



Family Sunday School

“Life Can Be Hard” Series

Lesson 4 - How to deal with... the weight of the world

Introduction: It seems like everything in the news involves someone being treated unfairly. While we are called by God to sympathize with and help our neighbor, focusing on the plight of minorities, the poor, the sick and the elderly can be overwhelmingly sad. To help us deal with our disappointment in our nation’s response to these challenges, we will be using verses from Isaiah assigned for our Sunday worship. You will be able to hear them during the Kitchen Table Gathering and revisit them during the week with your family.

(Sundays at 10:30am on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/elcserver>)

Start the Fun!

For this activity, families are going to literally be connected to each other - like a branch to a vine. Teams of three or more people join hands to form a line. If possible, the person in the middle should be wearing shoes that tie. A leader sticks the joined hands together by wrapping them with masking tape. This is to ensure that the group stays together. If the grip is broken, the team must be retaped before continuing. The team then goes from station to station around the room to complete tasks (See below.) Prepare the materials for the tasks ahead of time, making accommodations for allergies and age levels.

Here are some suggestions: • Fold a paper airplane. • Cut out a shape from a piece of paper. • Roll up a newspaper and put a rubber band around it. • Untie and tie the shoe of the middle person. • Feed each member of the group a marshmallow. • Blow up and tie off a balloon. • Unwrap a present. • Peel an orange.

Encourage family members to encourage each other as they move through the tasks and cheer for everyone as they finish. As everyone is being untaped, pull them into a discussion about their experience.

What was fun? Hard? Easy? What did they have to do to be successful? How is this like being a member of our church? (Working together, everyone has different gifts to share, common goal - to help others, teach others about God's love, good communication) We are connected to Jesus at all times. Jesus is with us, there for us, helping us in all we do.

*Jesus our Vine Game Lesson Written by Beth Tobin for Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA.
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Read together (2 Parts)

The Song of the Vineyard

Isaiah 5:1-7 (*New International Version*)

I will sing for the one I love
a song about his vineyard:
My loved one had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.

He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.
He built a watchtower in it
and cut out a winepress as well.
Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.

“Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.

What more could have been done for my vineyard
than I have done for it?
When I looked for good grapes,
why did it yield only bad?

Discuss - Part 1:

Ask: Isaiah is writing a song about God and God's people. He calls God “the one I love,” and the people are the vineyard. What does this part of the song mean?

Discussion points for parents: God gave the vineyard everything it needed to produce good fruit. He took the stones out and built a watchtower so that workers could keep an eye on it. We know God expected good grapes to grow there because God was ready with a winepress to squeeze out the juice. Since the vineyard represents the people, this means God gave the people everything they needed to be a successful community. But the song says the vineyard produced bad fruit. So God wasn't happy with the community, and asks why it turned out so bad.

Now I will tell you
what I am going to do to my vineyard:
I will take away its hedge,
and it will be destroyed;
I will break down its wall,
and it will be trampled.

I will make it a wasteland,
neither pruned nor cultivated,
and briars and thorns will grow there.
I will command the clouds
not to rain on it.”

The vineyard of the Lord Almighty
is the nation of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are the vines he delighted in.
And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;
for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Discuss:

Ask: From the second half of the poem you can tell how God feels about the vineyard not producing good fruit. How do you think God feels?

Discussion points: God is disappointed. It sounds like God is going to stop caring for the vineyard.

Ask: In the last two lines the poem tells us what God was expecting from the society. What were the main two things that were missing?

Discussion points: The poem says God “looked for justice,” which is fairness under the law. The “bloodshed” refers to abusive practices that bleed the poor to death. It also says God looked for righteousness, which is people doing the right thing. The “cry” refers to the anguish of the disadvantaged members of society.

We are not alone in wanting everyone to have equal opportunities. Just as God heard the outcry of the oppressed in Egypt, God hears the cry of the oppressed today and is indignant. God intends to use God’s people to promote justice and equity. We can echo God’s love and care for the church by carefully cultivating justice in our society.

If you are worried that God will give up on us, the vineyard, remember that God did not give up after Isaiah wrote this poem about Israel. Instead, God sent Jesus to help us where we stumble. Jesus reminds us of the vineyard metaphor in the Gospel of John 15:5-8 in the New Testament:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

Again, God’s hope for us is to produce healthy fruit, or a society that is fair and good. Without Jesus we could never hope to attain that. But we have Jesus, the true grapevine, who helps us grow when we are not where we need to be yet.

Pray

Think about the things in the news that have been bothering you. When you pray to God about them, lament and rage with God about them, knowing that God feels the same way you do about injustice. Thank God for the opportunity you have to work with Jesus to make things better.

Participate

Craft: True Vine Painting

- 1 packet of purple Kool aid unsweetened drink mixes (off brand works too) per child;
- green paint (or green Kool aid);
- cornstarch; small containers (Dixie cups work well);
- paintbrushes;
- watercolor paper or white/light blue construction paper;
- pictures of grapevines;
- smocks (aprons, large t-shirts or garbage bags work well as smocks); plastic table cloths or newspaper to cover tables.

Directions:

Mix up a batch of grape “scratch and sniff” paint. Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water with one packet grape kool aid and 1 tablespoon cornstarch. (Feel free to play around with the amounts of water and cornstarch to create thicker or thinner paint). Cover the work spaces and put smocks on the kids. Kool aid will stain clothes! Show the children pictures of grapevines to help them in their painting. Then have them paint a thick green vine with smaller branches coming off it and a few leaves, then give them the purple scratch and sniff paint to paint the grape bunches. Leave room at the bottom to write “ I am the vine; you are the branches.” Let dry completely.

As they work, make sure the children understand the grapevine metaphor. When Jesus says he is the vine, we can also picture a tree. Jesus is the trunk of that tree, and the roots that go deep down into the ground. All of the branches are connected to the tree, or the grapevine. The branches cannot produce leaves and fruit by themselves. If you break a branch off an apple tree and keep it in your room, are apples going to grow off that branch? Of course not! Why not? The branch cannot grow fruit unless it is attached to the tree trunk. Grapes don't grow unless the branch is attached to the grapevine. So Jesus is the grapevine. Who do you think the branches are in this illustration? That's right, we are the branches. We can only grow and bear fruit (good things, good results) when we are attached to Jesus.

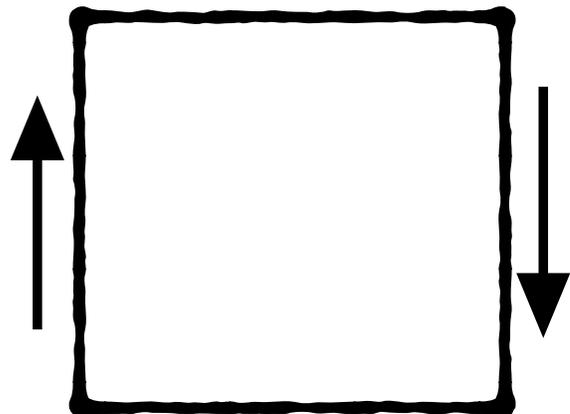
Wrap Up

God loves people, all people. If we are struggling, God is not happy, just like the owner of the vineyard. If we have the things we need but are worried about other people who don't, God will help us to help them through Jesus.

Take a Moment to Breathe

Trace the Square with your Breath

Start with your finger on the lower left corner. As you move your finger up the left side, breathe in. Hold your breath as you move your finger along the top. As you move your finger down the right side, breathe out. Hold your breath as you move your finger along the bottom. How do you feel?



Repeat 4 to 6 times. How do you feel now?