



WEEK 3

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

STRONGER

THE BIG IDEA

When life goes wrong,
God gives us each other.

THE BIBLE

Romans 5:2-5 and 12:9-21; 1 John 3:18

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

STORY | Talk about something unimportant that you can't stand.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about something you really hate, like pineapple on pizza, or slow walkers, or Bitmojis. Be dramatic!*

QUESTION | What's something you can't stand?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond. Each time, encourage other students to voice their agreement. Rile up the room!*
- Maybe you didn't agree with every annoying thing that was just mentioned, but let's be honest: **it's kind of fun to hate things sometimes, isn't it?**
- When someone calls out something they hate, we often want to join in and pile on. But although it's pretty harmless to gang up on something dumb (like pineapple on pizza), have you ever noticed how easy it is for us to gang up on other people?

DISCUSSION

- **Have you ever been ganged up on? Have you ever ganged up on someone else? Why do you think people tend to gang up on each other?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or groups. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed and share a few thoughts of your own.*

VIDEO | A Clip from "The Mob Song," from *Beauty and the Beast* (2017)

- Sometimes, it's like we're just waiting for someone to make a mistake so we can gang up on them.
- When one person is angry, scared, or mean enough, it doesn't take much for their negative emotions to spread to others. Pretty soon, an entire group of people will often join in, united by their shared anger or hatred. Psychologists use the term "mob mentality" to explain this phenomenon, which makes me think of this clip . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play a clip of "The Mob Song" from *Beauty and the Beast*. If you'd like to use the 2017 movie, you'll have trouble finding full-length videos online, so we recommend creating a brief video of your own by playing the movie on your laptop and creating a screen recording of the scene. We suggest clipping the movie from 1:36:15 ("This is a threat to our very existence!") through 1:37:10 ("It's time to follow me!").*
- You've probably never joined an angry mob with pitchforks and torches, but I'm guessing you've seen a group of people get together and gang up on someone before.

WE'RE DESIGNED TO GATHER TOGETHER

- Don't get me wrong — sometimes people need to be called out, especially when they are guilty of harming others in some way. In those cases, a public call-out is an attempt to hold that person accountable for their actions.
- But the *glee* so many of us get from ganging up on other people (especially when they've already fallen or been knocked down) might show us something important about ourselves.
- God has designed us to thrive in relationships with each other, but **instead of coming together in healthy relationships, we often come together in judgment or hatred of others** — and that's not what God intended.
- For the last two weeks, we've been talking about what we can do when we face losses, challenges, or failures. We talked about how **Jesus can redeem what's gone wrong** and how, when life doesn't make sense, **God can be trusted**.
- But today I don't want to talk about your hurt and pain. I want to talk about what we do when others are hurting.
- It's easy to gang up on someone. But when someone is in pain or has made a big mistake, what might it look like for us to gather around them in a different way?

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

STORY | Talk about a time when your community made you stronger.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when your community gathered around you when you were hurting, either because of something you did or because of something that happened to you. Be sure to emphasize who gathered around you and how they helped or encouraged you.*
- I'm not sure how I would have made it through if it weren't for the community of people that gathered around me.

DISCUSSION

- **Have you ever made it through a hard time because of the people who gathered around you? What happened?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or groups. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed and share a few thoughts of your own.

SCRIPTURE | Romans 5:2-5

- Last week, we talked about several people who suffered in ways that didn't seem to make a lot of sense. We said that, 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.
- Last week, we read part of a letter written by a man named Peter, who wrote to his fellow Jesus-followers to encourage them. Today, I want to read part of a letter written by another man named Paul. Paul wrote a letter to a group of Christians living in Rome — a letter we now call "Romans."
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Romans 5:2-5.
- Paul says we can "rejoice" in our pain. That seems a little weird, doesn't it? Nobody throws a party when they fail a test, get their heart broken, or make a big mistake.
- But Paul says we have a legitimate reason to find joy in our pain. We rejoice because loss and failure produce perseverance, and perseverance, over time, produces character.
- But let's face it — no matter what Paul says, **have you ever tried to be happy about your own pain and suffering? It's not easy!**
- But let me remind you what I said a moment ago when I gave you some context for this letter. **Paul's words weren't written to an individual. They were written to a community!**
 - Paul assumed this letter would be read by an entire church, together — a group of people committed to God and to each other.
 - If we want to understand what Paul is saying, we have to understand the context that Paul was writing in.
- With that in mind, a few pages later, it shouldn't be surprising that Paul talks in greater detail about how we can take care of each other. It's not a change of subject — it's a continuation.

SCRIPTURE | Romans 12:9-21

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Romans 12:9-21 together.
- Again, Paul tells us to rejoice in our suffering. But this time it's right in the middle of advice on how we can love each other better. That's not an accident. Paul wanted his readers to understand he was writing to all of them — a community that was committed to each other.
- Paul knew something we need to remember: **when life goes wrong, God gives us each other.**
 - When something hurtful is done to us, God gives us each other.
 - When we suffer a tragedy or loss, God gives us each other.
 - When we make huge mistakes, God gives us each other.

- I said I don't want to talk about our pain today, though. Instead I want to talk about the pain of others, and what we're going to do about it.
- When someone in our lives is hurting, grieving, or experiencing a big failure, how will we respond? Will we ignore them? Will we pile on in judgment or anger? Or will we gather around them in love?
- And if we do decide to gather around them in love, what should that even look like? How do we know when someone is hurting, and what should we do about it?

DISCUSSION

- **If you were hurting because of your own failure, mistake, or choice, how would you want others to help you?**
- **If you were hurting because of something that happened to you, how would you want others to help you?**
- **When someone is hurting, how can we make sure we help them in the ways they want and need to be helped (and not just the ways we think they should be helped)?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or groups. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed and share a few thoughts of your own.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

VIDEO | Sara Tucholsky's Home Run Moment

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play [this video](#) (or a video like it) of two high school softball players who carried their competitor to home base after she suffered a knee injury.
- Sara's injury was painful and unexpected. She probably felt angry with herself, frustrated at the situation, and embarrassed at the way things had happened. But do you see what her opponents did for her? Their actions reflected so much of the words Paul wrote to the church of Rome. When they saw Sara's pain, failure, and loss . . .
 - They didn't just pretend to care about her – they really cared.
 - They honored her.
 - They practiced enthusiasm, joy, hope, patience, and hospitality.
 - They celebrated her in her victory and they mourned with her in her pain.
 - They weren't too proud to help her.
 - They refused to see her as an enemy to be hated or ignored – they saw her as a person to be loved.
- Every time we see someone fall, either in pain or in failure, we have an opportunity to pick them up and help them finish the game. When we do . . .
 - We all win, together.
 - We all grow stronger, together.
 - We all build character, together.
 - We all model hope, joy, and selfless love to the world around us, together.
- Did you hear what these girls said about the reaction from the crowd? People were moved. Why? Maybe it's because, deep down, **we know we're designed to do life together.**

DISCUSSION

- When we're going through a difficult time, what are some ways other people can help make us stronger?
- When we help others through a difficult time, what are some ways that experience can make us stronger?
- Read I John 3:18 and Romans 12:9-21. Which words or phrases stand out to you most, and why?
- How can our group do a better job of putting these passages into practice?
- Is there anything going on in your life that this group can help carry you through?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give your students a few moments to share in pairs or groups. To close, ask a few students to summarize what they discussed and share a few thoughts of your own.

ACTIVITY | Group Commitment

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Work together to create a Group Commitment. First, brainstorm your group values. Then brainstorm your group promises. You may want to re-read Romans 12:9-21 together for some ideas. Then put all of your values and promises together in a group commitment you can all agree on, and share it with the group. While you don't need to provide any supplies, this is a great opportunity to re-use some of your supplies from the Fall Discipleship Activity, Small Group Conversation Starters. Download this resource from your Discipleship section, then check out the "Group Confidentiality" conversation starter.

PRAYER

- Before we leave today, I want us to take a moment to put into practice something we talked about today. If you're here today and you're hurting, we want to gather around you, pray for you, and tell you how much you're loved.
- I know life can get difficult and painful sometimes, both for us and for those around us. And when it does, I hope you'll remember that, **when life goes wrong, God gives us each other.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Close in prayer. If there are students who want prayer for something specific, take time to gather around them and pray on their behalf.