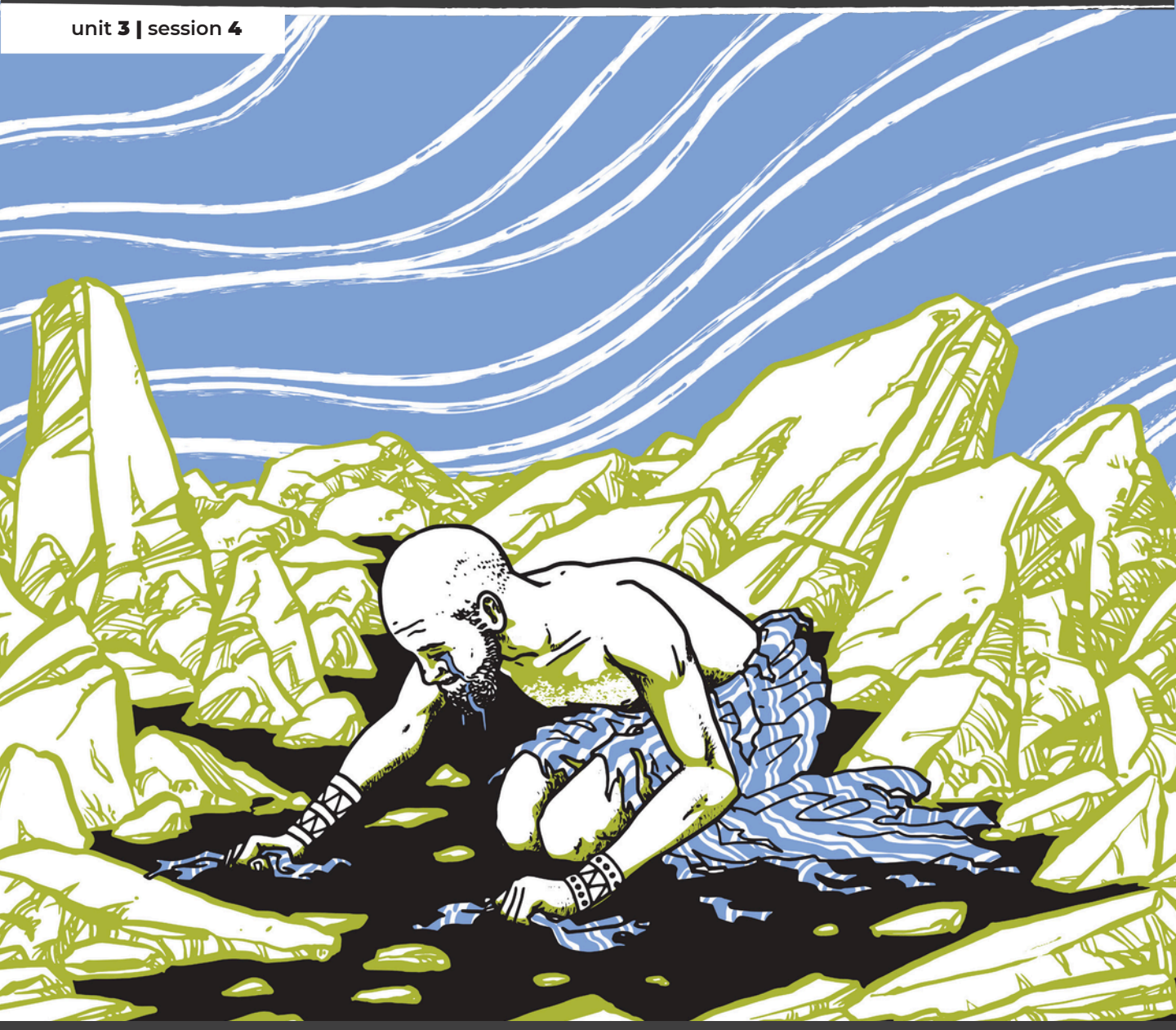
BLESSED BE THE NAME

unit **3** | session **4**

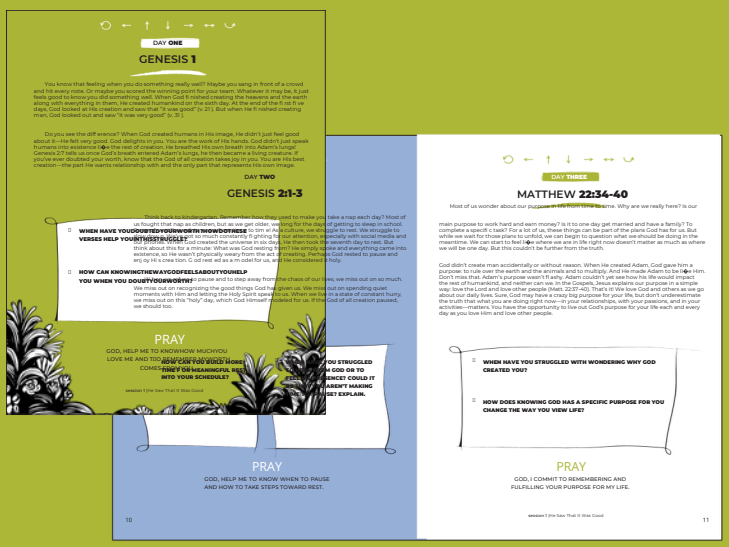


CHRIST **CONNECTION**

Job, aman ofintegrity, suffered greatly at the hands of Satan, yet he endured and received the Lord's compassion and mercy (James 5:11). Jesus, the perfect Son of God, was tempted, betrayed, and crucified by the work of Satan, but Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him (Heb. 12:2). This was God's will for the salvation of sinners.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

In addition to the group portions of this study, the **Daily Discipleship Guide** also includes five days of devotions following each session. As we journey through the storyline of Scripture over the course of three years, we won't have time to cover some sections of the Bible. These devotions will help with that, filling in the gaps in the biblical storyline and allowing more opportunities to cover biblical themes and insights not discussed during group time. These devotions help you know how to read and interpret the Bible for yourself. Symbols for the Seven Arrows reading method are provided at the beginning of each week's devotions as a reminder of common questions to ask about Scripture as you read each day. The devotion pages are perforated so that you can take them home with you.



SEVEN ARROWS

OF BIBLE READING

What does this passage say?

What did this passage mean to its original audience?

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about man?

What does this passage demand of me?

How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

How does this passage prompt me to pray?

DAY **ONE**

1 THESSALONIANS **5:16-18**

A lot of us were probably taught to say thank you when someone gives us a gift. And a lot of us have probably also experienced that awkward moment at Christmas or at a birthday party when a relative gives us something we've clearly outgrown, like a doll or some other embarrassing toy. It can be difficult to say thanks, right?

It's even more difficult to express gratitude to God when life isn't going our way. Instead, we experience doubt and wonder why the Lord is allowing pain to enter our lives. These verses encourage us to always rejoice and to give thanks in every single situation—even the difficult ones. How are we supposed to do this? Well, it isn't always easy. But can do this when we remember that God never changes even when our circumstances do. We can rejoice when we consider that any suffering here is temporary and that God sees it and feels compassion toward us in our suffering. We can give thanks when we remember that God made a way for us to one day live in perfect peace, free from all of sin's effects, through the death of His Son, Jesus. When we center our minds on these truths, we can live out the commands in these verses. We can fix our gaze on Christ and His kingdom, where we'll one day live forever.

- **WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIFE MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO REJOICE AND GIVE THANKS?**

- **HOW COULD PRAYING CONSTANTLY HELP SHIFT YOUR MINDSET TO FIX YOUR GAZE ON JESUS?**

PRAY

LORD, HELP ME TO HAVE A HEART OF GRATITUDE. HELP ME TO REJOICE IN ALL THINGS BECAUSE I KNOW YOUR PERFECT KINGDOM IS COMING SOON.



DAY **TWO**

PHILIPPIANS **4:4-7**

Worry can act a lot like weeds in a flowerbed. Weeds take root and quickly spread everywhere. They steal nutrients from the flowers and choke out everything of beauty. Worry can be like those weeds, quickly consuming our hearts and minds when we allow it to continue unchecked. It can steal the joy and beauty of the moment we're in. And many of us simply don't know how to stop it. We worry about so many things: our future, our friends, our grades, our families, our health. It can feel impossible sometimes not to worry.

There seems to be some connection between giving thanks and trusting God instead of worrying. What happens when we give thanks and rejoice? Well, it involves us looking back at how God has been faithful in our lives. When we do this, we can see God's provision—the way He takes care of us. We can see that God didn't leave us, even when it may have felt like He did in the moment. We can look back and see that God worked things for our good that we never imagined could turn out for our benefit. When we look back and give thanks, we can rejoice and know that we have no reason to worry about the present or the future because it's all in God's sovereign hands. And this will lead us to experience a peace that doesn't make sense in the circumstances. It leads us to rest in who God is even when we face impossible situations because we know He's been faithful.

IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH WORRY?

WHERE CAN YOU LOOK BACK AND SEE GOD'S FAITHFULNESS? HOW CAN THIS HELP YOU REJOICE AND GIVE THANKS?

PRAY

FATHER, I SURRENDER ALL OF MY WORRY TO YOU. INSTEAD, I COMMIT TO SEEING HOW YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN FAITHFUL. I GIVE THANKS AND REJOICE NO MATTER WHAT.

DAY **THREE**

JAMES **5:10-11**

Have you ever had a bad day that turned into a bad week? Or maybe it even turned into a bad month or year because your difficult circumstances didn't get better as quickly as you would've liked. When we're walking through challenging seasons, we can often wonder, "How long is this going to last?" We can grow impatient for our situation to improve or for the struggle to end. As we read about Job this week, we can certainly imagine that Job wondered, "What else? How long?"

James wrote this letter to the twelve tribes of Israel who had been scattered all over foreign lands due to persecution. James encouraged them to press on and endure (James 1:2-3). But he also urged them to remember the prophets and Job. Why? They suffered greatly and their pain wasn't lifted quickly, but they are commended because they endured. They kept going. They kept speaking God's truth. They kept worshiping God even when life was deeply painful.

James also reminded the tribes that "the Lord is compassionate and merciful" (v. 11). And this can help us endure pain and suffering too. When we remember that God doesn't delight in our pain— when we remember that He is actually there with us in our pain—we can press on. We can hold on a little longer. We have the hope of eternity, and even if certain situations here never improve, we can be assured that we'll experience perfect peace and freedom from all suffering when we enter heaven.

- **WHAT SITUATION HAS YOU WONDERING, "HOW MUCH LONGER"? EXPLAIN.**

- **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO EITHER ENDURE A DIFFICULT SEASON NOW OR TO PREPARE FOR DIFFICULTIES THAT MAY COME?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR BEING WITH ME IN MY SUFFERING. THANK YOU FOR THE HOPE OF HEAVEN. HELP ME TO ENDURE, KNOWING THAT ONE DAY I'LL JOIN YOU THERE.

DAY **FOUR**

JOHN **9:1-11**

Walking through horrible circumstances or watching others walk through them can often cause us to wonder why bad things happen. Many of us have probably asked why tragedy happens to good people, like a baby who is born with a terminal disease. We question why God would allow this. It doesn't seem fair; it just feels wrong.

When Jesus met the man who was born blind, His disciples asked a similar question: why? Specifically, they wanted to know if the man was born blind because of his parents' sin. It's a valid question even if it seems a little odd. Ultimately, every bit of pain, suffering, and death results from sin. Adam and Eve's choice to sin and disobey God ushered in all of these effects. But Jesus told His disciples that this man's blindness wasn't because of sin: it had a specific purpose. Jesus would give this man sight—*ex nihilo,* or out of nothing. He didn't just give the man something he once had but lost; he gave him something he never had to begin with. The entire point was to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. The man's blindness, though incredibly painful, had a purpose. It was instrumental in showing others who Jesus was. And in a way, he was privileged in his suffering.

Is suffering often a result of sin? Sure. But our suffering can have purpose. We can reflect who Jesus is to those watching us suffer. We can help them see that Jesus is the Son of God.

WHEN HAVE YOU WANTED TO ASK GOD, "WHY?" HOW HAVE YOU SEEN PURPOSE COME FROM SUFFERING?

HOW DOES IT COMFORT YOU TO KNOW GOD CAN USE SUFFERING?

PRAY

FATHER, ESPECIALLY IN MY SUFFERING, HELP ME TO REFLECT WHO YOU ARE TO OTHERS. I COMMIT TO DEPENDING ON AND WORSHIPING YOU.



DAY **FIVE**

JAMES **1:2-4**

Think of a time when you had to push yourself to keep going. Maybe you were running in a race or lifting heavy weight. Maybe you were studying for a really difficult test or working a late shift to help with the financial needs of your family. Many of us struggle with the desire to quit. We don't see the payoff, and we certainly don't feel joy in what we're doing. Our stamina threatens to give out; we don't feel strong enough; we grow tired. But there's usually a reward in enduring.

Sometimes it's more difficult with spiritual matters. We can't always see what we're up against, like in the examples above. Instead, maybe we're facing depression, anxiety, worry, loneliness, or bitterness. And in this battle, many of us find that our walk with God is one of the first things to suffer. This passage encourages us to find joy when we experience trials. Why? Because trials pay off by growing our ability to endure. To find joy when we're facing emotional, physical, or spiritual struggles doesn't seem possible, but James explained why it is: trials produce endurance. When we lean into God during suffering, our faith strengthens. We lean in by continuing to press forward in our walk with the Lord even during our struggles: We continue to meet with Him in prayer; we stay in His Word; we worship; and we stay connected to godly community. And through God's goodness, our trials aren't wasted. They result in endurance—a great reward in maturing our faith.

WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH WANTING TO GIVE UP?

WHY DO YOU THINK TRIALS HAVE A WAY OF HELPING US MATURE IN OUR FAITH MORE THAN COMFORT AND EASE?

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR USING THE TRIALS IN MY LIFE TO MAKE MY FAITH STRONGER AND MORE MATURE. HELP ME FIND JOY IN THIS TRUTH.

