



UNIT: SUFFERING

LESSON 3 | MENTAL AND PHYSICAL AILMENTS

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That when humanity inherited sin from Adam and Eve, it also inherited the suffering that would come from life in a fallen world. However, when these sufferings remind us of our need for God, we can rejoice that He has promised us a resurrection and new life through faith in Jesus.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Understand that mental and physical ailments do not have to define us or keep us from finding joy in God's promises for His people.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Romans 5:12-14, 8:18-25, Genesis 3:17-19, Job 3:20-26, Matthew 9:1-8, John 6:38-40, Revelation 7:13-17, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

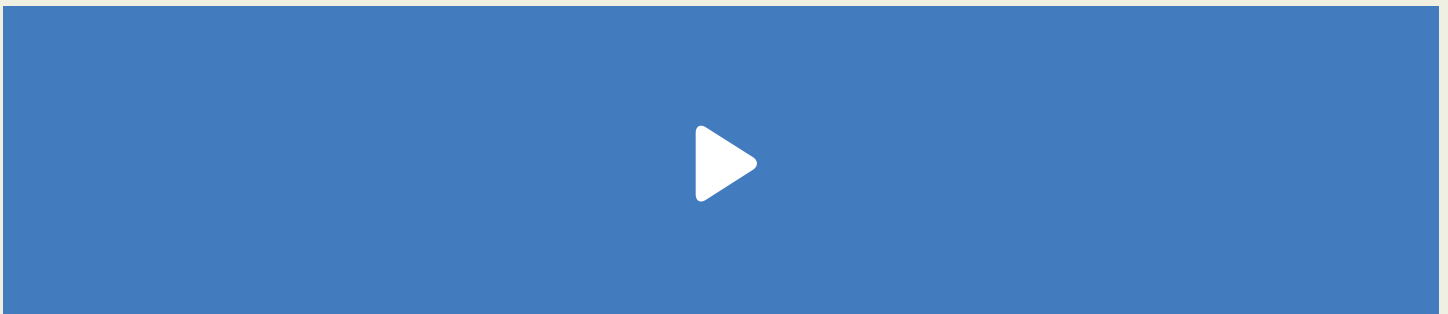
ANCHOR STATEMENT: When we suffer from ailments and illness, we have hope that these sufferings are temporary. Through faith in Christ, we will be raised to walk in new life, which is the permanent healing that we desperately need.

OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students will have an opportunity to look broadly at mental and physical ailments, which we essentially define as any form of illness that makes life more difficult. Most often, these things are completely out of our control and dealt out randomly, such as cancer, anxiety disorders, broken bones, visual impairments, and so on. All of these ailments are a result of living in a broken world that is in desperate need of a Savior. The goal of this lesson is for students to understand the "Why?" of this suffering and to help them see where God is when they feel like their life has been made nearly impossible.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Anchored* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Romans

- *Author:* Paul is the author of Romans.
- *Time frame:* Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- *Purpose:* Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, it was essential that a level playing field be given to all Believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

Genesis

- *Author:* While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- *Time frame:* It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make the date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC.
- *Purpose:* Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eve's fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

Job

- *Author:* There are many traditions about who wrote the Book of Job, as the text does not identify its author. It was possibly Job, Elihu, or someone who lived in Job's era.
- *Time frame:* This book was likely written before the era of Moses, as evidenced by references to a unique type of money (Job 42:11) and the city of Teman (Job 2:11). The timeline is likely from the second millennium of history, during the era of the Patriarchs.
- *Purpose:* Job is a book of wisdom literature that underscores how humanity is unable to see life as God does, especially when facing the nature of suffering. It likewise demonstrates the tension between God and Satan.

Revelation

- *Author:* The writer of Revelation identifies himself as John four times. Scholars agree that it is most likely John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' most beloved disciples.
- *Time frame:* Revelation was written toward the end of John's life somewhere between 90 and 95 AD.
- *Purpose:* The purpose of Revelation was to reveal the fullness of Christ's identity and to provide hope for suffering Believers at the time who were encountering grave persecution and suffering. Today, it provides us hope for what is to come, as well as a stark warning of the battle that rages until Christ returns.

THE SETTING

In each Gospel account, we read that Jesus performed miraculous healings. These healings, like the healing of the paralytic man in Matthew 9, were meant to display something far more than a medical marvel, though. Not only does Jesus give the man temporary healing for this life, but He prefaces this healing with a far greater offer of eternal healing. In each healing miracle that Jesus performs, He reminds His people of the importance of seeking healing for their souls (something that can only be found through faith in Jesus).

THE MAIN POINT

Ailments and illnesses are a common form of suffering in humankind. And in the midst of these sufferings, we often wonder

why these things happen at all. Where is the Jesus who was walking around and passing out miraculous healings in the four Gospels? But as we examine these miraculous healing accounts closer, we can understand that Jesus is actually offering a much more perfect type of healing. Yes, He was able to heal the temporary ailments, but He also offered healing of the soul and an eternal life where ailments would no longer plague His people!

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible Study section called *The Main Event*; and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To help students see that life can be more difficult when facing temporary (or permanent) illnesses.
- *Set-Up:* Compile 15-20 photos of different celebrities, movie posters, sports teams, and famous places in the world that students would easily identify. Then, make sure you can display these photos, either on individual pieces of paper, or on a projection screen.
 - *Make sure you print out the Bye-Bye Letter PDF and prepare it for your game.*

FIRST, make sure that you have prepared the Bye-Bye Letter cards and have them hidden out of sight. Prepare your photos, but make sure that students don't get a sneak peek at any of them.

Once you have welcomed students, explain that to begin your time, you have a challenge that you will need volunteers for. Depending on your group meeting space, you may have volunteers stand or come to the front. **Say something like:**

- **For this challenge, I need two volunteers to start. Once you are ready, I'll show you a photo of someone or something, and the first person to correctly call out what or who is in the picture will get a point. But don't worry- I have several photos. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to each get points.**

THEN, show your two volunteers the first photo. Once you have determined who the winner of that round is, pull out one of your Vowel X cards. **Say something like:**

- **Great job! Unfortunately, I have a little something for you. In my hand is a 'Bye-Bye Letter' card. When I give it to you, you will no longer be able to say, write, or sign that letter when you answer for the rest of the game.**

Hand the student their card, and have them show it to the group. Then, proceed with the game. After 2-3 rounds, hand out two 'Bye-Bye Letter' cards, one to each of the students.

NEXT, have the students participate in more rounds, giving the winner of each round a Bye-Bye Letter card each time. At some point, their ability to answer should be nearly impossible. When the game has come to a natural conclusion, **ask students:**

- **What is it with these Bye-Bye Letter cards? Why are they changing the game so much?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Say something like:

- **When our volunteers couldn't use the letters that they normally would be able to, it made life harder for them. Instead of just knowing the correct person or thing in a photo, they had to put forth a lot of extra effort to answer without the letter "A" or "M." Getting stuck with a Bye-Bye letter card made things more difficult, and it was hardly fair. After all, I was just handing these things out randomly as we went. They didn't ask for these cards, and there wasn't anything they could do to make them go away.**

FINALLY, explain to students that just like these Bye Bye Letter cards, sometimes we are dealt things in life that we didn't ask for and that won't simply go away. **Say something like:**

- **Today, we are going to talk about how different mental and physical ailments make life harder for us, as well as the suffering that comes along with that. And as we have in the last two lessons, we are going to find out what the Bible has to say about this type of suffering.**

If there are no questions, transition into the Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* Help students see that suffering comes for all of us, but thankfully, Jesus offers healing in a way that is far beyond healing as we know it here on Earth.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, ask students:

- **Can anyone give me an example of a physical or mental ailment (illness) that would make life more difficult for someone?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Some good examples are Broken bones, chronic depression, cancer, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or even eczema!

Explain to students that when we are talking about mental and physical ailments today, we want to be respectful and understand that these things do not take away or diminish our value to God. To ensure that students are prepared for this difficult topic, you will want to open with prayer. **Pray something like:**

- **Lord, we are coming to you with confidence that no matter how difficult today's topics can be, You will be present with us, and provide us with the comfort we need. We know that you are strong and gracious enough to handle our tough questions. We know that You are called Healer. And even when we suffer due to mental and physical ailments, whether they are temporary or life-long, we understand that these things will not plague us forever. Please use Your word to instruct and comfort us today. Amen.**

THEN, say something like:

- **Even without a mental or physical ailment, life is pretty difficult, right? But most of us manage to get where we are supposed to go, complete the tasks we are asked to do, and even have some time to relax and watch television for a little while. But when we are dealt sickness, whether it be mental or physical, it can make normal daily tasks nearly impossible. Imagine how hard it would be to fold your clothes with a broken arm. Or think about all the important events you might miss out on when something like chronic depression keeps you exhausted and numb. These are real roadblocks that can randomly pop up in our lives, and they aren't always fixed as quickly as we would like. A broken arm takes about 12 weeks to heal. And chronic depression can be seasonal or even a life-long battle. In this suffering, we have some very real questions for God. The first of which is "Why?"**

Explain to students that the first passage we will read might be hard to swallow. But encourage them to keep listening because even though we are going to answer the "Why?" we are not without hope.

Read Romans 5:12-14. Then say something like:

- **As I said, this passage is a little bit of a harsh reality. Suffering, pain, and death exist because they were brought into the world by sin. And from Adam, this sin and suffering has been passed down to every generation of humankind. So the next time you get bronchitis, thank Adam. After you get rest and fluids, of course.**

Read or have a student read Genesis 3:17-19. Explain to students that we can see in Adam's curse, which was given to him by God after Adam and Eve sinned, including things like "thorns and thistles" that spring up from the ground and the hard labor of tending to a field of produce. These are all hints towards suffering in a fallen world. **Say something like:**

- **When Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, they were given curses by God as the result of their sin. To fully understand where ailments and illnesses originate, we must take a close look at Adam's curse. Humanity was leaving the perfect oasis of God's presence and entering a world cursed with strife and suffering. God promised Adam that the world he was entering would be difficult, and that it would yield thorns and thistles. When you or someone that you know is stricken with a mental or physical ailment, it's not because that person deserved this type of thing more than another. We have all inherited sin, which means we have inherited suffering together. Because the world has been cursed by our sins, it yields thorns**

and thistles into our lives.

NEXT, take a quick moment to remind students that the purpose of this is NOT to diminish the suffering that we go through. Not at all. But when we understand the “Why?” of mental and physical ailments, it sets us up really well for the next question: “Where is God in all this?” Instruct students to turn to Job 3.

Explain that the Book of Job is commonly one of our first stops in Scripture when we think about suffering. Job was a man who followed God and was considered by many as a righteous man. **Say something like:**

- **When the book of Job opens up, we as readers are meant to see that if anyone deserved to escape this suffering that we all face, it very well might have been Job. But it was because of this that Satan, the Accuser, sought to make Job’s life more difficult. Satan wanted to inflict enough suffering on Job that he would give up his faith entirely. And after taking away Job’s family and property, he brought illness upon Job. Not enough to die, but plenty enough for Job’s life to be made incredibly difficult. Let’s take a brief look at Job’s experience with this suffering.**

Read or have a student read Job 3:20-26. **Ask:**

- **Have any of you ever felt like Job does in these verses?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, **say something like:**

- **When Job lost his family, his wealth, and his health, he likely felt blindsided by all of this suffering. After all, he had done all the ‘right’ things. And yet, mental and physical ailments still found him. In his eyes, and even in our eyes as the readers, it seems completely unfair. But let’s look a little deeper. What we really should see is that even if Job had been a horrible person who cursed God, cut people off in traffic, got into fistfights with his neighbors, and stole money from his family... he would have been just as capable of suffering the losses that he did as a righteous man. What we are meant to understand by Job’s suffering is that nobody, not even the most righteous of people, can avoid the suffering that sin has brought into our world. Every single one of us has a need for a Savior who can defeat sin and destroy the horrible things that it has brought with it.**

Explain to students that if we look at Satan’s purpose for inflicting Job with suffering, we see that it was aimed at taking Job as far away from God as possible. **Ask students:**

- **How can suffering from mental and physical ailments cause us to distance ourselves from God?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **What good is it to distance ourselves from God?**
 - *Answer:* Help students see that there is no good in distancing ourselves from God. Nothing ‘better’ happens.

NEXT, **say something like:**

- **Suffering is really hard. And it’s so tempting to blame God for the things that we suffer, and even to be angry when He doesn’t heal us as quickly as we like, or at all. After all, we see Him miraculously healing people in Scripture! Why doesn’t He always do that for us when we ask? But let’s take a closer look at one of these miraculous healings. I think you will find something more is at play.**

Read or have a student read Matthew 9:1-8. **Ask students:**

- **What did Jesus first say to this man whose physical ailment left him unable to walk?**
 - *Answer:* That his sins were forgiven.

THEN, explain to students that when Jesus offered healing to people during His earthly ministry, He always pointed

them back to God. In this narrative, we see that the scribes who were watching questioned His authority to forgive a person's sins. Explain that prior to the second half of the passage, when Jesus told the man to rise and walk (physical healing), He offered the man something greater than temporary healing in a temporary world. Jesus offered man permanent healing in a future, permanent world.

Read or have a student read John 6:38-40 and then Revelation 7:13-17. **Say something like:**

- **From these passages, we see that God's desire is that we would draw closer to Him, because His will is to raise us up on 'the last day.'** This essentially means that when we surrender our life to Christ and put our faith in Him, we will take part in a resurrection like His when He returns for His people. Even though our physical body fades away, with all of the sufferings and tribulations (or trials) it endured, we have a promise from God that He will raise us in new life, where suffering will be no more. This new life is only possible because of Who God is and what He has done for us. When Jesus performed healing miracles, He made sure to point to the much greater healing that we all need, which is resurrection from the death that we have inherited because of sin.

Ask students:

- **Think about a physical or mental ailment that someone you know is currently suffering from. If you had the chance, would you rather offer this person instant healing today so that they can live out the rest of their life however they please, or a completely new body that would never be subject to suffering again?**
 - *Answer:* You would DEFINITELY want to give them the body that won't suffer again. Even if you offer healing for something today, there is plenty of opportunity for other suffering tomorrow because we live in a fallen world.

Say something like:

- **Sadly, you and I aren't quite able to deliver on that promise of a new body that won't suffer from physical and mental ailments. But we can and should point people to the One who can free us from the suffering of a fallen world: Jesus.**

Remind students of their Anchor Statement for this lesson:

WHEN WE SUFFER FROM AILMENTS AND ILLNESS, WE HAVE HOPE THAT THESE SUFFERINGS ARE TEMPORARY. THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, WE WILL BE RAISED TO WALK IN NEW LIFE, WHICH IS THE PERMANENT HEALING THAT WE DESPERATELY NEED.

Explain to students that we have incredible news to offer to a suffering world, and a unique perspective when life throws ailments and illnesses our way. **Say something like:**

- **It's not always easy to remember God's promise of restoration in the middle of our suffering, or when we witness the suffering of others. For example, if you have to miss Prom because you've come down with the flu, you might be tempted to wallow in frustration. Or if you have trouble taking tests because you have an anxiety disorder, you may wonder how God could ever use you when you can barely pass the 7th grade. And hear me say this: What you or someone you know are going through IS frustrating. But it can also be a reminder of how awesome God's promise is for us.**

FINALLY, read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. **Ask students:**

- **How can this passage encourage us when we are in the midst of suffering?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Say something like:

- We could get caught up with the ‘fairness’ of our suffering. But that is not sustainable. It’s going to happen whether we believe it should or not. However, if we look at our suffering through the lens of this passage, we can see that where pain, ailments, and illnesses have made life more difficult, and when our bodies fade, Jesus has made the free gift of new and eternal life easy. In fact, we are able to experience this spiritual renewal right now!

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the Last Word portion of your lesson.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To facilitate prayer among students, and help them practice viewing suffering as a reminder that they need the promises of God.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure that students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, explain to students that to end your time today, you are going to give them an opportunity to pray with one another.

Divide students into groups of 3-5, and instruct them to read Romans 8:18-25 together. **Say something like:**

- **Once you have read Romans 8:18-25 together, I want you to discuss some of the ways that you either have suffered or are currently suffering. This is completely up to you and what you want to share- do not feel like you have to share anything if you aren’t comfortable. And if you are listening to others, I want you to be kind and courteous. This is not a time for gossip or teasing. Once the people who are comfortable doing so have shared, I encourage everyone to participate in praying for one another. If you don’t exactly know how to pray for one another, then feel free to read on to Romans 8:26-27.**

THEN, give students time to read and pray with one another. This portion should come to a natural conclusion as students finish praying together. **Say something like:**

- **As believers, we have more than just the hope of resurrection and eternal life with God. The Lord has also blessed us with each other. The things we talked about today are really difficult, and they can leave us feeling lonely and discouraged. Sometimes, praying alongside one another when suffering arises or persists can be the most wonderful way to say, “We can’t fix this, but I know God will one day.”**

FINALLY, if there are no more questions, close the lesson in prayer.

- Don’t forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you’re posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.