



Lesson 1

To Begin ...

What was your very first paid job? Where did you work? What did you do? Did you like it?

Hey Life Group Leaders! Welcome to Week 1 of our new Life Group Video Series, "Built Faith Tough," where we will study through several different Scripture passages dealing with building faith in Jesus! We hope that this series will be uplifting, challenging, and help you find your next step in your journey with God!

You have eight questions based the video lesson this week! Remember that these Leader Notes are to serve as a guide for further and deepening conversation with your Life Group, not as the answers! Enjoy this week's discussion and always remember to ask an extra question such as "Why do you believe that?" to draw out some more conversation from your group members!

To start off this lesson, you have one question that everyone in your group should be able to answer. They are personal, but you should have fun with it! Please make sure that your group feels the safety of sharing within the group. There is no right or wrong answer here. No snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

Discussion Prompts

*1. Biblical scholar, John Stott writes in his book, *The Cross of Christ*, "The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation." Do you agree with Stott's statement? Why or why not?*

This is a question that everyone in your group should be able to answer. Maybe this is statement is something that you believe, made you think, or that you possibly disagreed with. Share your opinions and reasons for them. If you do disagree ... GREAT! Why do you disagree and what is your biblical interpretation to support your opinion? If your view is contrary and you cannot find biblical support, where did you get your view and how does the lack of biblical support change your thinking process? This is great for discussion with a healthy back and forth conversation.

2. *While some trials are the consequences of our actions, other trials are not of our own doing. Yet, we can easily assume, "What did I do wrong?" Why are we so quick to blame ourselves?*

This is another question that everyone in your group should be able to answer and this may reveal a great deal about the people in your group. Some may feel that people in general are just bad, so that is the reason for the blame. Some may feel that they have to earn their favor with God and that they didn't do enough to earn a blessing or they did something wrong and caused the storm. Allow people to share. Remember please, no snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

3. *James 1:2 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds ..."*

- *In your opinion, what is a trial and what is not a trial?*
- *Is there a difference between "happiness" and "joy"? If so, what is the difference?*

Some answers to this question may include that trials are an act of trying, testing, or putting to the proof. A believer who is put to a trial is being tested for resiliency or challenged in a way that can deepen one's faith. Trials may also break someone down who has not sufficiently trained to go through that trial. Either way, a believer's faith is put to a test.

Happiness is great, but we can get happiness from a lot of things, even earthly things. Joy, on the other hand, is a long-lasting state of being. Joy is promised by God and something we should strive towards. Having joy through trial is being confident in the love that God has for you regardless of how the trial ends. It's the long game perspective of life with God; knowing that God may be digging at some deep seeded problem that needs his and your attention for you to overcome and be a better light in his kingdom.

4. *The famous preacher, Charles Spurgeon once said, "Trials teach us what we are; they dig up the soil, and let us see what we are made of." Read James 1:2-4, as well as Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; Philippians 3:10; and Hebrews 10:35-36. According to these verses, how can we benefit from trials?*

James 1:2-4 reads, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Romans 5:3-4 reads, "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 reads, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ."

Philippians 3:10 reads, "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death"

Hebrews 10:35-36 reads, "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

Some answers to this question may include that trials expose us to a type of spiritual training through suffering that may not be particularly fun at the time, but they produce an inner strength that can only be attained by actually facing and completing said trial. One of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is "long suffering," also translated as patience or forbearance, although, long suffering is probably the more accurate English word. Long suffering is literally a gift of the Spirit of God. A realignment of our vision takes our perspective off of the negative aspects of suffering and pain, putting it in better alignment with God's perspective and his intentions for us in this life.

5. Read James 1:14-15. How does James describe the progression from temptation to death? How can temptation be a trial?

James 1:14-15 reads, "but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Some answers may include that the anatomy of sinning is in view here in these verses. Temptation comes from evil desires inside us, not from God. It begins with an evil thought and becomes sin when we dwell on the thought and allow it to become an action. Sin acts like a snowball rolling downhill as it grows more destructive the more we let it have its way. The best time to stop a temptation is before it is too strong or moving too fast to control. We can resist the temptation by turning to God for strength and choosing to obey his word. The key to successfully handling a trial or test is to discipline our desires, purify our motives, and trust God's plan and timetable to meet our needs honorably. This deepens our faith and reassures us of God's love for us.

6. In John 16:33, Jesus promises that we will have trouble. After reading some or all of the following verses, answer the questions below. James 1:5-6; Proverbs 3:5-6; John 14:16; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 5:6-8; and Revelation 2:2-5.

- What help does God offer us during trials?
- How do these verses increase your trust in God?

John 16:33 reads, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

James 1:5-6 reads, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."

Proverbs 3:5-6 reads, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

John 14:16 reads, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—"

1 Corinthians 10:13 reads, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

1 Peter 5:6-8 reads, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Revelation 2:2-5 reads, "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."

Some answers may include that God brings us peace because he's overcome the world; he gives wisdom generously; he bears our burdens when we lean into him and makes our paths straight; he has given us his Holy Spirit who indwells us; he always provides a way out of temptation; he cares for you and will lift you up; he allows us to repent and return to him.

Some answers to the second question may include that when we truly believe these things about God as stated in the Scriptures, we then know that he loves each of us. When we put our belief into action with these areas of our lives, God is always faithful to follow through and strengthen us, bringing his peace and comfort when we are tired. Trusting God's resourcefulness gets us through such extreme times because faith determines the real outcome.

7. Paul writes in Romans 8:28, "All things work for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." How has God leveraged your bad experiences for good purposes?

This is another question that everyone in your group should be able to answer because it's asking for each group member's story. Allow people to share. Remember please, no snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

8. Read James 1:12; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 4:17; and Revelation 7:16-17. According to these verses, how will God reward believers for faithfulness during trials?

James 1:12 reads, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

1 Corinthians 2:9 reads, "However, as it is written: What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived – the things God has prepared for those who love him—"

2 Corinthians 4:17 reads, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

Revelation 7:16-17 reads, "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Some answers may include that a person is blessed with the crown of life; God had prepared such unimaginable, incredible things for the person who truly loves him; we will experience eternal glory; we will never be hungry, thirsty, or suffer from heat, and we will be eternally comforted personally by our Lord God Almighty.