

STRONGER

WEEK 2

BIG IDEA

When life doesn't make sense, God can be trusted.

BIBLE

Genesis 37 & 39; I Peter 5v7-11; Psalm 46v1-3

WHAT?

STORY

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a lighthearted or funny story from your life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you were lost or confused, or misunderstood something that should have been obvious.*

STORY

- We all have moments in life that leave us feeling confused, but sometimes those moments aren't very funny.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when life suddenly became difficult, maybe because of a loss, personal failure, or tragedy. Be sure to emphasize how you tried to understand why this was happening to you, but couldn't make sense of it.*
- Have you ever experienced something that was both painful and confusing? Maybe a close friend no longer wanted to hang out with you. Maybe a family member left, or got sick, or hurt you, or passed away. Maybe you had to move or change schools. Maybe you were unfairly accused of something you didn't do.

SOMETIMES LIFE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

- Life isn't always going to make sense. We're going to experience hurt that we didn't expect, and that we can't make sense of.
- Sometimes life is going to be painful. Sometimes we're going to ask questions like, "Why me? Why is this happening? What did I do to deserve this? Where is God?"
- I don't know if you've ever felt like life doesn't make sense. Maybe you have – maybe you're experiencing it right now. Or maybe you haven't – maybe your life has always been pretty good. If you're tempted to tune out because you're not sure this conversation applies to you, I promise you that it does.
 - Even if life has been good to you so far, someday it will get painful and confusing. This conversation can help prepare you for that.
 - Even if life is good for you right now, life is probably a challenge for someone you know. This conversation can help you love and encourage that person in the middle of their hurt.
- To help us make sense of life when it doesn't make sense, I want to tell you the story of a guy named Joseph.

SO WHAT?

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 37

- Joseph is an important person in the history of God's people. He is a descendant of Abraham (who God once made an important promise to) and an ancestor of Jesus. Through Joseph's family lineage, God came into the world in the form of a man. But when Joseph was alive, he had no idea how God was going to use him or his story for so many generations to come.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Genesis 37 together.*
- Talk about a surprising turn of events! Can you imagine how painful, frightening, and confusing that must have been for Joseph?

- While Joseph was sitting in that cold, dark well, I'm guessing he was asking himself some of the same questions we talked about a moment ago: "Why me? Why is this happening? What did I do to deserve this? Where is God?"
- (Sure, Joseph could have had more chill about the dream thing, but being an arrogant brat is not a good reason for your siblings to kidnap you, sell you, and stage your death.) **Joseph's situation was unfair, painful, frightening, and confusing.**
- Fortunately, Joseph's situation was about to get temporarily better . . . but then it was going to get even worse.

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39 ▲

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Genesis 39v1-20 together. Don't read the final three verses yet!*
- Imagine how difficult and confusing this must have been for Joseph. He had already been treated unfairly and abandoned by his family. But now, as he's trying so hard to obey God and do what's right, he's unfairly accused and imprisoned.
- Imagine you're Joseph, waiting for God to do something, yet again.
 - You're thrown into a well and abandoned by your siblings. God doesn't save you.
 - Your parents are grieving because they're sure you're dead. God doesn't fix it.
 - You're sold into slavery, falsely accused of a crime, and thrown into prison. God doesn't intervene.
- I don't know about you, but if I were Joseph, I would be pretty angry by now. I'd be angry at my family, at Potiphar, at Potiphar's wife, at an unjust system of government, and at God. Joseph didn't deserve the hurt he was experiencing. It wasn't fair. It didn't make sense.
- But Joseph didn't say those things. Scripture doesn't tell us what Joseph felt, or thought, or said to God during these painful and confusing moments. But here's what Scripture does tell us . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Genesis 39v21-23 together.*
- In the middle of Joseph's hurt, God was with him. When everyone else had caused him pain, God showed him kindness. When life was so difficult it didn't make sense, God redeemed what had gone wrong and used it for Joseph's good.

- There is more to Joseph's story that we don't have time to cover today, but you should read it! Once again, Joseph's story would get worse before it got better, but it is pretty amazing to see the ways God continues to redeem Joseph's pain. Through Joseph's difficulty, God used Joseph to save countless lives — including the lives of his brothers.
- Through Joseph's story, we learn something important about God and about our lives: life is going to hurt sometimes, but **when life doesn't make sense, God can be trusted.**

SCRIPTURE | 1 Peter 5v7-11

- Joseph isn't the only person in Scripture who had to trust God when life didn't make sense. After Jesus died, rose again, and left earth, Jesus' followers had their faith in God tested in significant ways.
- Because the Roman government was threatened by the message of Jesus and the new Kingdom Jesus came to announce, Jesus' followers were being captured, imprisoned, tortured, and killed. They knew Jesus had called them to share his good news all over the world, but they were being severely punished for it.
- God's people were suffering without reason. They were following Jesus, doing God's will, and spreading Jesus' message of love, redemption, and salvation — so why were they suffering? It didn't make sense.
- But watch what Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, says to his fellow Jesus-followers . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read 1 Peter 5v7-11 together.*
- Do you hear that? Yes you're going to suffer, but Jesus will redeem your hurt. Through your pain, he'll make you stronger. **Trust God with your pain because God cares for you.**

NOW WHAT?

VIDEO | Derek Redmond's Olympic Story

- Derek Redmond was a popular and successful British athlete. He had broken records, won gold medals, and made history. In 1992, he was

avored to win even more medals and break even more records in that year's Barcelona Summer Olympics.

- But watch what happens when, just a few moments into the semi-final, life suddenly gets very difficult.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play *this video* of Derek Redmond's Olympic story.
- That was Derek's hamstring you saw tearing mid-race. After collapsing to the ground, he made the decision to finish his race in spite of his excruciating pain. He stood up and kept going.
- And did you see what happened next? Derek's father rushed to his side. He didn't take his pain away, but he held his son close and walked alongside him to the finish line.
- I don't know when, or how, life is going to get difficult for you. I don't know when, or how, life is going to stop making sense. But when it does, I hope you'll remember this image of Derek and his father.
- In the middle of your pain and confusion, you can trust that . . .
 - God will rush to your side.
 - God will carry you.
 - God will care for you.
 - God will redeem your hurt to make you stronger.
 - God can be trusted.

MUSIC | "Rescue," by Lauren Daigle

- As we listen to this song together, here's what I want you to do:
 - **If you're struggling to trust God right now** because something in your life is painful and doesn't make sense, listen to the words of this song and imagine God is speaking these words to you right now — because I believe God is.
 - **If you're not sure what you think about God at all**, that's okay, but I'd love for you to do the same. Like we talked about last week, Jesus came to redeem what's gone wrong, both in our lives and in our own hearts. Jesus came to rescue us from so much — including our own sin.
 - **If your life is pretty good right now** and you can't really relate to any of the stories of pain you've heard today, that's okay — but I have a challenge for you. As you listen to this song, imagine you are one of the people we talked about today. Then try to listen to this song through their ears. Maybe God wants you to hear this message to prepare you

for something difficult you'll face in the future. Or maybe God wants you to hear it so you can share it with someone you know who's hurting.

- No matter which of those categories you fall into, I hope this song reminds you that, **no matter how much hurt or pain you experience, you are deeply loved by God, who can always be trusted.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play or perform the song, "Rescue," by Lauren Daigle.*

PRAYER

- I know life can be difficult and painful sometimes, but I hope you'll remember that God is with you and working through all of it. No matter what you're going through, remember, **when life doesn't make sense, God can be trusted.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Close in prayer. First, thank and praise God for the fact that God can be trusted, even when life doesn't make sense. Second, offer an opportunity for students to trust God with any pain they're currently experiencing. Third, encourage students to pray for someone else in their life who might be hurting right now.*