



WEEK 4

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

STRONGER

THE BIG IDEA

When life gets hard,
God helps us persevere.

THE BIBLE

Romans 5:2-5; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10;
James 1:2-4

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Blindfolded Superfood Test

- For the last few weeks, we've been talking about growing stronger, so I've been doing a little research. All of my "how to get stronger" Google searches led me to a list of superfoods.
- A "superfood" is any food that is packed with lots of nutrients. These foods are supposed to make you stronger and healthier, so I thought we could try them out together and see what we think.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Split your group into two teams (for a smaller group) or bring a few students to the front (for a larger group) to compete in a blindfolded taste test. Before you begin, make sure there are no food allergies among the students playing. For each round, blindfold two students and let them taste the same "superfood." The first student to guess correctly is the winner. Give each round a timer to keep the game moving quickly. Check out this list of 50 superfoods for some ideas, but eggs, garlic, brussels sprouts, canned salmon, and prunes are definitely a good place to start.*
- After that game, I think some of you would agree — just because something is good for us doesn't mean we're going to like it.

QUESTION | What's something that's good for you, but that you absolutely hate? Why do you hate it?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*

IMAGES | Things We Hate (Even Though They're Good for Us)

- I'm with you. There are a lot of things that are good for me that I absolutely hate. I might like the benefit those things give me, but I hate having to actually do them. I'll show you a few — let me know if you agree.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Use the images provided in your Week 4 folder (or make your own) to talk about a few things you hate, even though they're good for you. As you show each one, try to get a reaction from your students. These images include . . .*
 - Studying
 - Sleeping
 - Brushing your teeth
 - Waking up
 - Showering
 - Exercising
- Why do we know the benefits of studying, getting enough sleep, moving our bodies, or brushing our teeth, but it's sometimes still such a challenge to actually follow through and do those things?
- Why is it so hard to persevere through things that are boring, uncomfortable, or difficult? And why does it even matter if we do or not?

PERSEVERING CAN BE PAINFUL

- For the last few weeks, we've been talking about some painful things.
- We've talked about how we all experience hurt and pain. We said that we might experience hurt because of the choices we've made, or because of someone else's choices, or because of no one's choices at all — sometimes painful things just happen.
- When those painful things do happen, we talked about how **Jesus can redeem what's gone wrong**, how **God can be trusted**, and how **God gives us each other**.
- But there's something we haven't said, and we haven't said it on purpose. When life gets difficult, we never said that God would make it easier.

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

STORY | Talk about a time you had to persevere.

- **INSTRUCTIONS (PART 1):** *Tell a story from your life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time when you had to persevere through something that was difficult, but good for you. It might be a new skill you were trying to learn, a difficult conversation you needed to have, or a challenging season in your life. Be sure to emphasize why you continued to show up, work, or endure when it was difficult.*
- At the time, I really wished things would get easier and that someone would take away the pain and difficulty. It wasn't an easy period in my life, but I'm so glad I experienced it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS (PART 2):** *Finish your story by sharing how you grew and changed as a result. Focus on the skills or character traits you developed and emphasize how you would never have developed those things if the journey had been easy.*

- That was my story, but I know some of you are experiencing (or know someone who is experiencing) a season that is so much more difficult than mine.

DISCUSSION

- **Have you ever been happy you persevered through something you didn't want to do? Why are you glad you stuck with it?**
- **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.

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

- Broken relationships, medical diagnoses, physical limitations, financial hardship, loss of a loved one — these are all difficult situations that many of us have to endure for a very long time, if not for our entire lives.
- Life gets hard for all of us sometimes. But some things don't get fixed. Some things don't get easier. Some things require perseverance.
- **What is perseverance?** To persevere means to keep going, even when it's hard, and even when you're not sure things will ever change.
- Maybe that sounds depressing, but here's what I've learned about facing times of pain and difficulty: **we persevere because, even if our circumstances never change, we can change for the better.**

SCRIPTURE | Romans 5:2-5

- Last week, we looked at a passage of Scripture that I want to look at one more time.
- Last time, we talked about how, after Jesus died, rose again, and left earth, Jesus' followers experienced a lot of pain and difficulty.
- 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.
- In the midst of all of that difficulty, a man named Paul wrote a letter to some of the Christians who were suffering and dying because of their beliefs.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Romans 5:2-5 together.
- **Paul says we can "rejoice" in our pain because loss and failure produce perseverance,** and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope — and hope never lets us down.

PAUL UNDERSTOOD PERSEVERANCE

- So what does Paul know about perseverance? Sure, he's telling these other Jesus-followers to persevere through their pain and difficulty, but are these just empty words, or is Paul speaking from experience?
- **HIS EARLY LIFE**
 - When Paul was young, he took his education seriously. He learned from the best teachers, studied extensively, and did very well. Paul also ran his own tent-making business.

- If you've ever studied really hard or tried to find new ways to make money, you know these things don't happen by accident. They require perseverance.
- **HIS CONVERSION**
 - When Paul met Jesus for the first time, God struck Paul blind for several days, with no promise that his sight would ever return. During those days, Paul fasted and prayed continuously.
 - That required perseverance too.
- **HIS MINISTRY**
 - When Paul began traveling the world sharing the message of Jesus, his life didn't get easier. He nearly died several times, survived a shipwreck, got bit by a venomous snake, had multiple disagreements with the other apostles, and wrote letter, after letter, after letter to help encourage and correct his fellow believers.
 - I don't know if I'd have enough perseverance to deal with all of that, but Paul did.

SCRIPTURE | II Corinthians 12:5-10

- Although we don't know all the details, we know there was yet another thing going on in Paul's life that required perseverance.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Corinthians 12:5-10 together.*
- We don't know what was causing Paul so much pain. We don't even know if it was physical pain or emotional pain, but we do know Paul pleaded with God to please take it away.
- Despite Paul's pleas, God did not take away Paul's pain. And here's what's so incredible: Paul accepted it. Paul didn't rage, or quit, or question God. Instead, Paul practiced what he preached to the believers in Rome. Paul rejoiced in his suffering.
- Paul understood what we need to understand: that his weaknesses could help make him strong, and that his obstacles could become his opportunities. For Paul, his pain was . . .
 - A chance to grow in faith.
 - A chance to grow in character.
 - A chance to experience the grace, power, and strength of God.
- Paul trusted that, **when life gets hard, God helps us persevere.**

DISCUSSION

- **How can someone develop perseverance?**
- **Why do you think it's important to God that we develop perseverance?**
- **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?*

GOD HELPS US PERSEVERE

- So what's the point? Is the point of this message to do your homework, work hard, and brush your teeth twice a day? Um, no. God has much bigger dreams for you than just good behavior (or good hygiene).

- The point is this:
 - Someday, **life is going to get difficult**. Maybe it is already.
 - When life does get difficult, God may not always fix it, but **God will always help you endure it**.
 - As you persevere through difficulty, you can be joyful because you know **God will use your pain to grow your character and grow your faith**.

VIDEO | "Grit: the Power of Passion and Perseverance," by Angela Lee Duckworth

- There are professional researchers who have dedicated their entire careers to studying things like perseverance, self-control, and grittiness. They study successful people in order to uncover the things that make them so successful.
- One researcher, Angela Lee Duckworth, shared some of her findings in this TED Talk . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play a portion of [this TED Talk](#) (1:33-3:27), or play the entire thing if you have time.
- I love her definition of the word "grit." She says, "grit" is "the passion and perseverance for very long-term goals."
- I can't imagine any goals that are more long-term (or more important) than the goals God has invited us to be a part of, like . . .
 - Love God with everything you have (Mark 12:30).
 - Love others like you love yourself (Mark 12:31).
 - Share the good news of Jesus with the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20).
 - Be transformed to be more like Jesus (Romans 12:2).
- These are big goals. We couldn't possibly achieve them on our own. But remember, when we're at our weakest, God's power is at its strongest.

ACTIVITY | The Grit Test

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Take out your devices! Head to angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale and have everyone in your group take the test. Record your scores and talk about them together.

DISCUSSION

- What's one area where you think you have grit? How did you develop it?
- What's one area where you don't have much grit at all? How can you develop more of it?
- Do you have any long-term goals for your life? Name one if you do.
- What are some of God's long-term goals for us and for the world?
- Read James 1:2-4. What part of this passage do you find most encouraging and why? Which part do you find most challenging and why?
- What's one difficulty that you need God's help to endure right now? How do you hope persevering grows your faith? How to you hope it grows your character?
- **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.

PRAYER

- I know we've talked about some hard things this month, but I hope it helped. Even if you're not going through something difficult right now, I hope you'll remember these conversations when life does start to get hard. I hope you'll remember that . . .
 - **Jesus can redeem what's gone wrong.**
 - **When life doesn't make sense, God can be trusted.**
 - **When life goes wrong, God gives us each other.**
 - **When life gets hard, God helps us persevere.**
- Just like Adam, Eve, Joseph, Peter, Paul, and all of the earliest Jesus-followers discovered, none of our pain, losses, or failures need to be wasted.
- Jesus has the power to redeem all of our hurt. He can use it to **make our faith stronger, to make our character stronger**, and to show us that **He is stronger than any trouble we face**.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Close in prayer. Ask for strength and perseverance for everyone in the room, but take extra time to pray specifically for any students who request prayer for a difficulty they're experiencing right now.*