**Study Series: A Long Obedience in the Same Direction**

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**Lesson Title: “Hope” (pp. 41-50)**

September 27, 2020 Session 04

**The main point of this lesson is:** Suffering is a reality of life, but so is the opportunity to hope in God.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults give dignity to suffering by hoping in God.

**Key Bible Passage:** Psalm 130

Before the Session

**Bring** an extra pair of shoes to the session. (Steps 1 and 7)

During the Session

**Step 1. Introduction / Discussion Starter**

**Hold up** one of the shoes and **drop it**.

Then **hold up** the other shoe for a few seconds (long enough to be a little uncomfortable).

**Ask adults** if they’ve ever lived through a season filled with so many difficulties that they lived each day “waiting for the other shoe to drop.”

**Ask:** What do we need most during those difficult seasons? (Be sure to **mention hope** if no one else does.)

**Read** the main point of this lesson statement (p. 51). This session explores how to give dignity to suffering by hoping in God.

**Step 2. Day One – “I Pray to GOD…and Wait for What He’ll Say and Do”**

**Ask:** Would you agree “to be human is to be in trouble”? Why?

**Use** the author’s remarks **to analyze** the difference between pain and suffering. (Day One, p. 42. Keep the **focus** on the reality and meaning of human suffering.)

**Refer** to Day One, activity 1 (p. 42) **in a general sense** to determine varied responses to suffering.

**Assert** suffering with dignity is not denying feelings of despair, depression, or anger, but acknowledging and dealing with them appropriately.

**Invite a volunteer to read** the Day One margin/pull quote (p. 42).

**Discuss** Day One, activity 2 (p. 42).

**State** Psalm 130 can help believers reach Job’s decision.

**Read** the last sentence of Day One (p. 42).

**Invite a volunteer to read** Psalm 130 from The Message (printed in Day One, p. 41).

**Step 3. Day Two – Giving Dignity to Suffering, Part 1**

**Ask:** What might some people think or feel if they heard a person voice the anguished prayer of Psalm 130:1? Why is that?

**Read** the Day Two margin/pull quote (p. 44).

**Use** remarks and activities from Day Two (pp. 43-44) **to determine** ways believers can give dignity to suffering.

**As participants state** those ways, **record responses** on a marker board or other large writing surface.

**Step 4. Day Three – Giving Dignity to Suffering, Part 2**

**State:** While the world might say suffering should be covered up, Psalm 130 tells us suffering is to be “held up and proclaimed” (p. 44).

**Analyze** the difference between holding up suffering and celebrating it (p. 45).

**Read and discuss** the quotes by Nouwen and MacDonald from Day Three (p. 45).

**As the group discusses** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 45), **record on the board** dignified ways to handle suffering.

**Point out** 1 Peter 4:19 tells us to entrust ourselves to God when we suffer.

**Ask:** What do you see about God in Psalm 130 that can enable us to entrust ourselves to Him?

**Add to the discussion** with remarks from the last three paragraphs of Day Three (p. 46).

**Invite volunteers to read** Psalm 130:3-4 and 1 John 1:8-9.

**Ask:**

1. What must we do to receive God’s forgiveness? (This would be a good place to **present** the plan of salvation—see the inside front cover.)
2. If God forgives so freely, why don’t we feel forgiven?
3. How does refusing to forgive ourselves rob us of hope?

**Declare:** God doesn’t keep a record of our sins, so neither should we!

**Step 5. Day Four – Employed to Wait**

**Request adults state** the two great realities identified in Psalm 130 (p. 47).

**Ask:**

1. What does Psalm 130:5-6 call us to do in the midst of those realities?
2. What does it call us to be?
3. How might being a watchman sound passive and idle?
4. How is it actually very passionate and active?

**Invite volunteers to read** from various translations the repeated phrase in verse 6.

**Consider reasons** the psalmist repeated that phrase.

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 (p. 47).

**Note** the author gives an equation to live with the reality of suffering with dignity.

**Write** Wait + Watch = Hope on the board.

**Evaluate** how waiting and watching can lead to hope rather than despair or discouragement.

**Draw attention** to the margin/pull quote in Day Four (p. 48).

**Invite responses** to Day Four, activity 2 (p. 49).

**Step 6. Day Five – An Eye Specialist and a Painter**

**Evaluate** what the author meant by saying we need an eye specialist rather than a painter when we suffer (p. 50).

**Analyze** how Psalm 130 functions as an eye specialist.

**Invite a volunteer to read** the Day Five paragraph (p. 50) beginning “For the person who suffers ….”

**Ask:**

1. What are skills of waiting and watching that we have observed in Psalm 130? (**Draw attention** to the responses recorded on the board and **record** additional skills mentioned.)
2. How does learning and activating those skills give dignity to suffering?

**Step 7. Live Out the Lesson**

**Draw attention** to the pair of shoes.

**Declare:** Every day when you put on your shoes, remember the decision you must make in this difficult world. You can face suffering with pessimism, anxiously waiting for the other shoe to drop, or you can give dignity to suffering by standing firm in your hope in God.

**Urge adults to practice** the skills of waiting and watching this week.

**Close in prayer.**