



If God Is With Me in Hard Times, Why Doesn't He Just Fix Them?

Supplies

- Bibles
- construction paper (1 sheet per child)
- plain white paper (several sheets per child)
- markers
- tape
- glue sticks
- plain white paper

Tear Up Paper

Set out tape, and have small-group leaders give each child a sheet of construction paper. Set out markers, and have each child draw a self-portrait.

Then have kids tear their portraits into 10 to 15 pieces. As kids tear their papers, have them name hard times they've experienced or someone they know has experienced.

Say: **Your papers have become a jumbled mess. Hold up the tape. Tape might help patch things up. After all, it's right here next to you! But you're not allowed to use it. Even though it could fix your paper and put it back together, I'm not going to let you use it.**

Ask: • **What do you think of my no-tape rule?**

• **Does it ever feel like God is choosing not to help you fix your problems? Talk about that.** Have kids share in their small groups, and then ask a few kids to report to the whole group.

Say: **Today we're learning that God is with us in hard times. And we also know that God is good and that he's all-powerful. So if God is with us, and he *could* fix our problems, is he like the tape? If God is with us in hard times, why doesn't he just fix them? Let's dig in to that.**

Dig Deeper

Have small groups discuss these questions.

Ask: • **Have you ever had to take a pet to the vet? What are some reasons you take your pet to the vet?**

• **How did your pet react?**

Say: **Most dogs and cats can't understand how a vet could possibly be a good thing. They think it's torture! But we know that the vet is there to help them stay healthy and happy.**

That's kind of like what the Bible says about hard times in our lives. They can actually be good for us! There may be a *reason* for your hard time...even if you don't see it right now.

Read James 1:2-4. Then have small groups discuss this question.

Ask: • **How has a hard time helped you grow?**

Say: **So I may not let you use tape to fix your paper. But what if you could rearrange your paper scraps, maybe mix them with some colors from other kids' papers, and make a cool mosaic?**

Have small-group leaders give each child a sheet of plain white paper, and set out glue sticks to share. Allow time for kids to make mosaics.

Say: **Without ripping your paper, you never could've made these awesome mosaics. Sometimes hard times can help us grow and be even better, happier people! Or sometimes hard times lead us to a better understanding of God's peace and power. God is with us in hard times, and when we turn to him with our problems and worries, we can grow in faith.**

These verses list two good things that can come out of hard times. Listen for those two good things.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, and ask kids to share what good things they heard. Then have small groups discuss these questions.

Ask: • **When have you felt God comforting you?**

- **Tell about a time you helped someone else because of something hard you experienced.**

Encourage small-group leaders to share their own examples first.

Say: **It's kind of like this.**

Give each child a fresh sheet of white paper. Have kids crumple it, then uncrumple it and feel the difference. Then have kids keep crumpling and uncrumpling a number of times until they feel the paper getting softer.

Say: **Paper isn't something we think of as soft. But the more "hard times" it went through as we crumpled it, the softer it got. God is with us in hard times, and he can soften our hearts through dark valleys so we're a comfort to other people.**

Here's the reality: We live in a broken world, so we're *going* to have hard times. But we have hope! Listen to what Jesus said about that.

Read John 16:33. Then have small groups discuss this question.

Ask: • **Jesus said to take heart because he has overcome the world. How does that help you?**

Say: **When we face troubles, we can take heart knowing that they can't defeat us because Jesus has the ultimate victory! Here's one way to look at the positive side of hard times.**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-10. Then have small groups discuss this question.

Ask: • **Think of a hard time you're going through right now. What "but" could you add to show you have hope?**

Say: **God is with us in hard times, and he doesn't always fix them. But he can always bring good out of them, and we always have hope that one day, all our troubles will be gone. We can change our focus from our problems to the hope we have. Let's look at things differently.**

Give each child a fresh sheet of paper, and have kids roll their papers into "telescopes." Have kids look through their telescopes as you read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.



OBJECT LESSON

[10 min]

Seeing the Light in the Dark

Supplies

- poster board
- dark marker

Easy Prep

- In large letters write on the poster board, “God is with us.” Then set the poster out of sight.
- You’ll need your windows covered (from Core Bible Discovery) so you can make your room very dark.

Observe How Eyes Adjust From Light to Darkness

Say: **In today’s Bible story, God gave the Israelites a visible reminder that he was right there with them as they went through a hard time. God gave them a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire that they could see, day or night.**

We might not be able to see a reminder of God so clearly, but if we change the way we’re looking, we can find reminders of God all around us. Let’s see what a vision adjustment is like from light to dark and how it can teach us to adjust the way we look for God in hard, dark times.

- Have kids look up toward the ceiling lights for about 30 seconds, then turn off the lights so the room gets quite dark.
- Invite kids to call out how much they can or can’t see right away, then ask again in 15-second intervals as everyone’s eyes slowly adjust to the dark. The more time that goes by, the more they should be able to see.

Say: **When our eyes quickly go from seeing in bright light to seeing in the dark, it takes a while for our eyes to adjust. We have these amazing, tiny cells in our eyes called *rods* and *cones*. Kind of strange words to describe things in our eyes, but they help us see in light or dark. When we go from bright light to darkness, our eyes go through what’s called “darkness adaptation,” and the rods in our eyes slowly make a chemical that helps us see in low light. That’s why as time passed after turning out the lights, you could slowly see more and more in the room.**

- Turn the lights back on, and allow about a minute for everyone’s eyes to readjust to the light, then have everyone look toward the lights again.
- Repeat the process of turning out the lights and allowing everyone’s eyes to adjust, but this time hold the poster board with the message you’ve written facing everyone *after* you’ve turned out the lights and see how long it takes before everyone can read the message.

Say: **God is always with us, even in times it might not feel like he is because we’re struggling or afraid. This message was here all along, even before you could see it. Hard times can make life seem dark, but when we allow ourselves time to adjust and look for God, we can see the truth that God is with us even in the dark valleys.**

- Turn on the lights, and repeat the room-darkening process one more time. This time, instead of having everyone look at the ceiling, have everyone close their eyes and even gently cover them with their hands for about a minute before you turn the lights out.
- Hold the poster board up again and see how long it takes this time for kids to be able to read the words.

Talk About It

Ask: • **What was different when you closed your eyes before the lights went out?**

Say: **Closing your eyes helped them adjust faster to the dark because you’d prepared them a little bit by blocking some light.**

Have kids discuss this question in their small groups.

Ask: • **What can we do to prepare ourselves to see that God is with us in hard, dark times in life?**

Say: **Even when life is great, we can practice trusting God. We can pray that God helps us see reminders of him all around us no matter what our circumstances. Watching for God through life’s ups and downs helps us be able to see that God is with us in hard times.**