fruitful.

Joseph had enough to store up grain and supplies.

After seven years, there was a famine in Egypt.

Joseph, who had listened to God, was able to help the Egyptian people by feeding them with the food that had been stored up.

Joseph went from a slave to being second in command over all of Egypt.

We have a great opportunity to read about Joseph's story after it all happened.

Since we can read his story, we can more easily understand how God was working out each struggle of Joseph's life so he could be who God called him to be.

There's more to Joseph's story.

You might be wondering what happened to Joseph's brothers.

Well, Joseph's brothers ended up having a really difficult time back at home.

They struggled with famine and almost starved.

Their father had another son, younger than Joseph, named Benjamin.

Joseph's brothers heard about the grain that was being given out in Egypt.

They traveled to Egypt to get food so that they and their families wouldn't starve.

When Joseph's brothers came to Joseph for the grain, they bowed down before Joseph, whom they did not recognize.

But Joseph recognized them.

Joseph imprisoned his brothers but after a few days, he released all but one brother.

He sent the rest back home with bags full of grain.  
He also returns all their money.

Joseph told them if they brought back Benjamin, he would release their brother.

At first, Joseph was a little harsh to his brothers by imprisoning him.

In the end, he ended up being gracious to them by giving them all the grain for free.

I do not know how all of you would have reacted in the same situation as Joseph.

But I can imagine that some of us might have wanted to keep the brothers imprisoned for much longer for what they had done.

Because Joseph had a relationship with God, he knew that even though his brothers didn't make good choices, God was good, and he should be good to them too.

Let's go back to the time when I asked you to think about when you were an underdog.



How did you feel towards the people who were calling you an underdog?

I am sure we have a lot of various feelings.

Maybe some of us would be angry, and maybe some of us would think they are right.

I am sure glad Joseph did not believe his brothers.

Instead, he trusted God that even though he was an underdog, he was capable of great things.

Joseph's brothers did end up returning to Egypt with their youngest brother Benjamin.

Joseph kept his identity a secret at first, but in the end, he told his brothers who he was and embraced them.

He even sent them back home with more grain and the money they brought.

Later Joseph had permission from the Pharaoh to move his whole family to Egypt.

Wow!

What a great journey of twists and turns!

But wait...the journey isn't quite finished yet!

With Joseph's family living in Egypt, he was still in charge of Egypt.

The famine continued to get worse.

Eventually, the storehouses were out of grain.

The people of Egypt went to Joseph for help.

Joseph had them give over their livestock in exchange for food since they were out of money and all the money was in the pharaoh's treasury.

Once the people of Egypt ran out of livestock, they sold land to Joseph.

Everything was given to the pharaoh.

In the end, the people of Egypt became slaves to the pharaoh.

Joseph had the people give  $\frac{1}{5}$  of their seed to the Pharaoh and keep  $\frac{4}{5}$ th for themselves.

The people of Egypt were happy with Joseph and how he took care of them throughout the famine.

We can learn from Joseph's story that we might not always be seeing God at work when we are in the thick of trouble.

But we need to have faith that God is going to work things out for us and that He will make things even better than we can imagine when we trust in Him.

We can also learn that even though we might be considered an Underdog, it doesn't mean that God won't use us.

Joseph's brother counted him out.

But because Joseph trusted God, he overcame all the obstacles put in his path.



In our small groups, we are going to discuss being the underdog.

We can't always see God working in our lives until we get the bigger picture.

---

## QUESTIONS STRUGGELS (W3)

---

1. Can you think of a story from one of your favorite books about an underdog? Examples: Luke from Star Wars, Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief
  - What made these characters underdogs? What did they have to overcome?
2. Would the story be as exciting if it ended before we ever knew what happened to the underdog?
3. When have you ever felt like the underdog? (Do not make anyone answer if they do not feel comfortable sharing)
4. Why do you think God uses underdogs? *Example:* Underdogs can't rely on their own abilities but on God's.
5. How do you think the brothers felt after they saw what Joseph had become?
6. What kind of struggles do we see right now in the world? Examples: Covid, oppression, hunger
7. Can we see God working in any of these areas? Examples: medical workers, new laws, food banks
8. Do you think God causes all the struggles of the world?  
*Example Response from a leader:* No God doesn't, we live in a fallen world where sin and bad choices cause struggles and we can see that happening in Joseph's story by the brothers' choices and the wife of Potiphar, but we have the assurance that God will use our struggles.
9. What can we do in the midst of our struggles? Example: Pray and lean into God

---

# WEEK 04

## THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

---



**Scriptures:** James 1:2-4; Philippians 1:6; Romans 12: 1-2



If we are willing, struggles can shape and mold us to become more like Christ.

**icebreaker**

### Opening Game: Play-Doh Pictionary

#### In-person Game (supplies and prep):

- Make a list of words that you want your youth to mold into clay during the game. Words should be simple and not too hard to mold.
- Example List
  - o Hot Dog
  - o Cat
  - o Basketball
  - o Video Game Controller
  - o Taco
  - o Cross
- Cut the list up into pieces and put them in a cup or a hat.
- Split up your group into teams depending on the size of your group.
- A small group of 20 could have two to three teams.
- Have the teams sit in their groups facing the front of the room.

### **In-person Game (how to play):**

- Each team will have one player to start the game.
- Give that person a container of Play-doh and show them the word they have to mold.
- Without talking or making any gestures, they are to mold their word into clay and their team members are to call out what they think it is.
- The team who guesses first gets a point.
- Then the team chooses another player to go up and mold the word.
- You can play as many rounds as you have time for.
- The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

### **Opening Game: Playdough Pictionary**

#### **Online Game (supplies and prep):**

- Play-Doh (or recipe for salt dough)
  
- Let students and parents know in advance that they are going to be using Play-Doh.
- If you can, mail them the Play-Doh or have parents pick it up.
- You could also send home a recipe to make homemade Play-Doh called "salt dough."
- The recipe for this can be found online and most people already have the ingredients for it in their own home.
- You will also need to be able to send students their secret words privately via text.
- Be sure you have parent or guardian permission to text or message them.
- (If both things are not possible look for the Game Twist)

#### **Online Game (how to play):**

- Text one student in the group the secret word
- Have that student use their dough to mold the secret word on the camera.
- Students can guess what it is via the chat on whatever program or app you are meeting on.
- The first one to guess rights gets a point.
- You can play as many rounds as possible that you have time for.
- The person with the most points wins.

### Online Game (a twist on the game):

If you are not able to get Play-Doh for everyone, you can be the sole person who models words with clay on camera and allows everyone else to guess what you are molding.

### LESSON:



Doesn't playing with Play-Doh bring back memories of kindergarden and primary school?

*Hopefully, all our playdough was soft and malleable.*

*Can you imagine what it would be like if we were trying to mold with dried-out Play-Doh?*

It most likely wouldn't be moldable or would just crumble.



Did you know that God was an artist?

Not only did he create the heavens and the earth, but He also created everything in it.

He created us and knit us together in our mother's womb.

But just being born doesn't mean God is done creating us.

We are one of God's amazing masterpieces and He still has a lot of work to do to make us more and more like the person we are called to be.



#### James 1: 2-4:

*Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.*

*So, let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

Many do not have joy in times of trouble, but we must remember joy and happiness are not the same things.

You can be joyful that your troubles are growing your faith, but you don't have to be happy about it.

Happiness is fleeting, while joy is lasting and comes from the Lord.

The keyword in **James 1:4** is *endurance*.

Endurance is the ability to keep up in a race without getting tired. When a runner first begins running, he doesn't have much endurance.

The more he runs, the stronger he becomes and the more endurance he has.

As young believers, we do not always have the endurance to get through trials and troubles without getting weary.

God allows these trials to help build our endurance.

Do you know how a potter makes a vase?

The first thing he does is cut a piece of clay from a bigger chunk of clay.

He will knead the clay to make it more pliable.

Then he will throw the clay onto a potter's wheel.

If he doesn't knead the clay, it won't be able to move on the wheel, and it will be stiff.

When we get into times of trouble, we often are like that stiff clay.

We don't want to move.

We are stuck in fear and worry.

But God has different plans.

He wants to use this time of trouble to knead us and make us moldable.



**Philippians 1:6:**

*And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*



When we accept Jesus into our lives, that is just the beginning of our journey as believers.

Before we even accepted Jesus, God was already at work in our lives. Even after we accept Jesus, God doesn't stop working. As believers, we partner with God and He continues to work in our lives so we can grow and become stronger in our faith and endurance.



When we are born, we often are very moldable.

As we get older, often life makes us stiff and hard.

We are not able to be molded as we once were.

Many things in our lives cause this.

Just a few examples include our parents' divorce, struggles in school, peer pressure, low self-esteem, and so much more.

After the potter throws the clay on the wheel, he uses water to help shape the clay.

At the same time, he uses his foot to push a pedal that makes the wheel spin.

The water helps keep the clay from drying out and getting too hard to mold.

Jesus is like that water in our lives.

He helps us have softened hearts that are clean and ready to be molded by God.

**Romans 12: 1-2** talks about our bodies being living and holy sacrifices.

We should not be transformed by this world, but let God transform us.

God wants us to allow Him to mold us and transform us to be more like Jesus.

But we have a choice, and we need to open our hearts and allow Him to do the work.

If we allow our hearts to be hardened by this world, we will not be able to be moldable.

It can be scary to give over yourself for the Lord and allow Him to mold you and make you more like Christ.

But when we imagine how much more amazing it is to be pleasing to God and work for His kingdom, it isn't as scary as it once was.

Not only does God want to mold us and shape us to be like Christ, but He also wants us to partner with Him.

God never promises that the life of a believer will be easy, but He does promise to work things out for our Good.

In times of trouble and struggle, we need to look to God for answers and allow these times to shape us.

If a time of struggle feels like too much for you to handle, remember that God can carry you through it.

Once the potter is finished molding his vase, he puts it into an oven to harden.

But he isn't done quite yet.

Once the vase is out of the oven, he paints in it.

Then he puts his mark on the vase so that everyone will know who the artist is.



When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are giving God permission to work in our lives.

The way the artist puts his mark on the bottom of the vase is the same way that we are marked by God as belonging to him as adopted sons and daughters.

This mark we carry means that we belong to the Creator and that makes us the most precious and amazing creations in this universe.



**Isaiah 64:8:**

*But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you our Potter; and we all are the work of your hand.*

This verse clearly explains how God is the Potter, and we are the clay.

In times of trouble, we need to remember that struggles are opportunities for God to mold us and make us more like Jesus.

We also need to remember that it's okay for us to take time to be molded.

Everyone in life will have a different journey and different obstacles to struggle with.

Do not compare yourself to others, but embrace your own path.

Remember that God made you unique and completely different from anyone else.

Even a potter uses different methods and amounts of time to make each vase unique and special.

When you struggle, pray for a soft moldable heart and allow yourself grace to make mistakes.

At the same time, learn from those mistakes.

And when trouble comes, view it as an opportunity to be molded.

Don't let yourself be hardened by the struggles.

Even believers who have been molded can have times of struggle that lead to the opportunity for change.

Our whole life is an opportunity to change and become more Christ-like.

In Japan, when a piece of pottery breaks, they don't throw it away.

Instead, they repair it with gold or silver in a process called *kintsukuroi*.  
(Share a photo of an example of kintsukuroi).

When we are broken due to struggles, we need to also allow God to repair the broken pieces.

God is so gracious that He will repair us to a be better than we were when we got broken.



During small group discussion, we are going to dive a little deeper into what it looks like to have a hard heart and a soft heart.



We also will look at our personal experiences and give ourselves some time to reflect and share what we have learned about our struggles.

---

## QUESTIONS STRUGGELS (W4)

---

1. What is something unique about yourself that you love? Examples: skills, freckles, abilities
2. Why does God make each of us unique, but at the same time wants us to look like Jesus? Example response: Looking and being are two different things. We are to have the same heart as Jesus but be our unique self.
3. How do struggles allow God opportunities to mold us?
4. What are some struggles we are seeing in our church today?
5. What are some struggles we are seeing in our personal lives?
6. What does a hardened heart look like that isn't moldable?
7. What does a soft heart look like that is moldable?
8. Have you ever heard the saying that an artist never truly finishes his artwork? How does that apply to us and how we are God's masterpieces?
9. Is there a time in your life that you went through a struggle that has made you stronger today? (Leaders have an example to share)
10. Is there a struggle in your life that has caused you to harden up? If so, can we pray for you about it?