

SERIES BIG IDEA

During the toughest, most tragic moments of our lives, God is with us, God loves us, and God wants to use our most trying struggles to develop a living faith within us that can withstand any circumstance.

BIG IDEA

Pain can be a helpful reminder that God is not only our Lord, but He is also our loving Father.

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 3:7–10, Exodus 13:17–18, Matthew 27:46

ICE BREAKER

Would you rather have the ability to avoid all pain for yourself or to be able to heal others' pain? Why?

OPENING THOUGHT

Many Christian thinkers have characterized our spiritual journey in three phases or stages. They give a variety of names to these stages, but for this series, we've listed them below. Which stage do you identify with most right now in your life?

Confident Faith—Everything seems to work like we'd hoped: Prayer makes a difference, our obedience to God results in blessings, and we are filled with joy and gratitude. This stage can last a long time and can include a sense of euphoria or 'rightness' about life and our relationship with God.

Challenged Faith—Things that worked in the Confident stage seem to have stopped working: Prayer seems unanswered, our obedience doesn't get us anywhere, and doubts grow. This stage can feel like nothing is happening like we are stagnant, or God is far from us. Though it is difficult to keep going, this is always a stage on our faith cycle - not the final destination.

Living Faith—Here we have a deep abiding faith that remains strong in most situations: Prayer is essential to a relationship with God, obedience is joyful, doubts come and go, but can't shake us. This stage roots us deeply into the practices that ground us to God, helping us to feel gratitude for the stages of both Confident and Challenged Faith that we've encountered.

BIBLE DISCUSSION

1. Read Exodus 3:7-10. In this part of the book of Exodus, the Israelites respond to their slavery by crying out to God, and God responds by sending Moses to deliver them. As we read this passage, what do we learn about God?
2. Read Exodus 13:17–18. When God led the Israelites down an unexpected road toward the Red Sea, what thoughts might have been going through their minds?

LIFE APPLICATION

3. When we are in the process of being rescued, it definitely can feel like our faith is being challenged. God may be at work, but we still find ourselves feeling like prayer isn't changing things. We wonder if God is listening or even cares. We may even begin to doubt God's existence or at least his goodness because we've ended up in a place that doesn't feel like a "rescue." What circumstances in your life are challenging your faith right now?
4. When our faith is challenged, we have the choice to complain or cry out to God. What is the difference between "complaining" and "crying out to God"? What would influence you to cry out to God instead of complaining during challenging times?
5. Read Matthew 27:46. Even Jesus cried out to God in his greatest time of need, and God didn't flick his wrist and take away Jesus' pain. What could this tell us about how God might be at work amid our cries for help?
6. How can we be a source of strength and encouragement to one another this week?