

Sing Tribulation

2

PSALM 22; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11



GOAL

Youth explore how songs of lament offer hope and comfort in times of grief and suffering.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God of comfort, you promise to never forsake us. Help me ground my hope in this promise. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Our culture doesn't readily create space for lament. When faced with tribulation, grief, and worry, we are encouraged to find a positive outlook or persevere through our troubles. The church and its songs of tribulation offer space for Christians to express pain and grief, drawing us to the comfort and hope made known in Jesus Christ. Fully human, Jesus suffered the depths of human pain. Fully God, Christ offers the hope of resurrection light, giving us strength in times of struggle.

THE BIBLE STORY

Psalm 22, with its vivid imagery of suffering and salvation, embodies the physicality of singing, first alone then in community. The psalmist aches with anguish that is both physical and psychological. The psalm burns with yearning for better days, looking back to salvation history and maternal comfort, and looking forward to joyful reunion in public worship and the cosmic consummation of God's will. By the grace of God, a lament raised in isolation becomes a hymn of thanksgiving in the congregation. For Christians, this is the psalm of the cross. Jesus makes it a new song for us, giving it new meaning in light of his life, death, and resurrection. He utters its opening words from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

Followers of Jesus continued to sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) when they met in the presence of the crucified and risen Lord. The "Christ hymn" was recorded in Paul's letter to the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:5-11).

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth deal with challenges and tribulations of varying degrees. Anxiety, isolation, depression, and grief are a reality in adolescent life. Music can be a source for expressing emotions where words cannot. Hymns can connect these expressions with the life and language of faith. This session's hymns can be useful in personal devotion as well as communal worship.

SESSION PREPARATION

More than one option in this session uses background music. You may wish to compile a playlist of lament songs (hymns or popular music) or find a curated playlist through a streaming service to use throughout the session.

- "This or That" (p. 16): Prepare and post the three sheets of newsprint with the prompts listed in the activity.
- Depending on the options you choose:
- "Communal Encouragement" (p. 19): Secure a list of church members or people who are homebound in need of prayer.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Device to play music
- ☐ Selection of one or more lament songs to play
- ☐ Prepared newsprint
- ☐ Markers

 Throughout the session, be mindful of the fact that participants are likely experiencing their own tribulations, some more severe than others. As you lead this session with wisdom, be sensitive to the emotions in the room and allow participants to share only as they feel comfortable.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 11)
- ☐ Internet-connected device

THIS OR THAT

C AM M

- On two sheets of newsprint, draw T-charts and write:
- ➔ When you are unhappy, would you rather listen to: Upbeat Music/Sad Music?
 - ➔ Do you prefer to listen to music: Alone on My Headphones OR With Others in a Crowd?

On a third sheet, write: What song would you play for a friend if you were trying to lift their spirits?

Post the sheets around the room and place markers near them for participants to use.

Play music as young people arrive and welcome them. Point out the displayed newsprint and invite them to write responses to the questions on the newsprint while others arrive.

Gather participants and discuss responses. Explain that, in today's session, they will explore how songs of lament can offer hope and comfort in times of grief and suffering. If anyone noticed the words to music that was played, discuss how the song expressed grief or suffering.

OPENING RITUAL

M T

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 11) and sing the first two verses of "Sing a New Song" to the familiar tune of "Morning Has Broken," either a cappella or with accompaniment using music from either bit.ly/FMBunessanTune (two verses) or the YouTube video "Giovanni Marradi—Morning Has Broken" (bit.ly/FMBunessanMusic, 3:39), stopping at 1:29 for two verses.

Alternatively, use the verse as a responsive reading, saying each line and having the youth repeat after you.

Invite youth to tell about songs of liberation that they noticed as they listened to music during the past week.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- ☐ Painter's tape
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Markers

EMOTIONAL CONTINUUM

CT AT

Use painter's tape to make a straight line on a table. Invite a volunteer to be a scribe. Have youth name all the different emotions they have felt. The scribe writes each emotion on a separate index card. Be sure to include cards for *tribulation*, *grief*, and *sadness* if youth don't name these emotions. If youth don't know the meaning of the word *tribulation*, have someone look it up on their smartphone.

Lay the cards faceup on the table near the taped line. Have youth work together to place each card on the line in order of their perceived intensity. Encourage them to talk about their reasoning for the ordering. Ask:

- ➔ How might *joy* and *tribulation* carry the same intensity?
- ➔ Do you think *numb* is an intense emotion? Why or why not?
- ➔ How does our acceptance or non-acceptance of certain emotions affect their intensity?

Tell the youth that, in this session, they will explore songs about tribulation, a strong emotion of pain or grief. Musical styles, hymns, and songs give people an outlet for expressing these strong emotions.

EXPLORING YOUR HYMNAL

C

Distribute hymnals and have young people explore them to find songs of tribulation. Invite the group to brainstorm key phrases to look for in seeking to “Sing Tribulation.” Help them use the index of the hymnal to find these identifying phrases.

Form pairs or small groups and have participants select a hymn to focus on. It may be familiar or new to them. You may suggest hymns listed in the sidebar.

Have participants read the lyrics aloud in their small groups and discuss how the hymn might be helpful to someone who is struggling.

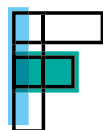
Gather as a large group and have participants name the hymns they chose and tell their insights about them. Remind participants that even a sad hymn has the power to offer hope and comfort to someone who is suffering.

☐ Hymnals



The *Glory to God* hymnal includes topics such as: *Lament, Grief, Comfort, Dying, and Encouragement*. Some common hymns, also found in other hymnals, include:

- “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” (#834)
- “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” (#65)
- “There Is a Balm in Gilead” (#792)
- “When Peace like a River” (#840)
- “Abide with Me” (#836)



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

REWRITING PSALM 22

C

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1. Form small groups or pairs and assign each group one or more of the numbered sections of Psalm 22 from the Resource Page.

Have youth rewrite their section of the psalm in everyday language. Encourage them to imagine expressing similar feelings to a friend or writing in their journal. Use the back of the Resource Page to write their translations.

Invite groups to read aloud the Bible verses and their translations in numbered order. Discuss:

- ➡ This psalm was written many generations ago; how is it relatable to things we feel and experience today?
- ➡ How does rewriting a Bible passage in your own words help you understand Scripture in new ways?
- ➡ Why do you think the author of this psalm begins with an individual’s lament and then moves into the entire community of faith singing God’s praises? How might this movement be important in our own experiences of grief and suffering?

☐ Copies of Resource Page 1
☐ Pens

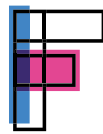
THE CHRIST HYMN

C

Use information from “The Bible Story” on page 15 to introduce the “Christ Hymn,” Philippians 2:5–11. Ask volunteers to read aloud the passage. Ask:

- ➡ How do these verses remind you of who Jesus Christ is?
- ➡ What does it mean to you to “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus”? What does this mindset look like in action?
- ➡ How might these words be comforting or encouraging to someone experiencing suffering?

☐ Bibles



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 3 from session 1 (p. 13)
- ☐ Highlighters or markers
- ☐ Colored pencils



This activity can be done at the beginning or end of this section in each session.

- ☐ Internet-connected device



Blues Songs:

- “Trouble So Hard” (1937), Vera Hall
- “Stack O’Lee” (1928), Mississippi John Hurt
- “Cross Road Blues” (1937), Robert Johnson

- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Internet-connected device



This activity references the school shooting that occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018. Be aware that some participants may find this subject disturbing or traumatic.

PSALM 96



Remind participants that they will read aloud Psalm 96 in each session and look for the session’s theme that appears in the psalm (“Sing Tribulation”). Distribute highlighters or markers and copies of Resource Page 3 from session 1 (p. 13), making sure youth receive the paper they already marked. Have additional copies available for new participants.

Have volunteers take turns reading aloud each verse. As the psalm is read, encourage participants to highlight words or phrases that offer comfort and hope to someone experiencing tribulation (suffering, worry, anxiety, grief).

After the reading, have participants show what they highlighted and explain what made them think of tribulation. Distribute colored pencils and ask them to elaborate on their thoughts, drawing words or pictures in the margins of the psalm. Gather the papers to be redistributed in the next session.

Choose one or both options.

THE BLUES



Play a piece of blues music for the group. See suggestions in the sidebar. Tell the youth that the song is an example of the blues, a style of music that originated in the southern United States. To explore the origins of blues music, show the PBS video “Is Blues the Mother of All Modern Music?” ([bit.ly/FMBlues](https://www.pbs.org/video/is-blues-the-mother-of-all-modern-music/), 11:35). Stop at 3:35 for a shortened version. Discuss:

- ➔ What emotions are expressed in the blues music in the video?
- ➔ How are the blues similar to songs of tribulation and lament we might find in Scripture?
- ➔ How might the blues help us express difficult moments in our faith journeys?

“SHINE” AND THE MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS SHOOTING



If you did not do the activity “Rewriting Psalm 22” from page 17, distribute Resource Page 1. Explain that “Shine” was written by two students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in response to a tragic shooting at their school on February 14, 2018, that killed 17 people and physically injured 17 others. Show the YouTube video “Shine by Sawyer Garrity & Andrea Peña ft. Stoneman Douglas Drama (Official Music Video)” ([bit.ly/FMShineVideo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMShineVideo), 5:56). Access the “Shine” lyrics at [bit.ly/FMShineLyrics](https://www.bit.ly/FMShineLyrics).

Have participants read the lyrics and note their feelings or responses to the lyrics. Discuss:

- ➔ Why do you think these students chose to put their traumatic experiences into song?
- ➔ How might this song offer healing to a community that has experienced so much suffering?

- Have youth take turns reading aloud Psalm 22. Ask:
- ➔ What similarities do you see between “Shine” and Psalm 22?
 - ➔ Why is it important for people of faith to notice connections between the experiences of those we read about in Scripture and in our lives and world?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

A QC

Have participants select art supplies from those provided and move to a space where they can create. Distribute Bibles and play reflective music. Have them paint, draw, or write as they listen to music and reflect on discussions about singing tribulation. Encourage them to incorporate Psalm 22 or Psalm 96 into their art.

Gather the group and invite volunteers to share what they created and the meaning it holds for them. You might display the artwork in your group's space for the rest of this four-session study.

- ☐ Device to play reflective music
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Art paper
- ☐ Art supplies: finger paint, watercolors, oil pastels, colored pencils, etc.
- ☐ Cleanup supplies

COMMUNAL ENCOURAGEMENT

S

Distribute pens, notecards, envelopes, and stamps. Encourage youth to identify a friend or family member who may need encouragement. You may also assign the name of a church member in need of prayer. Have youth write a message of encouragement and a prayer for this person.

Have them stamp and seal their envelopes and place them in the middle of your space. Say a prayer over them using this prayer or one of your own.

- ☐ Notecards, envelopes, and stamps
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ List of church members or people who are homebound in need of prayer

Holy God,
May your Spirit fall upon both these messages of encouragement and the people who will receive them.
We give you thanks for the presence of Christ Jesus in our lives, who was born in human likeness, humbling himself so that he might understand the pain and struggle we also know.
May we offer his light and love to all whom we encounter. Amen.



FOLLOWING JESUS

REVISITING “THIS OR THAT”

C

Return to “This or That” newsprint questions. Ask:

- ➔ Have your responses changed after learning about different ways that God's people sing tribulation? Why or why not?

Encourage youth to be mindful of songs of tribulation as they listen to music in the week ahead. Challenge them to think about how the practice of singing tribulation offers encouragement and hope to God's children as we deal with the struggles of our lives and the world around us.

In closing, choose one of the songs of tribulation referenced in this session. Open the hymnal to that song. Say the lyrics as a closing prayer.

- ☐ Newsprint from “This or That” (p. 16)
- ☐ Hymnals

Psalm 22:1–5, 12–15, 19–24, 27–31

In some translations, this Psalm of Lament is titled “Plea for Deliverance from Suffering and Hostility.” It begins with an individual’s cry and eventually moves into many voices proclaiming God’s power.

1

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

2

³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

3

¹²Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

¹³they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

4

¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;

¹⁵my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

5

¹⁹But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid!

²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog!

²¹Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.

6

²²I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

²³You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

²⁴For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

7

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

²⁸For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

8

²⁹To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

³⁰Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,

³¹and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.