

On Track Map

Topical Lesson: When Tragedy Happens

Preschool

Know Right:	God is our help in times of trouble.
Think Right:	"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9 (Top 12)
Do Right:	I will go to God in times of trouble.
Feel Right:	I can feel comforted when I go to God.

Tragedy and loss are heartbreaking and confusing. We don't understand why horrible things take place in our world, and we want God to make things right. When our world is dark and fills us with grief, we can find comfort knowing that God is near. Psalm 46:1 reminds us that, at all times, we can count on God as our refuge, strength, and help. This week we will be sharing this hope with our children. As you prepare, pray for God's perfect peace to fill you and your children. Ask Him to work in each of you through His Word. We know that our world is broken by sin; that means our hearts will continue to be broken by tragedy. During those times, may we find comfort in our God who is always with us.

Pre-Service Review Game

Worship Leaders will lead children in a review game. Game details are in the appendix.

Large Group Opening Time

Offering: We are going to worship God right now by giving our money. When we give our money to God, our church will use it to tell others about Jesus. *Or insert a specific way your church will use the offering.*

Think Right verse: Joshua 1:9 (Note: For this Get on Track Lesson, we recommend reviewing and emphasizing Joshua 1:9 rather than the current Think Right verse.)

Do you remember the verse about being strong and courageous? Listen as I read it from my Bible. *Read the verse from your Bible and then demonstrate the verse with hand motions.*

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong (show right muscle) **and courageous** (show left muscle). **Do not be terrified** (shake right pointer finger); **do not be discouraged** (shake left pointer finger), **for the Lord** (point up) **your God** (other pointer finger up) **will be with you wherever you go** (open hands start near ears and move downward out in front of you to make a path)." **Joshua 1:9**

Let's all stand up and say our verse with the hand motions. *Repeat several times while saying it in a loud voice, quiet voice, high voice, and while jumping up and down.*

Transition: *You will need to develop a transition based on song choice.*

Song 1: *Song of your choice*

Puppet Skit: God is with me

WL: Hmm. I don't see Tracker this week. Where did he go? Let's call for him! 1, 2, 3, Tracker!

Silence for a few moments. Then Tracker should sniffle, but remain hidden.

WL: Did you hear that? That sounded like Tracker... Is he crying? Tracker, do you want to talk about something?

Tracker should slowly come up.

T: *(Sniffles)* Hi, _____. I just...I'm just kinda...it seems like...oooooo...I just feel all alone! And kinda sad, too.

WL: Oh, Tracker! I'm so sorry to hear that you're feeling alone and sad. Sometimes I feel those things, too.

T: *You do? Really?*

WL: Yes, Tracker. I really do. But did you know that you're never really alone?

T: *Are ya sure about that? Cuz at night after my mom and dad tuck me into bed, they leave the room, and then I sure am alone in there.*

WL: You're not alone! God promises that He will always be with us. He is our help in times of trouble. That means that we can go to Him whenever we feel alone or sad or afraid, or whenever we feel stuck or don't know what to do.

T: *Wow, _____! Are ya tellin' me the truth? Cuz if you are, that is reeeeeeeally good news.*

WL: Yes, I am telling you the truth. And yes, it is good news! Whenever we go through hard times, or we feel scared, or we feel sad, we can call out to God and remember that He is with us, and He will help us. Do you know what it's called when we call out to God?

T: *Yeah, that's called prayin'! I already learned that I can talk to God any time, anywhere. He always hears me.*

WL: You're right, Tracker! We can know that God hears us when we pray and that He is with us all the time. That makes me feel comforted. How does it make you feel, Tracker?

T: *It makes me feel a lot better. I feel comforted, and I know God loves me.*

WL: You're right, Tracker. God loves you very much. Thanks for coming and talking with us today!

T: *Bye, everyone! See ya next week!*

Transition: *You will need to develop a transition based on song choice.*

Song 2: *Song of your choice*

Pray

Preparation for the Classroom

Pray: Pray that God will give you a clear understanding of Scripture and that the children in your class will feel the depth of God's love for them this week, knowing that He is our help in times of trouble.

Read: Psalm 46

Know Right: God is our help in times of trouble

Lead Teacher's Notes:

- This is a difficult lesson for preschoolers. Due to the family-based curriculum (all ages learning the same lesson), we will introduce a few basic concepts in the preschool lesson and focus on trusting God to be our refuge and help.
- Please refer to the Children's Ministry Resource Bible: page 1544-1545 (Problems Children Face); page 1504 (Teaching Children from Troubled Homes).
- As you prepare to explain a difficult subject:
 - Spend a significant amount of time in prayer. Pray that God will use you to help the children in your class understand that He is our help and comfort.
 - Be sensitive with your tone and wording as you speak about difficult topics. Do not share anything that is not age-appropriate; do not mention details about specific types of tragedy (unless you are using this lesson because your community has gone through a specific, recent tragedy). The focus of this lesson is God's strength, presence, and comfort during difficult times; the lesson is not meant to scare children.
 - Read through the parent letter included with this lesson.
- During your lesson:
 - If your community is navigating a recent loss or tragic event, reassure children that it is normal to experience fear, anger or sadness. These feelings are natural and appropriate in these circumstances. Model how to bring these feelings to God. Model how to express these feelings to loved ones. Do not shame children for these feelings or minimize them. Children need to be given places to process painful emotions; the church should be one of those places.
 - When teaching young children: make sure that you prioritize creating an environment that feels safe. When young children experience difficult circumstances, they may feel (and often are) unsafe. This lesson should emphasize that they are safe during this conversation and they are safe in this room.

Creative Ideas for the Lesson:

1. Build a "fortress/refuge" (a fort) inside your classroom, and have children sit in the fort as you teach.
2. Frequently refer to the Feel Right poster throughout the lesson. Have children make the faces shown on the poster at the right points during the lesson.
3. Use pictures of the following as you teach the lesson: a thunderstorm, a dark bedroom, and cracks in the road (earthquake). (see appendix) *This idea is written into the lesson.*

Note: For this lesson, we recommend including a parent letter to send home. Explain what was covered in this lesson, include Scripture references and book suggestions, and encourage parents to keep this letter somewhere safe so they can bring it out if their family or community ever encounters a tragedy. We've provided an example in the appendix.

Lesson Introduction for the Classroom

Pray: *When you pray in class, always remind children that you are talking to God. Tell children that God is always with us and that He loves it when we talk to Him. Have children bow their heads, close their eyes, and fold their hands so they can completely focus on God.*

Find It: When I open my Bible up to the book of Psalms, do I find it in the OT or the NT? (OT) Psalms is a book full of poems, worship songs, and prayers! Today we are going to read one song together.

Timeline: We aren't learning about a specific event on our timeline today, but we are going to be reading verses written by people who lived during Old Testament times. Which part of our timeline shows the Old Testament? *Have children point at the timeline.*

Introduction to the Bible Lesson:

Sometimes sad or scary things happen. Did you know that sad and scary things happened a long time ago, in the Bible, too?

Sad and scary things happen because of sin. What is sin? (Sin is anything we think, say, or do that is against God) Because there is sin in the world, sometimes people get sick, and sometimes people do mean things to others, and sometimes our favorite toy or game breaks, and sometimes people that we care about die. All of the bad things in our world are because of sin.

But we have good news, right? Who did God send to save us from our sin? (Jesus!) Jesus is God's rescue plan. Every good thing in the world is from Jesus. Once we are saved by Jesus, we can trust Him to be with us and to comfort us. How do you know if you have been saved by Jesus? *Invite students to answer; use this opportunity to share the Gospel and give an invitation for salvation.*

Thankfully, there is a happy ending because Jesus rose again, and He promises to bring an end to all bad things. But, at the same time, when bad things do happen, we know that Jesus really understands what we are feeling. In fact, when Jesus lived on earth, He experienced loss and sadness too, even though He never sinned! His close friends, John the Baptist and Lazarus, died; people were fighting with each other; and Jesus Himself was hurt and even died on the cross. *If your community has recently experienced a tragedy, this would be an appropriate time to talk about that loss.*

What can we do when something scary or sad happens? That is what we are going to learn about today.

Scripture Outline for the Classroom

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and help

Read Psalm 46:1

Recap: These verses say that God is our “refuge.” A refuge is a place that is meant to keep us safe and protected from things that might be dangerous or scary. These verses also say that God is our strength and our help. That means we can count on Him, even when sad or scary things happen.

We do not need to be afraid when sad or scary things happen

Read Psalm 46:2-3

Recap: In these verses, we are hearing about some very scary things, right? Even when sad or scary things happen, God promises that He will still be strong, safe, and with you always. God knows how you feel, and He will never leave you! What Top 12 verse does that remind you of? (Joshua 1:9)

Hold up the picture of a thunderstorm. A thunderstorm is sometimes scary. That's when there's a big storm outside with rain, lightning, and thunder. What does a thunderstorm sound like? *Coach children to make clapping sounds with their hands to mimic the sound of thunder.*

Is God still with us if there's a thunderstorm outside? (Yes!) If we ever feel afraid, we can go to God and ask for help.

Hold up picture of dark bedroom. Sometimes we don't like to be in the dark. It might feel scary. Can you close your eyes with me? When you close your eyes, it is very dark! We can't see anything!

Is God still with us when it is dark? (Yes!) If we ever feel alone, we can go to God and ask for help.

Hold up picture of cracks in the road. Have you ever felt an earthquake? It is when the ground shakes. Let's see if we can make the ground in our room sound like an earthquake. *Coach children to stomp on the ground loudly.*

Is God still with us if there's an earthquake shaking the ground? (Yes!) Even during an earthquake, we can go to God and ask for help.

Sometimes when we ask Him for help, He makes the bad things stop. Sometimes He helps us by staying with us and helping us get through the bad situation.

We can go to God anytime to ask for help. He is very strong, and He promises that He is always with us! That makes me feel comforted.

God is always in control

Paraphrase of Psalm 46:4-9:

Even during scary situations, like when people fight or when there are wars, God promises to be with us and to use everything for our good. God is always in control.

Has God ever changed? (No!) When we look at the Old Testament on our timeline, we can know that the people on that timeline prayed to and worshiped the same God that we worship today. God is always the same. He has always been with His people, and He promises to always be with His people. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, you are one of His people!

When I think about this, it makes me feel protected, safe, and thankful. How do you feel when you hear this verse? *Use the Feel Right poster and invite children to answer.*

God promises to be with us

Read Psalm 46:10-11

Recap: God says, “Be still, and know that I am God...”

God wants us to pause and remember who He is, so we can be filled with courage and hope. We can remember that we aren’t alone. God is always with us!

Remember when we learned that God is our “refuge”? When we say that God is our “fortress,” that means the same thing: God is a safe place for us to go when we need to be protected.

Even in the darkest, saddest, scariest places, God promises to be with us. He has always been the same, and He will always be the same.

Conclusion:

What are some true things we can know about God from these verses? (God is with us, God is powerful, God is strong, God is our fortress/shelter/refuge, etc.)

Do Right and Feel Right:

These are important things to remember, especially when sad or scary things happen. Even if we feel sad, confused, or afraid, we can remember that God will always be with us and will comfort us, and we can always go to Him for help.

Pray together to close.

Hand out letter to parents as children are picked up at the end of class.

Review Questions: What did you discover today?

1. Did we learn from the Old Testament or New Testament today? (Old Testament)
2. Why do sad or scary things happen? (Because of sin)
3. Who can we go to for help and comfort when sad or scary things happen? (God)
4. What does the word "refuge" mean? (A place of safety/protection)
5. Who is our help in times of trouble? (God)
6. Has God ever changed? (No)

Discover Time

Transition to Discover Time: Today we learned that God is our refuge and help. He is always with us, even when sad or scary things happen. Now we are going to go make some posters to help us remember that God is our help!

On our way to our Discover Time, let's march and chant, "God is my help!"

Do Right: I will go to God in times of trouble.

Goal: To help children understand that God is with us and is our help during the good and bad times.

Large Group: Art Station

Supplies:

- Activity sheet with "God is my help, and He is with me everywhere!" (one per child) (see appendix)
- Small cards with pictures of locations preschool children go: library, grocery store, park, doctor's office (in advance cut out one set per child) (see appendix)
- Glue sticks
- Crayons

Instructions for the DT Leader:

1. Ask children, "Is God with you everywhere?" (Yes!) Explain that today we're going to decorate posters that will help us remember that God is our help in times of trouble, which means we can go to Him and ask for help any time.
2. Hold up one of the location cards and ask, "Can God help me at _____?" (Yes!) Talk about ways God can help us at that location.
3. After you've talked about a location, children can color and glue the location card onto their poster. Remind children that they will get to take these posters home, so they should decorate them carefully.
4. Repeat with the other location cards.
5. When time is up, head back to class chanting, "God is my help!"

Alternate option: Print the alternate "God is my help" activity sheet (see appendix). This option is a coloring sheet with the same elements as above but without the cutting and gluing.

Classroom Review Time

Lead Teachers ~ Connecting the DT to the Lesson: That was a fun Discover Time! You did a great job thinking of all the ways God can help us. Today we learned that God is our refuge and help, and that He is always with us, even when sad or scary things happen. Now we're going to review our lesson and see what else you remember!

Reviewing the Know Right:

Supplies:

- Large blocks (if large blocks aren't available, use small blocks to build a tower)

Instructions:

1. Ask the review questions from the lesson. When a child answers the question correctly, they will get a block. Children will work together to build a fort with blocks.
2. As the children's fort slowly gets bigger and bigger, occasionally remind them that God is our help in times of trouble.
3. After all the questions have been answered, repeat a few times, so children can confidently answer. If you run out of blocks or if the blocks fall over, start building the fort again.

Think Right Activity while waiting for parents:

Supplies:

- Ball

Instructions:

1. Have children stand in a circle.
2. As a group, take turns tossing the ball across the circle. Before tossing, you should say, "_____ (insert name) will go to God!"
3. Then toss the ball to that child.
4. Repeat so all children have a chance to catch and toss the ball.