



LESSON 3: COMFORT IN TOUGH TIMES

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: Jesus stands ready to offer comfort to them in the midst of their tough times.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED: To commit to turning to Jesus and accepting the comfort He offers, trusting that He will keep His promise of peace and rest.

Scripture Focus: John 14:25-27, John 16:33, Matthew 11:28-30

Supporting Scripture: Romans 15:13

OVERVIEW: Peace and comfort from the Lord are two things that can elude us in the midst of tough times. He is not always the first person we turn to when things are going wrong. Instead, the first people we run to are often our friends or family. Yet, when Christ physically left this earth, He let us know the Holy Spirit is with us always to remind us of the truth. He can keep us from getting overwhelmed because His peace is stronger than anything this world can provide. We are going to have trials they are going to come. However, one thing you can assure your students is that they can rest in the knowledge that God is greater. This lesson will help you teach your students that no matter how “heavy” the load they carry, the Lord wants to carry it for them. They can seek Him during tough times and receive comfort. A comfort that only God can give.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Tough Times Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your “Jesus And Tough Times Lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-tough-times-teacher-prep>

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details give you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

John

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John, son of Zebedee, a fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus. John also penned the book of Revelation as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

Matthew

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point of this lesson is to learn that when we face tough times we can turn to Jesus and be comforted. We would love for there to never be a hard time. However, Jesus tells us himself in John 16:33 that we will face trials of many kinds. With the difficulties of this world the Lord also gives us several promises. He will be with us. He will comfort us. The peace He gives is unlike anything the world can offer. He knows the burden we bear is too much for us to carry on our own. Instead, He carries it for us. We can't keep the hard times from coming, but we can hold tight to the One who can let us know everything is going to be OK in the end.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead-In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

THE LEAD-IN

- **Goal:** To aid students in understanding we can (and should) turn to Jesus during the hardest of times.
- **Set-Up:** Create an account on iamsecond.com. You'll need to be prepared to show one of the following two videos:
- **Video One:** Lee Lucas <http://www.iamsecond.com/seconds/lee-lucas/>
- **Video Two:** Bethany Hamilton <http://www.iamsecond.com/seconds/bethany-hamilton/>

FIRST, explain that you're about to show a video. Set up the video by **saying something like:**

- **Last week we talked about how to have the faith to really go through the tough times. Yet, even when we're learning to place more faith in God, we can still think we need to "be strong," or have an attitude of "I can do this." Today we're going to talk about how to turn to Christ for comfort during these hard times. We're going to watch a video of a person who went through a difficult time and how they turned to Christ and what happened.**

THEN, show the video. When you've finished, lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask something like the following:**

- **What stood out to you from their story?**
Answers will vary
- **How do you see the way Christ comforted them in their story?**
Answers will vary based on the video and what they hear. Try to point them to the way they talk about not knowing if they could have made it without the peace and comfort God gave them.
- **Even though Christ brought them comfort, does this mean everything was "wonderful" at the end of their story?**
Answers will vary: Bethany Hamilton still doesn't have an arm. Lee Lucas still has burned skin over much of his body.
- **When things are hard, do you turn to Jesus for comfort? Who or what gives you comfort in the difficult times?**
Answers will vary.
- **Does relying on God to give us peace mean we will always "feel good" about everything?**
Answers will vary. Asking God to love us and be with us means we are not alone during the hard times. The unique piece about the story we watched was that they allowed God to use it for something more. There are times when things are going wrong and it's hard to know how to rely on God. That's alright. The question really is if we will allow Him to love us. He loves us no matter what, will we allow that love to comfort us.

Help students see that though the circumstances might remain tough, God gives peace to help us carry on through the tough times. And that is what this lesson is about. **Say something like:**

- **In this lesson we're going to talk about this idea of seeking out comfort from God during the hard times. We think we can "make it" on our own. Perhaps we can. Yet, there are moments when things just are not easy and perhaps we just need to feel some comfort. We're going to take a look at what God says about comfort when things are not going well.**

Transition to the Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students see that Jesus stands ready to offer comfort to them in the midst of their tough times.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, take a moment and review the last couple of weeks. Remind students this is the third lesson that looks at what Jesus had to say about tough times. Ask if anyone can remember what the last two lessons were about. Use the following bullet points to help you review:

- **Lesson 1:** When we experience tough times, we should express our emotions to God in real, honest ways, embracing a more honest dialogue with Him.
- **Lesson 2:** Faith in Jesus and His ability to lead them through trials is what will get them through tough times.

Ask students about how the last couple of weeks have gone personally, how they are applying what they're learning in their relationship with God. **Consider asking something like:**

- **Are you putting your faith in the Lord to help you get through tough times?**
- **Are you still being honest with God about the way you are feeling?**
- **What's changed about your spiritual life as a result of the last few weeks of engaging with God?**

Once you've finished, ask students the following question to help set up your time of Bible study. **Ask:**

- **What does the word 'comfort' mean to you? Define it in your own words.**
Answers will vary.
- **Was there something that you turned to as a little child that brought you comfort when you were upset?**
Answers will vary. Students may have had a blanket, pacifier, or even sucked their thumb as a child.
- **Why do babies or toddlers turn to these little trinkets? What purpose do they serve?**
Answer: It's something to hold on to feel better when we are upset. It's a way to soothe themselves when things are scary or uncertain.

Explain that when times get tough, we all look for comfort. You're about to see what Jesus has to say about where to seek out true comfort.

NEXT, instruct students to turn to John 14. While they're doing so, see if anyone can provide any details about John and his gospel. Supplement their answers by providing the context using the Details from the Bible Background. Explain to students that Jesus is nearing His final moments with His disciples. What they are about to read are some of Jesus' last words on this side of the cross. Once they've located the passage, read or have a student read John 14:25-27. **Then say something like:**

- **In this passage, Jesus knows He is going to suffer and die for our sins. He also knows when He is raised from the**

dead He will not physically stay on the earth with us. He wants His disciples to know they will not be alone. God is going to be with them completely, however just in another way.

THEN, lead students in a short discussion. **Ask something similar to the following:**

- **Who does Jesus say will be with us now that He has physically left the earth? Tell me what you know about Him.**

Answer: The Holy Spirit or the “Advocate.” In other passages, He is called our “Helper.” We can sometimes think of the Holy Spirit as a “what,” like a ghost in a paranormal movie. However, He is very real and very much God. When we have a relationship with Christ He is the one who speaks to our heart and lets us know that everything is going to be all right. He is the one who reminds us of Christ’s words of truth. It’s easy to forget and focus on the “bad” when things are going wrong. Jesus wanted to make sure we knew that God is always with us and not far away.

- **How is God’s peace, the peace that’s different from the world, a gift?**

Answer: God gives us peace that is different from anything else the world can offer. Anything else we do or go to for comfort can go away. To know that we can have peace, or that feeling that it really is going to be OK is a huge gift.

- **Why do you think Jesus tells us not to be troubled or afraid?**

Answer: When we know we can turn to Jesus for peace, and that God is always with us, we can know always that we are never alone. Often the hardest thing about something horrible is thinking we must deal with it on our own. We want to know someone can hold us. God is saying that no matter what happens He is with us.

- **Do you understand what it means when it talks about this kind of peace?**

Answers will vary.

NEXT, have students flip over to John 16:33. Read it aloud and then lead students in a discussion. **Ask:**

- **Where does Jesus say we find our peace?**

Answer: Jesus tells us clearly that our peace is in Him. It isn’t just a feeling that will go away. It’s deeper than that.

- **What does Jesus say here about tough times?**

Answer: He tells us here that we will face trials. There is sin and things that happen we will never understand. However, God is bigger than all of it. When we know our peace is in Him, then we are reminded that someone bigger, who conquered it all, has our back.

THEN, look at the last passage of the lesson, Matthew 11:28-30. Read it aloud and then, lead students in a discussion. **Ask:**

- **Have you ever had to literally pick up something that’s so heavy you can’t really handle it? Tell me about it.**

Answers will vary.

- **What is Jesus talking about here as far as being tired and carrying burdens?**

Answer: These are the bad things that happen in our lives that feel literally like something we have to carry. Our problems and troubles can feel just like those things we try to really pick up. Our arms ache and we can’t handle it. Saying He will give us rest is another way of saying, “Hand it over and I will carry that for you.”

- **What is Jesus talking about in taking on His “yoke?”**

Answer: Jesus isn’t talking about eggs. A yoke is something that they put on two cattle to keep them working together to plow a field. We can feel like we are so “tied” to the bad stuff in our lives that we can’t do anything. In this way, the yoke of our tough times is heavy. Jesus tells us that if we literally “hitch” ourselves to Him we can put all of that stuff down and take on a burden much lighter. He

will literally give us a light at the end of the tunnel. He gives us the peace to lay it all down and let him carry it instead.

FINALLY, ask:

- **We have looked at several different passages that talk about God giving us peace, comfort and rest. How do we begin to apply this in our lives? How do we begin to make the leap from head knowledge to heart knowledge?**
Answers will vary. Hearing this may not be new for some of the students. However, how can they believe in this in a practical way? Don't be afraid to answer the hard questions and let them wrestle with this idea.

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students commit to turning to Jesus and accepting the comfort He offers, trusting that He will keep His promise of peace and rest.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a marble or small rock, pen, and piece of paper for every student.

FIRST, explain to students that as you begin to wrap up your lesson, you want to give them to feel what a "burden" can be when it weighs them down. Then give each student a rock, pen, and paper.

NEXT, say something like:

- **Each of you has a rock, pen and paper. Hold the rock in the hand you write with. Now pick up the pen and write how you would define peace on the paper. You must hold the rock while you write.**

Give them a few moments to perform the task, then **ask:**

- **Was it easy to write while holding the rock? What stood out to you?**
Answer: It was not easy. It was cumbersome and a pain. At best you were distracted. You may have even figured out how to work with it, but it wasn't the best way to be able to write anything down.

Then **say something like:**

- **Now let's try the exercise again. This time put the rock down, and write your definition of rest and peace.**

Give them a few moments to finish up and **ask:**

- **Was it easier this time? Why?**
Answer: They weren't "burdened" in any way. They could just perform the task without hindrance.
- **Tell me what were some of your definitions based on tonight of comfort, peace and rest?**
Answers will vary. Let them share.
- **If holding the rock is like us trying to deal with tough times without Christ, and putting it down is like giving our burdens to Jesus (and He replaces it with His burden), what does this tell us about the way He gives us comfort, peace and rest from the tough times?**

Answers will vary.

FINALLY, finish up by **saying something like:**

- **God replaces our burdens with His peace. Sometimes it doesn't mean everything goes away. Even though you weren't holding the rock anymore, it was still there. You could see it, touch it and feel it. However, you didn't have to hold on to it. Jesus gives us comfort, peace, and rest even when things go wrong. All we must do is rely on Him and know He is that peace. Keep your rocks this week, you will need them for your devotional tomorrow.**

Make sure there are no closing thoughts and then close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Social Media, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

- ♦ *Do you have questions about a lesson?*
- ♦ *Something that worked particularly well you want to share?*
- ♦ *Something that didn't work you want to bring up?*

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.