



## HANGING ON IN GOD'S APPARENT ABSENCE

Hang On!

April 30, 2022

### 1 PREPARING

#### A. THE SOURCE

**Romans 8:28 (NIV)** • “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

**Matthew 5:43-45 (NIV)** • “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

**1 Peter 4:16-19 (NIV)** • “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”

**James 1:2-4 (NIV)** • “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perse-

verance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

**James 1:12 (NIV)** • “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

**Matthew 5:10 (NIV)** • “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

**Revelation 22:12 (NIV)** • “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”

**1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)** • “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

**Hebrews 2:17, 18 (NIV)** • “For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

**2 Peter 2:9 (NIV)** • “If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and

to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.”

**Job 30:25, 26 (NIV)** • “Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? Yet when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

## **B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “HANGING ON IN GOD’S APPARENT ABSENCE”**

One reality touching all of humanity is tragedy. Some say “bad things happen because of sin” or “one day God will make it all right,” but neither leaves believers or unbelievers with much to fortify them through tragedy. This lesson has two goals: (1) to help us understand the nature and purpose of trials and trouble and (2) to help us understand what it means to trust God in those moments. The major skill needed to do this is to be clear about what we know about God without letting what we don’t know confuse us. Ultimately when tragedy strikes, we will find ourselves striving to breathe, but with God we have what it takes to see us through. We may not be seeing clearly, but we can still see.

## **C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “HANGING ON IN GOD’S APPARENT ABSENCE”**

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Explore the realities of pain and suffering and the questions people assume about their source.
2. Understand what the Bible says about trials and apply it to the questions people have about God.
3. Develop a thoughtful approach to handling trouble in light of an abiding trust in what God says.

## **D. MATERIALS NEEDED**

**Beginning** • (Activity A) a piece of rope six to eight feet long for each group of three or four students; (Activity B) a few rocks that fit in the palm of the hand (one for each student, if possible), blindfold.

**Connecting** • Bibles and/or student lessons, handout (p. 54), pens or pencils, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

**Applying** • Paper, pens or pencils.

## **2 BRIDGING**

### **A. WHERE WE’VE BEEN**

**Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:**

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

### **B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS**

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at [www.realtimefaith.net](http://www.realtimefaith.net))
- >> Service project reports

## **3 BEGINNING**

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with

one another) and to study from the Word.

## A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready** • The purpose of this exercise is to get students to consider how enduring trials faithfully increases our ability to endure more. They will be given a piece of rope about six to eight feet long. Their task will be to do whatever they need to the rope to make it easier to hold on to. They will find that making loops, knots, belts, and harnesses are ways to redistribute the weight so they can hang on to the rope.

**Get set** • Divide the students into groups of three or four and give each group a piece of rope. (This exercise is an example, so you don't have to have climbing rope. Just make sure they don't try to scale the building with a piece of string when you're not looking.)

**Go** • When each group has its piece of rope, **say: Imagine you were stuck on the side of a mountain and you had only this rope to hang on to. What could you do to this rope to make it easier to hold on to? If you could do anything to this rope before you had to rely on it, what would you do?** (Some students will make knots in the rope or even loops to rest their weight on. Some have manufactured a harness to sit in.)

**Debriefing** • Go around the class and ask the students to report on their plan to hang on.

**Ask: What did you choose to do to make your rope easier to hang on to? Why did you choose to do it this way? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach? What analogies about enduring trials can you make by looking at tying knots in the rope to hang on to?**

## B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready** • Collect a few rocks that fit in the palm of your hand easily (if possible, one for each student). Try to find as many shapes

as you can. The goal of the exercise is for the students to choose a rock (they will do this blindfolded) that they would be willing to rest their weight on. Make the rocks small enough to illustrate that when we go through trials, we don't always have a lot to stand on, but we have enough. The students need to be able to stand on the rock, without touching the ground, for 30 seconds. The more varied the shape of the rocks, the more choices they have to make about which one they will choose.

**Get set • Say: Line up from one end of the classroom to the other by age, oldest to the left and youngest to the right. And one more thing: "You can't say a word!" No talking. You have to communicate in other ways.**

**Go** • Once the students have lined up, from oldest to youngest, walk down the line and have them close their eyes and choose a rock out of your box or bag. They are not to feel all the rocks, just reach in and grab one. When everyone has a rock invite them to see if the rock will hold their weight.

**Debriefing • Ask: Why did you choose the rock you chose? (actually didn't have much choice) How do you feel about resting your entire weight on something so small? How is this like living by faith amid the struggles and traumas of life? When in your life have you felt there wasn't much to rest your weight upon? What is significant about going from oldest to youngest? (actually nothing)**

## C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

**Share the following illustration in your own words.**

Three illustrations to consider about hanging on in trials:

"A vine clings to an oak tree and in so doing finds the protection in times of trial that preserves it. If a violent storm should arise and the vine is on the side of the tree away from the wind, the tree serves to protect the vine from the wind, which would otherwise tear it away

and rip it into shreds. If the vine is on the exposed side of the tree, the wind serves only to press the vine closer to the tree it already clings to.”—Michael Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), p. 382.

“A man was shopping in a grocery store. His young son followed closely behind, carrying a large basket. The father loaded the basket with one thing after another until another customer began to feel sorry for the boy. She said, ‘That’s a pretty heavy load for a young fellow like you, isn’t it?’ The boy turned to the woman and said, ‘Oh, don’t worry. My dad knows how much I can carry.’”—*Ibid.*, p. 380.

“A young boy carried the cocoon of a moth into his house to watch the fascinating events that would take place when the moth emerged. When the moth finally started to break out of his cocoon, the boy noticed how very hard the moth had to struggle. The process was very slow. In an effort to help, he reached down and widened the opening of the cocoon. Soon the moth was out of its prison. But as the boy watched, the wings remained shriveled. Something was wrong. What the boy had not realized was that the struggle to get out of the cocoon was essential for the moth’s muscle system to develop. In a misguided effort to relieve a struggle, the boy had crippled the future of this creature. Trials are necessary for growth.”—*Ibid.*, p. 384.

**Debriefing • Ask:** Which illustration did you relate to most? Who has gone through a tremendous amount of suffering in your sphere of influence? What are some of the questions for God or problems with God people have when they are suffering?

## 4 CONNECTING

### A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

**In your own words, share the following:**  
Every kingdom has its own history.

Understanding the big picture is an important reference point in working through pain, suffering, and loss. No amount of knowledge lessens our pain or frustration when “life turns on us” or “Satan attacks us” or “God allows things to happen.” The most important thing to realize is that as much as we know, there is still so much we don’t see. This is the primary problem in understanding **why** bad things happen the way they do, because we have no explanation for tragedies—other than they just happen or they are the result of living in a sinful world. When we have these bad things happen to us we look around for answers because we want them to stop. And in our thinking, knowing why things happen may help us find a way to stop them from happening. But ultimately, we can’t avoid problems and suffering, and that causes many to get bitter. This is why we need a guiding rule to help us.

**Try this one:** Don’t let what you don’t know confuse you about what you do know.

Distribute the handout (p. 54), along with pens or pencils. **Say:** We are going to take a simple quiz. Please answer true or false to the statements by yourself, and then we will discuss the answers. When they have finished, go through the answers quickly. (All of the answers are true—some may want to argue the nuances—but we will get a chance to explain further in a moment.)

**Ask:** Which statements are no-brainers or easy to explain? Which of these true-false statements are more difficult to agree with than others? Why?

Distribute or call the students’ attention to the Bible Insights section of the student lesson. **Say:** Look at the verses listed in the student lesson and see if any of them gives insight into whether these statements are true or not. Go back now and write a verse that corresponds to the statements on the handout.

When the students have matched statements with verses, have volunteers complete the “true” statements with an “and” or “but” attached to the end of the statement. For instance: “Heaven is real, **but** it is not here yet.” Or “God never

breaks His promises, **and** in time that will never be questioned.”

## B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

**Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.**

**Debriefing • Say:** When tragedy strikes others, it is easier for us than for them to see the bigger picture. To those who are in the middle of the pain, it is terribly difficult to “shut off the pain and just think about what’s going on.” So how do we hang on when our world falls apart? Think about the stories mentioned earlier.

## C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

**Ask:** Should we try to explain every problem that assaults people? How should we answer or respond to the pain people experience in life? What are some things you shouldn’t say?

Have your students refer to the passages listed in the Bible Insights section of the student lesson and any others they can think of in the Bible, and choose which verse they would use to respond to each of the persons going through the trials listed below. You may want to list the situations on the white/chalkboard.

- >> A young family has to file bankruptcy and start all over again.
- >> A young child is abused and bullied.
- >> Thousands of children starve to death while the cows in other countries never go hungry.
- >> Two teenage boys lose both of their parents.
- >> A mother gives birth to a beautiful child and five days later dies for no apparent reason.
- >> Entire villages are murdered as a result of political strife.

**Ask:** How do we as children in God’s kingdom respond to these events? What do we say about God? What do we explain? What do we remain silent about? How can we encourage

others to hang on? What verses or promises seem to make sense to you personally?

## 5 APPLYING

### A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

**In your own words, share the following:**

Another way to look at how to hang on is the sport of rock climbing. Have you ever noticed how a small piece of rock can hold a tremendous amount of weight? In times of trouble we need to put the full force of our weight on something strong. Often, what we have doesn’t seem like much to stand on, but it is enough. Whether you use the idea of footholds or knots in a rope, we all need to know what we believe and know to be true—no matter what happens.

Distribute paper and pens or pencils. Ask your students to make two columns on a piece of paper. On the left side, write “What I Know to Be True” and in the other column, “What I Don’t Know.” (Refer to Friday’s Applying section of the student lesson.)

**Say:** Using the Bible verses and statements made by others in the class as well as your own, choose five truths you think you will always be able to hang on to no matter what comes your way. Write the truths in the space given next to the knots in the rope.

**Ask:** What are the things that you hang on to no matter what? What are your knots? What are your footholds? Why did you choose the ones you chose?

### B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. When have you been tossed around by life’s circumstances?
2. When have you felt that you were protected or life was going well?
3. Who do you know who has endured more than enough trouble and done so faithfully?



4. How did they do it? What character qualities do they have? What support did they have?
5. How does going through trials help you serve others as a citizen of the kingdom of God?
6. What Bible characters can you think of who seemed to hang on no matter what? How did they do it?
7. What individuals in history seemed to be able to hang on no matter what?

## 6 CLOSING

### SUMMARY

#### In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

We are promised by Jesus to have trouble: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV). Take heart! The most important thing we will ever do is trust what God says to be true. What God says about creation, His love for us, our forgiveness, the free gift of grace, power to overcome, the Second Coming, heaven, etc. We will never be stronger than when we are trusting fully what God says. And while we don't know why everything happens, we know enough to hang on.

## FOR LESSON FIVE:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE CONNECTING ACTIVITY.

### True or False Quiz

Indicate whether the statement is true or false:

- \_\_\_\_\_ God is a God of love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God allows us to make our own decision about whether to follow Him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God is just.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sin is the source of pain and suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Satan has power to hurt all people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God sometimes punishes people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God sometimes lavishes blessings on certain people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God never breaks His promises.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God takes responsibility for evil.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God uses trials to make us stronger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Heaven is real.



## STUDENT LESSON

### HANGING ON IN GOD'S APPARENT ABSENCE

Hang On!

April 30, 2022

#### Sabbath

#### FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 8, The Great Controversy:** “All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. . . . To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 104, 105.

#### HANG ON!

Long ago, in the days of sailing ships, a terrible storm arose, and a ship was lost in a deserted area. Only one crewman survived, washed up on a small uninhabited island. In his desperation the castaway daily prayed to God for help and deliverance from his lonely existence. Each day he looked for a passing ship and saw nothing. Eventually he managed to build a crude hut, in which he stored a few things he had recovered from the wreck and those things he had made.

One day, as the sailor was returning from his daily search for food, he saw a column of

smoke. As he ran to it he saw his hut in flames. All was lost. Now not only was he alone, but he had nothing to help him in his struggle for survival. Stunned and nearly overcome with grief and despair, he fell into a deep depression and spent a nearly sleepless night wondering what was to become of him and questioning whether life itself was even worth the effort.

The next morning he arose early and went down to the sea. There, to his amazement, he saw a ship lying offshore and a small boat rowing toward him. When the once-marooned man met the ship's captain, he asked him how he had known to send help. The captain replied, “Why, we saw your smoke signal yesterday, but by the time we drew close the tide was against us. So we had to wait until now to come and get you.”—Michael Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), pp. 381, 382.

#### Sunday

#### RESPONDING

- » Read John 16:33.
- » Dominic came home from his mother's funeral today. His mother was only 34 and had died suddenly of a rare virus. Sitting in his room amid all the pain and loss he feels, he is troubled by some of the things people said to him at the funeral. One person quoted Romans 8:28 to him, saying that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (NIV). Another mentioned that his mother's death must have been



part of God's will. While there were many compassionate words spoken, these statements troubled him. How could this work for good? How could this be God's will? Dominic is confused by the things he heard. What would you say to him if you could write him a letter as he sits in his room?

## Monday

### BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

- » Read Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 1:14; 1 Peter 5:8-10.
- » For 6,000 years the great conflict between good and evil has been going on between God and Satan. Even though we are sinners, God is with us. Every day He helps us fight our battles over selfishness and helps us to put the needs of others before our own. Satan brought sin and ruin to our planet. But when we accept God's gift of grace, He covers us with the righteousness of Jesus. It is important that we prepare ourselves in this controversy so we may overcome temptation and remain faithful children of God.
- » What steps are you taking to make sure you remain faithful to God?

- » Chose one of the activities below and complete it.

Get some paper and draw a series of pictures to illustrate Romans 5:18, 19.

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (NKJV).

Rewrite Romans 5:18, 19 in your own words.

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## Tuesday

### REFLECTING

- » Read Romans 8:28.
- » We could make a list of all the things we know about God. He is the Creator. He loves us. He created us with free will. He hears and answers all prayers. Sometimes we receive what we prayed for. Other times God knows what we prayed for isn't for our best and He says no. And there are times we just must wait. He lived and died for you and me. He is preparing a place for us in heaven. He is coming again, and we will be with Him forever. Heaven will be perfect. We will finally understand how evil and sin (rebellion against God) brought disastrous consequences into our world. We will hate evil and sin so much that we will never choose to sin again.
- » And there are many things we don't know. It's difficult to understand when bad things happen to us. We know it is because of sin in the world, yet we might still wonder, "Why me?"
- » Are you allowing something you don't understand to keep you from believing and following God? Do you know exactly how the Internet works? Does the lack of understanding how something works keep you from using it?
- » We shouldn't let what we don't know confuse what we do know. Think about how Joseph must have felt when he was sold into slavery by his brothers! Genesis 39:1, 2, 20, 21 says that when Joseph's life hit rock bottom again and again, the Lord was with him. Do you remember how God used him to save



the Egyptians and the Israelites? The same God promises to be with you.

### Wednesday

## BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Look up the Bible references below and choose the correct match. All the Bible texts are from the New International Version of the Bible.

Matthew 5:43-45

James 1:2-4

Job 42:1-5

John 16:33

Romans 8:28

Job 34:10-12

1 Corinthians 10:13

1. "All things God works for the good of those who love him."
2. "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy."
3. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds."
4. "In this world you will have trouble."
5. "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you."
6. "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind."
7. "So listen to me, you men of understanding."

### Thursday

## CONNECTING

- » Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.
- » Being prepared for what may come is very important. When things are going well and are peaceful is the time to prepare for trying times. How do we prepare for difficulties? By studying, praying, and memorizing Scripture so that when the difficult days come, you will have a tight hold on God! It's like having a smooth rope and tying knots in the rope

so you have good handholds in your rope. Trouble comes to all of us at some time. You want to be sure that when it comes to you, you won't lose your hold on God.

- » And in your moments of pain, anger, frustration, and confusion, know that God will be right beside you. God has promised to be with us in trouble and to deliver us. Sometimes we might not see or understand how we are being delivered, but we can know for sure that God is helping us (see Psalm 91:15). Just remember that no matter what is happening, hold on to God—don't let go.
- » Jesus Himself cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He heard no answer. But there was an answer. It came three days later when God the Father called His Son out of the tomb. Jesus will be with you through your trial. Even if you don't feel as if He is there, He is. And you will be stronger, sing louder, believe more fully, and know that your Father never let go of you. It is your choice—will you hold on to God no matter what is happening in your life?

### Friday

## APPLYING

- » Read James 1:2-4.
- » Write what you know to be true about God on the numbered lines. Find and choose five Bible texts that encourage you when you face trials and hardships. Write the references beside the knots on the rope. And when hard times come, use these Bible verses to help you trust in God.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

