







# CONNECT

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## **CONNECT: UNIT 1 BEGINNINGS**

### **FRIDAY TNT BIBLE STUDIES**

#### **CREATION**

Have students make the symbol (plus sign +) in notebook. Explain the symbol on page 9.

Read Genesis 1:1-5 in the Bible. Every time you hear "It is good.", raise the notebook to show the symbol.

Read summary of Genesis 1:1-5 on page 9. Have the students write down the bold print in their notebook.

Have students do the Warmup on page 10.

Have students do the Closing Ritual on page 12, instead of writing the symbol on their hand, pass the paper of that symbol from page 29. Let students take slips of paper home to spread the word.

#### **FALL**

Have students make the symbol (fig leaf) in notebook. Explain the symbol on page 13.

Read Genesis 3:1-7 in the Bible. Discuss Genesis 3:1-7 on page 15.

Read summary of Genesis 3:1-7 on page 13. Have the students write down the bold print in their notebook.

Have students do the Warmup on page 14.

Have students do the Closing Ritual on page 16, instead of writing the symbol on their hand, pass the paper of that symbol from page 29. Let students take slips of paper home to spread the word.

## SUFFERING

Have students make the symbol (teardrop) in notebook. Explain the symbol on page 17.

Read Genesis 3:16-19 in the Bible. Discuss Genesis 3:16-19 on page 19.

Read summary of Genesis 3:16-19 on page 17. Have the students write down the bold print in their notebook.

Have students do the Warmup on page 18.

Have students do the Closing Ritual on page 20, instead of writing the symbol on their hand, pass the paper of that symbol from page 29. Let students take slips of paper home to spread the word.

## FLOOD

Have students make the symbol (plus sign +) in notebook. Explain the symbol on page 21.

Read Genesis 9:9-17 in the Bible. Discuss Genesis 9:9-17 on page 23.

Read summary of Genesis 9:9-17 on page 21. Have the students write down the bold print in their notebook.

Have students do the Warmup on page 22.

Have students do the Closing Ritual on page 24, instead of writing the symbol on their hand, pass the paper of that symbol from page 29. Let students take slips of paper home to spread the word.

## TOWER OF BABEL

Have students make the symbol (bricks) in notebook. Explain the symbol on page 25.

Read Genesis 11:1-9 in the Bible. Discuss Genesis 11:1-9 on page 27.

Read summary of Genesis 11:1-9 on page 9. Have the students write down the bold print in their notebook.

Have students do the Warmup on page 26.

Have students do the Closing Ritual on page 28, instead of writing the symbol on their hand, pass the paper of that symbol from page 28. Let students take slips of paper home to spread the word.

## REWIND

Discuss "In Your Own Words" on page 30. Recap all sections of Bible Studies and Symbols with #1. Discuss #2, no need for writing.

Have students do the Game Show on page 30.

Have students form a large circle and link hands with the person to the left of you and have everyone do that around the circle one pair joining at a time. Say the prayer for the Closing Ritual on page 32.

# CONNECT



# SUFFERING PREPARE

## Genesis 3:16-19

As depressing as it sounds, everyone will eventually experience suffering. Sometimes suffering is a direct result of sinful actions like violence, greed, and abuse. Other times suffering is much more mysterious. (Think of natural disasters and terminal illness.) Sometimes suffering leaves us only asking, why?

Genesis 3 reminds us that suffering is a result of brokenness in the world. Following the serpent's persuasion, Adam and Eve broke the one rule God had given them. These verses offer an explanation for a significant amount suffering. **People hurt themselves and one another, exploit the earth, and fail to live as God intended. All this accounts for much of the pain we feel as fragile human beings.** There is another important lesson here too. While these consequences are real, we try our best to limit their effects. We reduce the pain of childbirth, kill weeds that would choke our crops, and work for equality between men and women. **Suffering is inevitable. At the same time, in the midst of suffering, God is faithful and will never leave us to suffer alone.**

## Job 30:9-10, 26-28

Job was a wealthy, righteous man with a large family. God was pleased with Job's faithfulness and boasted about him. Satan challenged God, arguing that Job only worshiped God because life was good. God gave Satan permission to take away Job's family, wealth, and health. **Though Job didn't understand his suffering, he cried out to God in the midst of it.**

## Matthew 27:45-50

Though suffering can't be fully understood, God is faithful to us in the midst of it. God does not avoid our suffering. Instead, God enters into it with us. We see this clearly in Matthew's description of Christ on the cross. **Through the cross, we know God has first-hand experience of a broken world.**

## Psalms 22:1-11

We've said again and again that God stays with us in suffering, but sometimes it doesn't feel that way. **Psalms 22 gives voice to those moments when God seems far away, uninvolved, and absent in our time of need.** These are the words Jesus used when he hung on the cross and suffered.



Everyone cries, even Jesus. Our **teardrops** are one important way we express how we are feeling. We usually cry because we feel pain.

Because sin exists, we all experience pain from other people, creation, and the distance between God and us.

## WHAT THE HECK ARE PRETEENS THINKING?

- Much of what preteens have heard about faith has been the happy stuff. As they experience suffering, remind them that their faith tradition can help them deal with and understand suffering.
- It's likely most preteens haven't developed a sophisticated understanding of suffering yet. That's ok! Walk with students in their suffering and help them connect it to our broken world. Remind them God is with them in all kinds of suffering.



# SUFFERING

**SEE**  
(15 MIN.)

## Warm up

**Supplies:** notecards, pens

1. Split students evenly into groups of three or four.
2. Ask each group to come up with as many oxymorons as they can in two minutes (for example, living dead or jumbo shrimp).
3. Gather the notecards from each group and vote on the best five oxymorons. Explain that an oxymoron is like a paradox. Sometimes suffering is like a paradox too. Life *can* come from death, and while suffering itself is not good it *can* yield good things in us.

## Video

**Supplies:** *Connect Unit 1 DVD*

1. Pair up. Have each pair come up with the top five worst things people say to others who are experiencing pain or suffering. Briefly share with the group and vote on the best *worst* answers.
2. Watch the "Suffering" lesson video. (*Connect Unit 1 DVD, chapter 3*)
3. Revisit the top worst things people say to others who are suffering. Discuss these questions as a group.
  - After watching the video, do you want to add or change anything on our list? Why or why not?
  - What is comforting when someone is experiencing pain? What did the characters in the video think?
  - What has God promised us in our suffering?

## LEADER TIP

The word "oxymoron" may lead to giggles, jokes, and calling each other oxymorons. It's okay . . . it's a funny word! Don't worry too much about it unless someone's feelings are getting hurt. It may be easiest for the kids to make a joke or two and then move on.

## LEADER TIP

Be prepared to give an example of something someone has said to you when you were suffering, such as, "Everything is going to be okay," or, "I'm here for you."



# SUFFERING

# EXPLORE

(15 MIN)

## Genesis 3:16-19

**Supplies:** *Connect Bibles, pens or pencils, colored pencils or markers*

Sin is brokenness that often results in suffering—pain, inequality, fear, struggle, and loss. Sin tears at our relationships with each other and with God. We are all broken, but God is there to help us through our suffering. In this Explore section, pre-teens will be asked to notice ways that creation suffers as a result of sin.

1. Read Genesis 3:16-19 aloud.
2. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the summary of the text found on page 10.
3. Follow the instructions to underline the rule Adam and Eve broke, and then draw ways creation suffers as a result.
  - Do you think suffering is always a result of sin? Why or why not?
  - In the story, try to find all of the different relationships that are broken because of sin. How many could you find?

## Job 30:9-10, 26-28

In his suffering, Job cried out to God. He didn't understand why his life had begun to unravel before him. His questioning and despair offer a vivid picture of humanity in pain. The story of Job tells us that God can handle our expression of grief and pain. Kids will see some of their struggles reflected in Job's words.

1. Turn to Job 30 and read verses 9-10 and 26-28.
2. Job is experiencing a lot of emotions in these verses. Draw a circle around any emotion you have also experienced.
  - Which emotion did you most identify with? Why?
  - If you had been friends with Job, how might you have supported him?

## Matthew 27:45-50

Christ on the cross is the ultimate moment we realize that God is not immune to suffering. God joins humanity in our darkest experiences. We are not alone.

1. Ask three volunteers to read: Matthew 27:27-29, Matthew 27:35, and Matthew 27:45-50.
2. Have kids underline verse 46 in their Bibles and draw a teardrop around verses 45-50. In the margin, write "God is not absent from suffering."
  - Sometimes we blame our parents for not understanding what it's like to be a kid. When have you felt like your parents didn't understand you?
  - Do you think God understands what it's like to be human—the good and the bad? Why or why not?
  - What is the hardest thing to imagine God experiencing with you?

## MORE TIME?

## Psalm 22:1-11

Jesus spoke words from this psalm when he was dying on the cross. In his suffering, even Jesus experienced the pain of a broken relationship with God. We know now that God was not truly absent. The psalmist knows this as well. Even in his pain, he knows God will remain faithful.

1. Flip to Psalm 22:1-11 and read the verses aloud.
2. Underline each place where the psalmist expresses hope that God will help.



# SUFFERING

**MAKE**  
(20-30 MIN.)

## Project

**Supplies:** *Suffering Learner Sheets*, scissors, pens or markers

This activity gives kids an opportunity to think about how (and through whom) God is with us in our suffering. Put this thought into action as preteens create a suffering and support chain. Students can create individual chains or combine chains that hang together representing the bond between people and God.

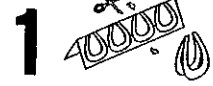
**As kids create their projects, use these questions to help them engage their minds and connect with one another.**

- What are some other words you'd use to describe suffering?
- Where do you see suffering in the world?
- Who do you go to when you're suffering?
- Describe a time when you were suffering and felt comforted. What comforted you?
- Do you think suffering is more or less difficult to deal with alone? Why?
- What do you think the world would look like without suffering?

## Closing Ritual

**Supplies:** blue marker

1. Gather everyone and stand in a circle.
2. Take a marker and draw a teardrop on the hand of the person to the left of you. Then write "God" in the teardrop to remind them that God is with them in suffering.
3. Continue this around the circle.
4. Once everyone has been marked with a teardrop, remind the group, "We can't fully understand suffering, but God's faithfulness can help us bear it."



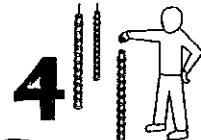
**1** Fold along the dotted lines. Cut out chain links.



**2** Write a moment of pain or suffering on a link. On the other side write who was there to help.



**3** Link your teardrops together to make a chain.



**4** Connect your teardrop chain with others in your group. Display them in your room or church.

## LEADER TIP

Provide an option for the group to turn this into a congregational project. Leave some links for others in the church to complete and add to the chain. Or consider stringing the chains to a dowel to create a display for the rest of the congregation to see!