

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

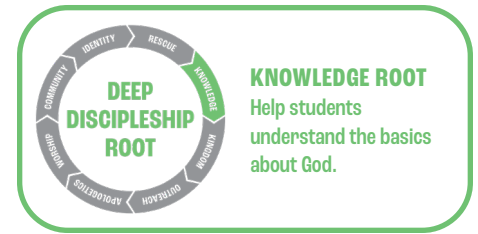
Disciples of Christ trust that God is always present, even when life is hard.

SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 11:25–30, HEBREWS 4:14–16, JAMES 4:6–8

OVERVIEW

Today is the final lesson in our When Life is Hard series, focusing on the Knowledge Root. In the midst of difficult times, *disciples of Christ trust that God is always present, even when life is hard*. There is comfort knowing that we are never alone, and God is always with us.



FACILITATOR NOTE: We've given you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1–2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3–5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- Did you ever get separated from your parents and lost somewhere when you were a kid? If so, what was that experience like?
- What circumstances cause you to feel all alone in life? What do you do during those occasions?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3–5 minutes

- Disciples of Christ trust that God is always present, even when life is hard.
- Life is hard, but God is always with us, even when we're hurting. In those times of hurt, God provides some amazing blessings and comfort for us as we go to him.

Read Matthew 11:25–30 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- What's been the hardest thing you have experienced in your life?
- What do you think true rest from Jesus looks or feels like?
- What areas of your life feel "heavy" that you need to turn over to Jesus?



Say something like: God knows life is hard. We may be surprised when we encounter hardships, but God isn't surprised at all. Because of this, God provides a great truth in this passage for us to hold on to—Jesus gives us rest when we come to him. This is an incredible blessing God has given us for when life is hard.

Read Hebrews 4:14–16 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- What is your initial reaction to hearing that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses?
- How do Jesus' struggles and sufferings give us confidence?
- How can knowing God is with you change the way you view going through hard times and experiencing hurt?



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Say something like: When God became flesh and walked among us in the person of Jesus, he experienced a hard life. Like us, he had to deal with various hardships and pain. He knows what it's like to hurt. He experienced it deeper than most of us can even comprehend. Why is this important? It means we have a Savior to run to who fully understands how hard life can be and can relate to our struggles.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read James 4:6–8 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How would you describe "going to God" to someone hearing it for the first time?
- What can you do to go to God when life is hard?



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Say something like: We must choose to go to God. In all these passages, the Bible informs us that we should respond to hardships by going to God. To experience rest, we must go to Jesus. To experience a sympathetic Savior, we must go to Jesus. To get more grace from God, we must submit to him. God is waiting for us. All we have to do is go to him.

CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5–7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how you've gone to God and trusted his presence during hard times.



SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

Example: Horatio G. Spafford wrote the hymn "It is Well with My Soul." What led him to write that hymn was a story of significant loss. In 1873, Spafford's wife and four daughters boarded a ship headed across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. Four days into their journey, the boat they were on collided with another. Their ship and all its passengers sunk below the water. Spafford's wife survived, but his four daughters did not. While on a boat headed to Europe to meet his wife, he wrote the hymn "It is Well with My Soul" over what was assumed to be the spot his daughters died. Despite the tragedy he experienced, Spafford was still able to write, "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul."¹

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have time, you could play this hymn so students can hear the whole thing. Several YouTube videos include the lyrics as well.



- What do you think gave Spafford the ability to say “it is well” even when his life was unimaginably hard?
- How could you get to a place where you could say “it is well” regardless of how difficult your circumstances are?

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2–3 minutes

Disciples of Christ trust that God is always present, even when life is hard.

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5–10 minutes

Make a plan of specific steps you will take to experience God’s presence. Remember that he is there for the good and challenging times. Share that plan with a friend who can remind you of it.

Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



MAKE LIFE APPLICATION



HOLD STUDENTS ACCOUNTABLE

FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.

CLOSING

PRAYER

2–3 minutes

Take time to let your students pray for each other’s applications in the upcoming weeks.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

“It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

Deuteronomy 31:8 (ESV)

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¹ Ph.D. “Story Behind the Song: It Is Well with My Soul.” *St. Augustine Record*. October 16, 2014. <https://www.staugustine.com/story/lifestyle/faiht/2014/10/17/story-behind-song-it-well-my-soul/985525007/>.

