**Learn in Community**

Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**How does God help me overcome?**

For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. ([Philippians 4:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Php4.13))

*Life can be full of challenges. Thankfully, when we make the decision to live for God, we can have confidence that we’re no longer walking through life alone. Because God wants us to succeed, He commits to being with us every step of the way. In a challenging and chaotic world, God offers His help to us throughout every difficult circumstance.*

*He knows that we’ll face fears, decisions, and emotions we don’t feel equipped to handle. The good news is that He has a plan for every fear, every worry, every emotion, every sin, and every decision we face. God’s desire is for us to live free from the worries of our world, so we can enjoy living fully for Him. When we don’t know what to do, we can turn to God for the answer. He will help us overcome every challenge.*

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| ***First time leading* Learn *for Adults? Check out the*** [***Facilitator Guide***](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf)***.*** |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**When you were growing up, what was your relationship with your siblings like? Did you deal with rivalry, jealousy, or competition in your family? |

Suffering is so very personal. When we enter seasons of suffering, we often feel isolated and alone. We feel like no one can understand what we’re going through. Help and hope seem far away from us. When we’re at our lowest, we can’t even imagine a day when things will be better. Suffering has a way of digging us into our own pit of despair.

But Jesus can minister to us during our suffering because He understands. Jesus knows our suffering because He suffered firsthand. Author Tim Keller said it this way, “The God of the Bible takes our misery and suffering so seriously that he was willing to take it on himself.” One day God will wipe away all our tears and stop all our trials. But until that day, our faithful God will be with us through our suffering.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: What difficult situation did you face when you really depended on God like sheep depend on a shepherd?



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| **QUESTION**What difficult situation did you face when you really depended on God like sheep depend on a shepherd? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son. Jacob openly showed his favoritism by giving Joseph an expensive custom-made coat. Understandably, this made Joseph’s older brothers jealous, so they decided to take matters into their own hands. They set in motion a chain of events that led Joseph into years of suffering. But as Joseph suffered, we’ll see that God was with him every step of the way. Not only that, but God blessed Joseph and his family through the suffering.

**Our Suffering Can Come from Unexpected Places**

Read [Genesis 37:1–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge37.1-11).

Sometimes in life, we experience suffering just when things are going great for us. Joseph had received a special gift from his dad. His dreams showed he would be elevated above his older brothers. Life was good!

However, sharing his dreams with his brothers was the starting point of Joseph’s suffering. His own family could not accept Joseph being elevated above them. Suffering is much more difficult when the people who cause us pain are the ones closest to us. But Joseph still had these dreams to hold onto hope when life got hard.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Joseph’s brothers were upset about his dreams? |

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| **QUESTION**Have you experienced tense relations with a loved one? What can you learn from Joseph’s experience about how to react in a situation like this? |

**Our Suffering Can Be Out of Our Control**

Read [Genesis 37:18–28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge37.18-28).

Joseph’s brothers intended to kill him, but God had a plan to protect him. His brother Reuben secretly wanted to save Joseph’s life by rescuing him. However, traveling traders appeared at that moment and changed Reuben’s plan. Joseph’s future took an unexpected turn. Even though God provided an escape, it must have been difficult for Joseph to see God’s hand in his situation at the time.

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| **QUESTION**Joseph’s suffering was caused by forces outside of his control. Which one is worse for you—going through suffering or feeling out of control? |

**Our Suffering Can Impact Others around Us**

Read [Genesis 37:29–36](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge37.29-36).

Joseph was hated by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and eventually sold as a slave. But he wasn’t the only one who suffered. His brother Reuben mourned. Joseph’s father Jacob was heartbroken beyond comfort. Similarly, others around us can suffer because of our situation.

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| **QUESTION**What might it have meant to Joseph if he had known his brother and father mourned for him? |

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| **QUESTION**What keeps us from seeing others who are sharing our suffering? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *When Joseph was sold by his brothers, the individuals that he was sold to are identified as a group of Midianites and Ishmaelites. Ancient audiences would have immediately remembered that these groups were relatives of Joseph and his family. The Midianites were the descendants of Midian, one of the sons of Abraham and Keturah, his wife after Sarah died. The Ishmaelites were the descendant of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through his Egyptian slave Hagar. Both of these men were half-brothers of Isaac, who was Joseph’s grandfather. Therefore, Joseph’s betrayal ran deeper than just his immediate family. Whether they knew it or not, it included his cousins as well.* |

**Reflect**

**God Helps Me with Suffering**

No matter what causes our journey of suffering, we are never alone. God is with us. For Joseph, going from the height of a dream that set him apart to the depth of imprisonment could not have been easy. If we read the full story, we’ll see that the same God who gave Joseph the dreams was also with him in the pit, the prison, and eventually the palace. God helped Joseph every step of the way. God’s love for Joseph and His choice of Joseph did not prevent him from experiencing hardship. It did something better; it made Joseph’s suffering count.

We can also make our suffering count by trusting God and believing His promises for our life. We can use our troubling times as opportunities to build our faith, perseverance, and hope. God used Joseph’s suffering as a canvas to paint the picture of all Israel’s redemption during many years of famine. God can use our sufferings as well. Whether our suffering is brought on by our own sin or situations out of our control, we can rest in the truth that God helps us in our suffering.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**What is the hardest thing you’ve had to face? Could you sense God’s presence (either directly or through someone else) in your time of trouble? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some things suffering has taught you about God? |

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| **QUESTION**How can going through suffering make us useful to others? |

**Activate**

Joseph’s suffering and God’s redemption were eventually a powerful testimony to those who knew his story. Our response to suffering can make God visible to those around us too. It’s important for us to share our testimony with friends who are suffering to help them have faith in our loving God. They too can put their hope in the God who made all things work together for Joseph’s good. God’s Word reveals that He’s still able to make all things work together for our good too.

**Challenge**

Do you know someone who is currently going through a hard time? Would you share with them the testimony of a time when God helped you in your time of suffering? To share your testimony, first write out the most essential details of what brought you to the place of suffering. Explain what God did to help you, including others He sent to walk with you. Finish your testimony with an attitude of thanks, detailing any lessons you’ve learned about God and yourself through your experience. Encourage them with the truth that the same God who met you can meet them in the middle of their suffering too.

If you’re having a hard time sharing your own testimony, give a message of hope by sharing Joseph’s story with your friend.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week. |

Before next time, continue to spend time in God’s Word with the personal devotions.

**What We Believe**

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| Some have tried to penetrate the mystery of suffering, but in doing so have gone beyond God’s Word. There are examples in Scripture of people suffering because of sin in their life. But righteous people suffer too. Others have suggested that God has a special love for those with long-term pain and suffering, knowing they can handle what others could not. But the love of God to every person is beyond comprehension or deserving. The answer the Bible gives concerning our pain and suffering is that we all live in a fallen, sin-cursed world. God did not make it that way. We have made it that way, from Adam and Eve to the present, “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard” ([Romans 3:23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro3.23)). |

**Learn on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: God Helps Me with Suffering**

Read [Genesis 37:1–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge37.1-11), [18–36](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge37.18-36).

Look back over Learn in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about His desire and ability to help you when you face suffering? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: God Understands Our Suffering**

Read [Hebrews 2:16–18](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb2.16-18).

Jesus experienced human suffering firsthand. Therefore, He has great compassion toward our trials and struggles. He moves on our behalf as one who understands. He wants to help you through your suffering.

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| **QUESTION**How does knowing that Jesus suffered during His human life comfort you in the middle of your own suffering? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some hard circumstances you’re currently facing? What can you do to invite Jesus into your situation? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: God Is with Us When We’re Suffering**

Read [2 Corinthians 1:3–7](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co1.3-7).

We’re not exempt from suffering. But God, the primary Source of comfort for believers, helps us during hard times. In fact, we may feel the presence of God even more during our suffering. His love is available to us always, even in the valley of our suffering.

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| **QUESTION**As believers, we may be tempted to interpret suffering as a sign that God doesn’t love us. How does today’s passage disprove this idea? |

In the family of God when one of us suffers, others of us may have experienced a similar suffering. Unlike Joseph who suffered alone, we have fellow believers who can share our suffering with compassion in their heart.

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| **QUESTION**Sometimes God’s comfort and love are available to us through other people when we’re suffering. How have you experienced this during difficult circumstances? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: Our Suffering Can Impact Others**

Read [1 Corinthians 12:22–27](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co12.22-27).

We’re the body of Christ. Each of us makes up individual parts of the body. When our eye is hurt, our whole body suffers. If our hands are not coordinated or our feet stumble, we struggle. In the same way, when one part of the body of Christ hurts, it affects others as well. Our response to this shared suffering is extending care for one another.

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| **QUESTION**Who suffers with you when you go through difficult times? |

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| **QUESTION**In the global Church, many believers in other countries face persecution, threats, and even death for their faith. How can those of us connected to them by faith take part in their suffering in a meaningful way? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: Suffering for Our Faith Is a Privilege**

Read [Philippians 1:28–30](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Php1.28-30).

As believers we not only have opportunity to trust in God, but also the privilege of suffering for our faith. The way we suffer can be a witness to those who don’t believe in God. In this way, even our suffering can serve to bring others to God.

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| **QUESTION**What has another believer’s suffering taught you about God? |

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| **QUESTION**Knowing that your suffering can bring others to God, how can you approach hard times with that in mind? |