



**STRUGGLES - TEACHING SERIES  
LESSON 2**

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## **STRUGGLES - TEACHING SERIES**

Week 2: God is faithful in the midst of our struggles.

Bible: Matthew 22:37-39; Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 34:10

Bottom Line: When life is a struggle, surrender to God. Although the situation may or may not get better, God will be faithful to show up.

### **OPENING GAME: Never Have I Ever** (in-person and online)

#### **In-Person and Online Game (supplies and prep):**

- Be prepared with 10 Never Have I ever questions that all your students will have done.
- Here is a list of examples, but you will want to adjust the questions to pertain to your group of students.
  - Never have I ever attended church.
  - Never have I ever been to youth Group
  - Never have I ever drank water.
  - Never have I ever watched TV.
  - Never have I ever sat in a car.
  - Never have I ever wore shoes.
  - Never have I ever ate food.
  - Never have I ever got a haircut.
  - Never have I ever closed a door.

#### **In-Person and Online Game (how to play):**

- Have all your students hold up all 10 fingers.
- Tell them the person with the most fingers left at the end of the game wins.
- The goal is to have everyone at the end of the game have no fingers standing up.
- One rule for this game is that nobody can lie or talk. You don't want them to talk during the game because they might start questioning your questions.
- In the small chance that someone did not do something and does have a finger left, quickly come up with a last-minute Never Have I Ever that you're sure will eliminate everyone still in the game.
- In this game you want everyone to lose.

#### **Game Twist:**

- You can arrange the game so that one group will win, and one group will not.
- For example, if you have all the girls win and the boys lose, or all the high schoolers lose and all the middle schoolers win.

- You want to make sure it is obvious that you are letting one group win over the other group.

## **TEACH**

Probably by now, you all figured out that our game was rigged.

I arranged it so that everyone would lose.

Often when we play games, either a board game or a video game, the goal of the game is to win.

It feels good to win a game and usually feels lousy when we don't win.

In this game, we all lost, so it wasn't as bad.

Life isn't a board game or a video game, but we can learn a lot about who we are when we win or lose a game.

We will talk more about this throughout our lesson.

### **Matthew 22:37-39:**

*Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Life is full of struggles.

When we are in a struggle, we often blame God.

We struggle to love ourselves—let alone love others around us.

But Jesus tells us in Matthew that we are to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Being a follower of Christ does not promise an easy life.

It doesn't promise that there won't be struggles, but it does promise that God will be there for you and that He will take care of us.

When we love God and have a relationship with Him, it's easier to cast our burdens onto Him and allow Him to fight our battles for us.

Why is it important to love our neighbor?

When God fills us up with all the strength, joy, peace, security, and love, we need to pour it out to others around us.

Allow God to pour His goodness into your life so that the overflow will land on those around you.

Now back to the board games and video games, how do you react when you lose a game?

Do you get visually upset and act like a sore loser, or do you lose gracefully and congratulate the winner?

There are many ways we can react to losing.

In the same way, there are many ways we can react when we are in the middle of a struggle.

**Proverbs 3:5-6:**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*

What does it mean to trust in the Lord with all your heart? It means to trust Him—not anyone else—with our lives.

Often, we rely on others for understanding and answers, but God wants us to come to Him directly for council.

Most likely the hardest part of this verse to grasp is the “do not depend on your own understanding.”

How often, while we are in the midst of the struggle, can we not see anything but that struggle?

It's hard to see through the struggle to how God is working.

God isn't asking us to put a brave face on when we are in a time of struggle, but He does want us to have a good attitude.

That attitude comes from trusting the Lord, even when we don't understand.

There are many things in our lives that we will not understand as they are happening.

Some we may never understand.

But sometimes God reveals His plan and how He is working through our struggle in His time.

There are many stories in the Bible of people who struggled.

During their struggle, they couldn't see what God's plan was, but they didn't give up trusting and relying on Him.

One of the best examples of this is Hannah's Story in **1 Samuel**.

Hannah was barren, and she could not have children.

If you want to know someone who is desperate and struggling to understand God's plan, speak to someone who is struggling with infertility.

In the midst of her struggle, Hannah didn't give up.

She continued to go to God and pray for a child.

She even told God that if He would heal her and give her a child, she would raise her child in the Lord and give him back to Him.

At one point, Hannah was praying and weeping so much that she was thought to be drunk.

While Hannah was praying and crying out to the Lord, she didn't know God's plan.

Throughout her struggle, she was trusting God and not leaning on her own understanding.

There is another woman in Hannah's story whose name is Peninnah.

Peninah was also married to Hannah's husband, and she already had children with him.

Peninah would taunt and make fun of Hannah for not having children.

Peninnah had a bad attitude.

She was blessed, but instead of being gracious and kind, she was mean.

Hannah, on the other hand, had a great attitude.

Even though she hadn't been blessed with a child, she reached out to God and trusted Him.

If you know Hannah's story, you probably know that God did heal her and allowed her to have a son whose name was Samuel.

Samuel became a prophet of the Lord.

In this story, Peninnah is a sore winner.

Often, when playing games, you might hear people say, "Don't be a sore loser."

Did you know that people can also be sore winners?

It's not fun playing a game with someone who wins and acts boastful and arrogant about it.

It makes you feel like you do not want to play the game with that person again.

Win or lose, when you are in the midst of struggle and don't understand or you are on the other end of the struggle, remember to have a Godly attitude and be gracious.

God will use our struggles to teach us to trust Him.

Imagine if you spend the time during your struggle focused only on the struggle and not focused on God and seeking his guidance, you will most likely build up anger and a poor attitude towards life.

But if you focus on God and allow Him to work through your struggles, you will learn to rely on God and seek His guidance.

This will build a godly character and a strong faith.

It's kind of like when you are learning to play a new game.

At first, you're going to struggle and make mistakes, but the more you play the better you get, right?

But what if you gave up in the beginning and had a bad attitude?

You would never have built up that skill that would make you a better player.

**Psalm 34:10:**

*Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.*

Most of Psalms is believed to have been written by David.

David, who was a shepherd, knew all too well about lions.

He was even known to have killed a lion.

David lived out in the fields and would have observed the lives of lions.

David must have observed young strong lions going hungry at some point in his life.

Do you know the Bible doesn't tell us that as believers we would struggle less because we are Christians?

As believers, it is more likely that we will struggle more.

But there's a difference between being a believer who struggles and a non-believer who is struggling with the same thing.

Believers have prayer and relationship with God, who can get us through our struggles and use our struggles to help us to grow.

Non-believers do not.

If you go through struggle and trust in the Lord, you will learn from your struggle because God will use it.

But if you struggle and do not trust in the Lord, the Devil will try to use your struggle as a reason to not trust.

In the previous verse, we read that we are to not lean on our own understanding.

If the animals like lions and birds can trust God to take care of them, then why can't we also trust God to take care of us and get us through times of struggle.

In our small group time, we will discuss more about what Hannah went through. We will also discuss what we can do when we are struggling with something we do not understand ourselves.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was going through your mind when we were playing the game?
2. What is your favorite Board Game? What is your Favorite Video Game?  
What is your Favorite Sport to play?
3. When you first started doing one of your favorite activities, were you good at it?  
What did you do to get better at it?
4. What do you think is worse: being a sore loser or a sore winner? Why?
5. How do you think Hannah was feeling when Peninnah was taunting her for not having a child?
6. We know through scripture how Hannah reacted in the midst of her struggle, but how do you think she felt when God answered her prayers?
7. What are some things that Hannah might have learned in her time of struggle that we also can learn in our times of struggle? Examples: waiting on God's time, strong prayer life
8. What are some things that we are struggling with that we do not have an answer for? Examples: Covid, Death, sickness
9. During this time of struggle, what are some emotions or questions that come up?  
Examples: Fear, worry, doubt. Anger
10. What can we do to help ourselves and others while they are struggling?  
Examples: Prayer, counseling, being a friend, listening to them.