



# Sermon Discussion Guide

## Struggle: When Life Makes No Sense Getting Through What You're Going Through – Part 3

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*"Because (you sinned), all your life you will struggle." Genesis 3:17 (NLT)*  
*"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)*

We know from personal experience that life is a struggle. We struggle with other people and with ourselves, but our real struggle is with God: we doubt his wisdom by asking "Why?" and wanting to be in control ourselves. God loves the interaction with us when we share our struggles with him by lamenting about our problems, but we need to know how to struggle with God and win. Here we'll discuss a consistent pattern in the Bible of the way God's people successfully lamented that each of us can follow: (1) Complain to God by telling him what I think is unfair or painful; (2) Appeal to God's nature; (3) Remind God of what he's said; (4) Express my total trust in God.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

*"The man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob. You have struggled with God and with men, and you have won; so your name will be Israel.'" Genesis 32:28 (GNT)*

1. Our real struggle in life is with God. In Genesis 32:28 above, Jacob struggles and receives a new identity. Why is it important for us to be open to accepting a new identity in our struggle with God?

*"You are always righteous, Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" Jeremiah 12:1 (NIV)*

2. There are examples in the Bible where God blesses people who complain to him in faith. What complaints does Jeremiah bring to God? Why would God welcome complaints about what we think is unfair or painful?
3. What does it mean to complain "to" God as opposed to "about" God? What does it mean to complain to God in faith?

*"Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my plea! Answer me because you are faithful and righteous." Psalm 143:1 (NLT)*

4. One step in successfully lamenting to God is appealing to God's nature, as David did in Psalm 143 above. But what is God's nature? Have several people in your group share their feelings about what God's nature or character is.
5. God makes many promises in the Bible. Think about what they are and discuss some of them. What promises has God made in the Bible that are important to you, and why?

*"Even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!" Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NLT)*

6. Part of sharing our struggles with God is to lament yet express our total trust in God. What are common unanswered questions about life that people have? Why can we still choose to rejoice in the Lord?

### Diving Deeper (optional)

1. We have struggles with others and with ourselves, but our real struggle is with God. In struggling with our problems, we sometimes run from God and doubt his wisdom, unwilling to give him control. Seeing and acknowledging God in the midst of our life situations in faith is an act of worship. Where have you doubted God's wisdom and been reluctant to give up control?
2. God wants us to know the answers to our questions, but we must first admit to him who we are. In what areas are you struggling with God, and what do you need to admit to him about yourself so he can begin a change in you?

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**

## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Name some common complaints teenagers express to their parents.
- Help group members understand that God loves interacting with us when we share our struggles with him by lamenting to him about our life problems.
- Encourage group members to pray through lamenting by (a) complaining to God about what’s painful or unfair; (b) appealing to God’s nature; (c) reminding God of his promises; and (d) expressing total trust in God.
- Pray: Dear God, you know all my struggles—my fears, addictions, limitations and concerns. You see the places where I am heartbroken. Like Jacob, all my struggles are rooted in you. More than just trying harder, I realize my struggle is surrendering things—the places I think I am in control. So today I give myself 100% to you—my finances, relationships, all of me. I want you to be the Lord and manager of my entire life.

### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.