



TRUST IN TRIALS

Disciples & Early Church • U9#2 1st-3rd Gr. • Mar.23, 2025

Concept

God is our strength and ever-present help.

Goal

Students will learn that because of God’s love and great power it is worth it to tell others about Jesus even though it might cause us problems.

Passage

2 Timothy 3:10-12, 4:6-8, 17-18

Key Verse: "But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death." 2 Timothy 4:17 (NLT)

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p>Learning Activity #1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>4 pictures of Paul’s life w/ text on back</i> • <i>Rubber plastic snake for prop</i> <p>Learning Activity #2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2 clear glass jars</i> • <i>Permanent marker</i> • <i>Table salt, ½ cup</i> • <i>Spoon</i> • <i>Hard-boiled egg</i> <p>Optional Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptop to play YouTube video about Paul 	<p>Activity Stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing cards, 3 decks/room • Cardstock, 2 half sheets/student • 4 copies of Bible promise sheets • Crayons, markers

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information (for the teacher)

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When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, He was imprisoned awaiting his execution. He recalled the beginning of his ministry (2 Tim 1:11) and previous persecutions (1:15-18, 3:10-12). Paul knew his life would soon be over (2 Tim. 4:6-8). For Paul, death was victory (Phil. 1:20-25). With such a perspective, Paul exhorted Timothy to face difficulties in his ministry with confidence in God's purpose and power (2 Tim 1:6-9).

Although other elements besides his suffering could be included in a time-line of Paul's life, we deliberately focus in this lesson on trials. Because Christians often have a horizontal perspective, we falsely think that everything should go well for us if we believe in Christ; we despair over trials in our lives. We don't like suffering and pain and wish to avoid it as much as possible. Paul's message is that Christians should expect suffering in this life. He often talked about his sufferings (2 Cor 11:23-27). From early in his own ministry, Paul taught his disciples that trials are a part of the Christian life. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of heaven" (Acts 14:22). "All who desire to live godly will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12).

"The reason some of us are such poor specimens of Christianity is because we have no Almighty Christ. We have Christian attributes and experiences, but there is no abandonment to Jesus Christ. When we get into difficult circumstances, we impoverish His ministry by saying—'Of course He cannot do anything,' and we struggle down to the deeps and try to get the water for ourselves. Beware of the satisfaction of sinking back and saying—'It can't be done'; you know it can be done if you look to Jesus. The well of your incompleteness is deep, but make the effort and look away to Him." [1]

Therefore, rather than sheltering children from the sufferings that result from the walk of faith, we must acquaint them with the sufferings of Christ and other faithful Christians. Such familiarity with the suffering of God's people and God's faithfulness in the midst of suffering results in confidence in God's purpose and strength during trials. Because Jesus has overcome the world, we can experience His peace—especially in the midst of inevitable trials (John 16:33). We want children to know that in difficulties, God's purpose and strength are manifested in different ways to strengthen their faith in Him. As people see God working in the midst of difficulties, we are given opportunities to share the gospel with others. Thus, in difficulties, our faith in the sovereign, loving, personal God is strengthened and others come to Christ.

[1] Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest, copyright renewed ©1963, by Oswald Chambers Publications Association, Ltd., "Impoverished Ministry of Jesus," February 27th.

Set Up

Instructions: Fill both jars half full of water. Put all of the salt in one jar and stir to dissolve. With a piece of masking tape or the permanent marker, mark the jar with the salt. Draw a face on the hard-boiled egg with permanent marker (so it won't wash away during the demonstration). Put the jars of water and the hard-boiled egg together for the demonstration.

Please Note: Make sure you mark the salt-water jar and leave it for the next class.

Activity Stations:

- **Bible Promise Cards**
 - **Instructions:** This week the students will illustrate promises about God's strength and power.
- **Game – Slap Jack**
 - **Instructions:** Divide students into groups of 4 and give each group a deck of cards. Deal all the cards evenly to all students. Put the cards in a pile face down in front of each player. One player will be the "caller." The "caller" will give the signal, e.g., turn, okay, etc., for all to turn the top card on their piles face up. The first player to slap a turned up jack wins all the face-up cards on the table. Continue playing until one person has all the cards. This game illustrates that we are willing to risk being hit by others in order to win the game.

How many of you played slap jack when you came in? Did anyone get their hand hit? Why were you willing to risk getting your hand hit when you played?

Today we are going to look at Paul's life and the suffering he endured. Paul wrote most of the books in the New Testament. Paul was willing to suffer because he believed in God's goodness, strength and faithfulness through all circumstances.

We're going to pantomime some situations in Paul's life so we can learn about him.

Pantomime of Paul's trials presented by teachers and students

Instructions: Form small groups. Assign passages for pictures #2, #3 and #4 to each group. The groups will spend 10 minutes with a teacher reading the passage and planning how to pantomime it for the rest of the class. When everyone is ready, a teacher will put the picture of Paul's conversion (#1) on the board (or where the kids can see it) and quickly read the story on the back of the black and white picture as another teacher pantomimes. As you continue through the passages, have the children pantomime their story as the teacher of their group reads it. After each group finishes, a child will take the corresponding picture from which the teacher read and place it on the marker trough of the white board. Teachers can pantomime one of the scenes if needed.

Incorporation Lg. Group

Introduction Lg. Group

Transition

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

Learning Activity#1 Continued

Transition

Lesson Lg. Group

Picture #1 – Acts 9:3-9 (conversion)

Picture #2 – Acts 16:19-26 (Philippian imprisonment)

Picture #3 – Acts 27:6-26 (shipwreck)

Picture #4 – Acts 28:1-6 (bitten by snake, snake prop)

Let's read what Paul said about all these trials.

After hearing about all Paul's trials, do you wonder how Paul kept going or even why he would want to? His life would have been a lot easier if he decided to live it quietly believing in Jesus. Paul's purpose in life was to tell others about Jesus. He knew he had come to the end of this life on earth and wanted to make sure that Timothy knew it was worth it to tell others about Jesus even though it might cause him problems.

The one thing Paul wanted to do most was to teach others the Good News about Jesus. Who can tell me what the Good News is? (Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our sins. Our worst sin is that we love ourselves more than God. When we admit we sin and ask for the forgiveness Jesus paid for, we are totally forgiven and become God's child.) Some people didn't want to hear this message. Why do you think some people don't want to hear the Good News? (They are proud – don't believe they need forgiveness, don't believe in God, etc.)

Paul had lots of enemies because there were many people who didn't want to hear the Good News. But he never quit. Because his message was God's truth, he never changed it to make people feel good about themselves or so they would like him. He was willing to be beaten, stoned and called names because he wanted everyone to have the opportunity to hear the truth. Nothing, not the rejection, the stoning, the imprisonment, the bad storm at sea or the snake, stopped him from telling people the good news about Jesus.

Let's read 2 Timothy 3:10-12. What do you think Paul was trying to communicate to Timothy in these three verses?

Paul can say this because it is the way he lived. His life is an example to all of us. His confidence in God made him willing to suffer to accomplish his goal to teach others about Christ. In verse 11, Paul says that the Lord rescued him. Listen as I read what one author says. "Although Paul and Silas had been thrown into prison for helping the poor girl, God had not forgotten them. He was taking care of them, just as He had taken care of Peter in prison in Jerusalem. His almighty power is far greater than any jailer's. No prison door in the world can remain closed against it."¹ With each difficult situation, Paul believed in God's love and great power; and, his faith was strengthened.

¹ Catherine Vos, The Child's Story Bible, New Testament, 1936, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., pp.174, 175.

Lesson Continued

Our key verse today is, "But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death" (2 Timothy 4:17). We can see from his life that he did not give up when troubles came. As Paul acted on his belief, God strengthened him.. Not only did he not give up, but he was more determined with each trial to continue to do God's work. And Paul wanted Timothy to have this same trust in God so he would experience God's strengthening and not give up when trials came.

As Paul wrote this letter, he was in jail again, but this time it was pretty certain that the Romans were going to kill him. Let's read 2 Timothy 4:6-7. A couple of months ago, we talked about how our lives are compared to a race. Paul is saying he knows the race is about over for him. He has stayed in the race up to the end. He has continued to walk with God, do God's work and believe in God's purpose and strength.

If you were Paul, you might think that God had deserted you. Let's read 2 Timothy 4:18 to see what Paul thinks. Paul knew God and knew He was still with him.

Let's repeat our key verse. It reminds us to have confidence in God and His strength all the time. Who remembers some of the ways God rescued Paul? (Rescued from those who wanted to kill him; kept him alive when he was stoned; sent an earthquake to release him from prison; chains dropped off Paul's arms; saved from drowning when the ship was in the great storm.) Throughout Paul's life, God proved that He was with Paul and powerful enough to walk with him through all difficulties. As Paul encountered troubles in his work for God, he believed in God's strength and love time and again. He always believed that God was with him. Therefore, his faith was strengthened to the point that it was unshakable. And now Paul knew he was going to die. He had fought the good fight and kept the faith. He knew he was going to be with Jesus and that Jesus would say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Transition

God was with Paul always whether He saved him from the difficulties or held him up through them. I'm going to do an object lesson to help us remember that God will lift us up in our troubles.

Learning Activity# 2 Lg. Group

Object Lesson - God Lifts Us Up [1]

Please Note: Make sure you mark the salt-water jar and leave it for the next class.

[1] Adapted from "Lift Your Hearts," Copyright © Susan L. Lingo, Published in "Show Me" Devotions for Leaders to Teach Kids by Group Publishing, Inc.

Learning Activity# 2 Continued

(Hold the hard-boiled egg so the kids can see the face.) This egg represents Paul. This jar of water represents Paul's life with the beatings, stoning, times in prison, the shipwreck and the snake. (Put the egg in the plain water.) When I put "Paul" in the water, he sinks to the bottom with all the troubles he has. But Paul never gave up; he kept telling people about Jesus, believing that God was with him, would lift him up and give him what he needed. And God was always with Him. (Put the egg in the salt water.) He said, "But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death" (2 Timothy 4:17). As this egg is lifted to the top of the water, God lifted Paul. God helped Paul escape from those who wanted to kill him. He sent an earthquake to open a prison door. Chains dropped off Paul's arms. God saved Paul from drowning when the ship wrecked in the great storm. All the time during Paul's life, God was with Paul. Paul knew that He was more powerful than any trial or difficulty. God didn't take the problems away, but He carried Paul through them. Paul always believed that God was with him.

Transition

Let's get into small groups and talk about difficulties in our lives and how God can lift us up and help us.

Learning Activity# 3 Sm. Groups

- What is the key verse? What does it mean? Do you think Paul always saw or felt God's strengthening when he was going through troubles?
- Do you think Paul was ever discouraged or confused or wondered if God was really with him?
- Why do you think he continued to do the very things that caused people to reject, arrest or hurt him? (The idea here is to direct the students to see that Paul believed God, he honestly wrestled through his questions with God, loved others more than he loved himself and his comfort. He knew that he would be with Jesus for eternity so he could suffer on this earth for a short while in order for others to have the opportunity to know Jesus.)
- Now what about us? Everyone will have troubles, even people who live for Jesus. What do you think when you have difficulties? Do you think, "Why me?" or "It's not fair!" or "God is angry with or punishing me."
- When you worry about what will happen do you think about God and how He has been with you in the past? Does it occur to you that He might want to help you?
- Do you look for ways that God might want to use your situation to show others that He is a powerful God?
- Can you think of a time you asked God to help you when you just didn't know what to do and God worked in a way that you couldn't believe?
(Teachers note: this would be a good time to share an appropriate personal story. Spend some time allowing students to share their experiences.)

**Learning
Activity#3
Sm. Groups**

**Optional
Activity**

Missions Prayer: Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving Campaign.

Let's pray now that God will help us remember that, "But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death" (2 Timothy 4:17). And let's also pray that He will give us opportunities to tell other people the good news about His amazing love.

Saddleback Kids Video about Paul's Ministry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIXFy3zjJh4>