Trauma Healing Story Book
for live or recorded story-based trauma healing
November 2014

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Adapted from Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help
© 2004, 2013 Harriet Hill, Margaret Hill, Richard Baggé, and Pat Miersma

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages are taken from the

For training in how to use this resource to carry out trauma healing,
see your local Bible Society or write to the Trauma Healing Institute
at traumahealing@americanbible.org.

TraumaHealingInstitute.org
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INTRODUCTION

The book Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help was first published in 2004 in response to the need expressed by church leaders in war zones: “My church members are acting strangely since the attacks. I don’t know how to help them. What can I do?” Healing the Wounds of Trauma delivers Bible-based trauma care for church leaders in a way they can pass it on to others.

Story-based Trauma Healing was developed in 2011 in response to the question, “What about people who are living with trauma, but who do not read or do not like to read?” The Seed Company partnered with American Bible Society to pilot trauma healing for oral communicators. It covers the same content as Healing the Wounds of Trauma using Bible stories, composite current-life stories, participatory exercises, and relevant Bible verses that each group puts to song in the local music styles. The stories are told and the group learns by discovery as they discuss the stories. The Scripture songs (and dance) allow for artistic expression and hide God’s Word in the heart.

In 2014, TWR (TransWorld Radio) partnered with American Bible Society to develop thirty-minute audio recordings of each story (and discussion) for broadcasting on radio and other media.

The stories are translated into the language that the people prefer so that they are free to engage without a language or literacy barrier.

A Story-based Facilitator’s Handbook with information on training people to use these materials and the associated program model is available at the Trauma Healing Institute website, traumahealinginstitute.org.
HEALING GROUPS

The stories can be told in person, or groups can listen to the audio recordings of the stories and recorded discussions and then discuss among themselves.

THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Two facilitators can lead a small group of six to twelve people that meets for a couple of hours at a time. Break into small groups of two or three from time to time and give feedback to the large group.

A group should be made up of people who are able to discuss together comfortably. This varies according to the culture, but if women cannot speak in the presence of men, or youth in the presence of elders, organize separate healing groups. However, people do not need to share the same kind of trauma to form a healing group. The effects of trauma and paths of healing are similar regardless of the source of the trauma.

Children under fourteen will be best served by a program using the children’s trauma healing material.

GETTING STARTED

Leaders need to be made aware of the trauma healing groups and agree to have trauma healing groups in their church or community. Where the healing group is part of a larger trauma healing program, this is taken care of by a convening session. If the healing group is not part of a larger program, the facilitator needs to present the ministry to the local leaders personally.

Participants are usually invited personally to small healing groups. The group can meet in a home or a room at a church. Participants should be seated in a way that allows them to interact with each other: in a circle, or around a table. Singing together is helpful at trauma healing sessions.

At the first meeting, take time to get to know one another, and explore hopes and expectations for the time together. Agree on the dates and times of meetings and whether or not refreshments are served. If there are to be refreshments, agree on how this will take place.

Allow at least 1½ hours for each story and song or exercise, not counting the greetings and leave-takings. Start and stop the sessions at the times agreed on. If some participants want to continue discussing beyond the time agreed on,
close the meeting to allow people to leave. Then those who choose to stay can resume the discussion.

Identify the set of stories that you can cover in the time you have to work with. Include the core stories and as many of the other stories as you have time for. Include the supplementary stories according to their relevance to your group.

Each meeting can follow this pattern:

1. Welcome.
2. Review of the previous stories and songs, especially those from the last meeting.
3. Tell the story or listen to the audio recording of the story, discussion, and song.
4. Ask the questions one by one, allowing the conversation to direct the discussion. Help the group discover the main points the story teaches.
5. If there is a Scripture song or exercise, learn the song or do the exercise.
6. Allow time for the participants to share any experiences they want to share with the group, as well as prayer requests and pray for each other.

**MATERIALS**

- A recording of the stories on SD card, MP3 player, Saber, or other device, if possible. Or printed copies of the stories if participants can read.
- Certificates of participation (see *Story-based Equipping Session Facilitator Handbook* or the Trauma Healing Institute website)
- A cross, matches, small sticks (Lesson 10)
- A rope or something that can be used as a rope (Lesson 11).
- Optional: Paper, markers, pens, clay.
1. IF GOD LOVES US, WHY DO WE SUFFER?

Pastor Mark

In the country of Bingola, there is a pastor named Mark. When Mark was three years old, his father died and he went to live with his uncle. His uncle was cruel to him, beating him often and not letting him have enough to eat.

Mark grew up and through help from another family member was able to go to school. He became a Christian and knew that Jesus had died for him. In time he had the opportunity to go to Bible school and became the pastor of a small village church.

Two years later, war broke out in Bingola. Over the next three years, Mark saw many terrible things: soldiers shooting innocent people, raping women, burning down villages. Finally, peace returned to the area but there were still problems that broke out from time to time.

Mark is still working as a pastor, but in his heart he is not happy. He keeps asking why God has let this suffering happen to his people. He is angry with God and feels that God has deserted him. Sometimes he thinks that maybe God is not strong enough to stop these things from happening. When he thinks of God as his father, he can’t imagine a loving father. In his experience, he only knew a father that was absent, or one that beat him cruelly.

One day he was talking with a local elder who reminded him of a story he learned as a child. This story told how God used to live with people in their village until one day a woman bothered him, and because of that he moved far away. Mark knew that this was not what the Bible teaches, but some part of him felt it might be true. Maybe God was angry and far away.

Sometimes Mark thinks these terrible things have happened because of the sin of the Bingolan people, so he preaches more about how God is judging them for their sins. At the end of his sermons, he sees the people looking sad and knows he is not helping them. Often when he is preaching, he feels like a hypocrite because he preaches about God’s goodness but he really feels God is far away.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?*
4. Have you ever felt like Mark?
5. What effect did Mark’s father and uncle have on his feelings toward God?
6. How did traditional beliefs of Mark’s culture affect his thoughts about God?
7. Compare your traditional beliefs with what the Bible says about what God is like. How are they similar and different?
8. What sort of teaching is unhelpful when Christians are suffering?

Creation

Long, long ago before the beginning of time, there was nothing of the world we know now. Only God was there. Then he started to create the world. Each time God spoke, something was created, and he saw that it was good. First there was light and darkness. Then he made the dry land, the sea and the sky around us. In the sky he placed the sun and the moon and all the stars. God spoke and many different plants and trees grew on the earth. God also created the insects, the fish, the birds and all the animals. Finally God made a man and woman to rule over all the other things that he had made. Then God rested.

God put the first man, Adam, and the woman, Eve, in a very beautiful garden. They had everything they needed and there was no pain or suffering. In the middle of the garden, God placed two special trees: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam, “You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except the one that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die!”

Adam and Eve were completely happy and were able to talk with God freely. But one day a snake came to talk to Eve. He said, “Did God tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?” She answered, “God said we could eat the fruit of any tree in the garden except the one in the middle. If we do, we will die.” Then the snake said, “No, you won’t! God understands what will happen on the day you eat fruit from that tree. You will see what you have done and you will know the difference between right and wrong, just as God does.”

Eve looked at the fruit and it looked beautiful and tasty. She liked the idea of becoming wise, so she ate some of the fruit, and she gave some to Adam and he ate it, too. Right away they realized that they were naked, so they sewed leaves together to cover themselves.

* These are the three basic questions for use with every story.
That evening, they heard God walking in the garden and they were frightened and hid. God called, “Where are you?” Adam said, “I was naked and when I heard you in the garden, I was afraid and hid.” So then God asked, “How did you know you were naked? Did you eat any fruit from that tree in the middle of the garden?” Adam said, “It was the woman you put here with me who gave me the fruit and I ate it.” Then God asked the woman, “What have you done?” She replied, “It was the snake who tricked me and I ate it.”

Then God spoke to each one of them. To the snake he said, “You are cursed more than all the other animals. You will crawl on your stomach and eat dirt. You and the woman will hate each other, and your descendants and hers will always be enemies. One of her descendants will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” To the woman he said, “You will suffer terribly when you give birth. But you will still desire your husband, and he will rule over you.” To Adam he said, “Because of what you have done, the ground is cursed. As long as you live, you will have to struggle to grow enough food. You were made out of soil and you will once again turn into soil.”

Then God made clothes out of animal skins for them. After that God sent them out of the beautiful garden so that they would not eat of the tree of life and live forever. This is how sin, suffering, and pain came into the world.

*(Based on Genesis 1–3)*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened in this story? Next? Next?
2. What did you like about this story?
3. What did you find difficult about this story?
4. What do we learn about God from this story?
5. What do we learn about the snake from this story?
6. What do we learn about the origin of sin and suffering in this story?
7. Where is God when we are suffering?

**SONG**

Make up a song using Psalm 103.13–14.

>“Just as parents are kind to their children, the Lord is kind to all who worship him, because he knows we are made of dust.”
EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE

Provide a quiet time while everyone has their eyes closed, or look down at the floor. Have the group slowly sing the song they composed about God’s love. Ask:

1. Do you have any hidden doubts about God’s love? If so, tell him.
2. Think about God as your loving father. Imagine you are a child with your loving father. Sense the love in his eyes as he looks at you.

Close with prayer and another song about God’s love.

2. HEALING THE WOUNDS OF OUR HEARTS

John Mba

John Mba and his wife Mary lived in a small village in Bingola. They had two children living at home, and one older son who was in the nearby town working as a teacher. One night some rebel soldiers invaded the village and set fire to the houses. John, Mary, and their children ran out of their house as the roof caught fire. Two soldiers grabbed John, though Mary and the children managed to run away. As they ran, Mary looked behind and saw a soldier cutting off John’s arm with a machete.

Not long after, they heard some trucks arriving, and the rebels quickly got into them and left the village. Mary ran back to John and was able to stop the bleeding from the stump of his arm. They went to the local hospital where the wound was treated and stitched. After a little while John’s wound healed. The rebels were chased out of the area and life came back to normal for most people.

John began to learn to farm with only one arm. Although he did his best, he was angry with everyone. He started beating his wife and children, and quarrelling with all the neighbors. John’s friends never talked about his missing arm. They just pretended nothing had happened. For John, his whole life had changed and he could not pretend that nothing had happened. John believed that men shouldn’t talk about their problems, and so he kept his feelings inside.

Mary was not angry with people but she felt very sad inside. She wasn’t interested in eating very much, and often wanted to die. Sometimes when she was alone in the house, she became very frightened for no particular reason. Both she and John had trouble sleeping and often had nightmares. One day, she began tell-
ing the pastor’s wife how miserable and frightened she felt, but the pastor’s wife told her that Christians should not have those kinds of feelings. This made her feel ashamed, so she never tried to talk to anyone else about how she felt.

The older son, who had been a very good teacher, was horrified when he heard about what had happened, and he started to lose interest in his job. At night he drank a lot with his friends, and was often late arriving at school in the morning. He often had headaches and stomachaches, but the clinic couldn’t find anything wrong with him.

All three of these people were Christians and went to church regularly. Every Sunday the pastor told them what God wanted them to do, how they should give money, and how they should work on the pastor’s farm. He noticed that some people in his church had changed their behavior for the worse since the troubles, and he thought the solution was to preach more about how God was angry with them for not obeying his laws.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened in this story? Next? Next?
2. What did you like about this story?
3. What did you find difficult about this story?
4. Apart from the loss of his arm, what else has John lost? What has Mary lost? What has the older son lost?
5. What do you think of the advice of the pastor’s wife?
6. How can you tell when someone has a wound of the heart?
7. How is a wound of the heart like a physical wound? Try to give five ways.

**The road to Emmaus**

When Jesus died, many people were confused and discouraged because they had expected Jesus to deliver them from the Romans who were oppressing them. Their capital, Jerusalem, was a dangerous place for anyone who followed Jesus and so his disciples were hiding behind closed doors. But two disciples left Jerusalem to go to a village called Emmaus.

As they walked together, they talked about everything that had happened. While they were talking, Jesus joined them and walked with them, but they didn’t know who he was. Jesus asked them, “What were you talking about?” They stood still and looked sad. One of them said, “Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn’t know what was happening there these last few days?”
Jesus said, “What do you mean?” They answered, “The things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. By what he did and said he showed that he was a powerful prophet. Our leaders had him arrested and sentenced to die on a cross. We had hoped that he would be the one to set our country Israel free. But it has already been three days since all this happened.

“Some women in our group surprised us. They had gone to the tomb early in the morning but they did not find the body of Jesus. They came back, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. Some men from our group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn’t see Jesus either.”

Jesus answered them, “Why can’t you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? Didn’t you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given glory?” Then Jesus explained everything the Scriptures said about him.

When they got to the village of Emmaus, Jesus seemed to be going further. But they begged him, “Stay with us! It’s already late and the sun is going down.” So Jesus went into the house to stay with them.

They sat down to eat, and Jesus took some bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. At once they knew who he was, but he disappeared! They said to each other, “When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn’t it warm our hearts?”

They got up and returned to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what had happened. They said, “We knew it was the Lord when he broke the bread.”

(See Luke 24.13–35)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. When we lose something or someone important to us, we feel sad. When Jesus died, what were all of the things the disciples lost?
5. The two disciples were discouraged and said, “We had hoped that . . .” What things are you hoping for that have not happened as you expected?
6. In Jesus’ day, women had low status. For example, their testimony was not accepted in a court of law. But Jesus revealed himself first to women, not men. How do you think this made the men feel? How do you think it made the women feel?
SONG

Make up a song based on 1 Peter 5.7 (NIV).
“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

ART EXERCISE

Have markers and paper or modeling clay available, if possible, or have a way to have people draw with a stick on the ground. Have everyone get quiet inside and ask God to show them the pain in their hearts. Then they can begin drawing or modeling clay—without thinking about it too much, letting the pain come out through the fingers. Drawings may be symbolic rather than realistic. Each person can use symbols that mean something to him or her. For example, a cigarette might represent a brother who smokes.

Allow up to twenty minutes for people to work individually. Then, in small groups, let those who would like to share:
1. Tell about their drawing or model.
2. Explain anything new they realized about their situation through this exercise.
3. As appropriate, have people pray for those who have shared.

3. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE IS GRIEVING?

Pastor Ndri

In the Boka district of Bingola, there had been fierce fighting. Many people had been killed, women and children as well as the men actually involved in the fighting. Ndri was the pastor of a large church in the main town. As the situation in the area got worse, more and more of his church members were killed and those who remained were hiding in their houses.

Finally, almost all the people in the town fled from the fighting into the bush. Pastor Ndri went with a group of 100 people, and they decided together to walk to the next country where they thought they would be safe. On the way, Pastor Ndri’s wife fell sick and died because they had no way to get medicine to her. Because of the danger, they buried her very quickly in the bush and then continued the journey. It took them three weeks to walk through the bush to safety. As
they walked, more people became sick, particularly the small children and the old people. Six more people died before they arrived safely in the next country.

They were able to find a place to stay provided by a large church there, and they began to find ways of getting food and making some money. Soon, more of the church members arrived to join them. After a few weeks Pastor Ndri had over half of his church members there with him. They still came to Ndri for help each day and, especially on Sundays, they met together to pray and read God’s Word.

Ndri soon became very concerned about the state of some of the Christians. Some of the adults who had lost family members were very sad and wouldn’t try to find work, or even help to find food. They seemed to have lost interest in life in general. One man kept saying over and over again, “If only I had thought to take some medicine with us, my wife would be alive today!” One woman who had lost her husband was repeatedly telling everyone that she could hear her husband speaking to her. Another woman insisted that her son had not died even though everyone had seen his dead body. She kept expecting him to arrive with the next group of refugees.

Often Ndri had really bad nightmares and woke up crying out for his wife. He was also angry though he knew he shouldn’t show this. He was angry with God, and even with his wife for dying and leaving him. He was also very angry with the rebels who had caused the war. Because he couldn’t show this anger openly, it was burning him inside and giving him bad headaches and stomach aches.

Sometimes Ndri wanted to cry and shout to God, but he kept telling himself that good Christian men don’t behave like this. Whenever he tried to help his church members, he told them not to cry. Finally one day it all got too much for him. He was walking down the street and saw a woman who looked very much like his dead wife. Suddenly he could not hold back his tears. He hurried back home, shut himself in his bedroom and cried and cried for hours. After that he slept heavily for many hours and the next morning woke up feeling better. After that he was able to help others find relief in crying as well.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened in this story? Next? Next?
2. What did you like about this story?
3. What did you find difficult about this story?
4. How did the behavior of Ndri’s church members change after they had lost loved ones?
5. What made it hard for Ndri and his church members to grieve their losses?
6. When Ndri held his tears and feelings inside, what effect did it have on him?
7. How did Ndri feel after he had cried?

**EXERCISE: THE PATH OF GRIEF**

Have three participants hold signs labeled: **Village 1: Denial and Anger; Village 2: No Hope;** and **Village 3: New Beginnings.** Have four people make the journey from village to village, acting in the appropriate way in each village (see below). As they go, have one person get stuck in Village 1 and another in Village 2. Another one of the group gets to Village 2 but then goes back to Village 1 for a while, and then goes forward again. Explain that this is a normal response to loss. What is not normal is to get stuck in Village 1 or 2 for a long time.

**Village 1** (one month or longer): Numb; not aware of what is happening; denying that the person died; starts crying; anger outbursts for no reason; continually says, “If only . . .”; has dreams of the person.

**Village 2** (6–15 months): In this village, people find it hard to concentrate; continue to think about the person who has died, and even think he will return; may feel guilty without reason; may want to commit suicide.

**Village 3:** Now they are ready to think about the future. They may remarry if a spouse died. They will be changed by the loss, but may be stronger than before.

Now have someone illustrate the “False Bridge” by going directly from the crisis to Village 3. He or she stumbles and falls. Explain that people try to take this route because they believe that they should not grieve. It does not work.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think of a loss you have experienced. Have you had any of these feelings?
2. Did you get to the Village of New Beginnings? Did you get stuck along the way?

Lazarus

There was a man named Lazarus. He lived with his sisters Mary and Martha. All three of them were close friends of Jesus. One day, Lazarus became very ill. His sisters sent a message to tell Jesus that his good friend Lazarus was sick.

When Jesus received the message he said to his disciples, “His sickness won’t end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son.” He waited a couple of days and then he said to his disciples, “Let’s go to Lazarus’ house.” His disciples said, “Teacher, the people in that region wanted to stone you to death! Why do you want to go back?” Jesus said, “Lazarus is asleep but I’m going there to wake him up.” The disciples said, “Lord, if he is asleep, he will get better.” So Jesus said plainly, “Lazarus is dead. I am glad that I wasn’t there, because now you will have a chance to put your faith in me.”

By the time they got to Lazarus’ house, he had already been buried for four days and many people had come to comfort Mary and Martha. When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him. She said, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus said, “Your brother will live again!” She said, “I know he will be raised on the last day when all the dead people are raised.” Then Jesus said, “I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. Do you believe this?” Martha said, “Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus asked about Mary, and Martha went to tell her. Mary got up, ran to Jesus and knelt at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus looked at Mary and the crowds of people weeping and he was terribly upset. He wept as well. The people said, “See how much he loved Lazarus!”

Jesus was still terribly upset, so he went to the tomb. They had put the body of Lazarus in a small cave with a large stone blocking the entrance. Jesus told the people: “Roll the stone away!” Martha said, “Lord you know that Lazarus has been dead for four days and there will be a bad smell!” Jesus said, “Didn’t I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?” So, they rolled the stone away. Jesus looked up and said, “I thank you, Father, for answering my prayer.” Then he called out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”
Lazarus came out! His hands and feet were still wrapped in the strips of cloth they buried him in. Then Jesus said, “Untie him and let him go.”

(See John 11.1–44)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. Mary and Martha both said, “If only . . .” when they saw Jesus. After a loss, have you ever said, “If only . . .”? Explain.
5. How did Jesus express his sadness?
6. How does Jesus’ behavior compare with what is taught in your culture? Are people allowed to show when they are sad or troubled? Are men allowed to cry in public?

SONG

Make up a song based on Ecclesiastes 3.1, 4. If you wish, use more verses from the passage.

“Everything on earth has its own time and its own season. . . .
[there is a time] for crying and laughing, weeping and dancing.”

4. GETTING OUR PAIN OUT THROUGH LAMENTS

God’s people lament

In the beginning of the Bible, God called a man named Abraham to follow him and to be the father of a very great nation. Abraham obeyed God, but many years passed and he and his wife Sarah never had any children. Finally, when Sarah was well past childbearing age, Isaac was born. He grew up and got married, and from his family came the nation of Israel.

Time passed, and God helped the Israelites take over an area of land called Canaan. After some time, they asked God to give them a king to rule over them. David was one of their first kings. He was an excellent warrior and the Israelites took land from others and ruled over them. When David died, his son Solomon became king, and he built a very beautiful temple in their capital city, Jerusalem. During this time the Israelites were free people in their own land, and they thought God would always protect them.
But in time the nations around Israel became stronger and attacked them. God didn’t protect them because they didn’t obey him. The attacks continued for a long time, and were very bad during a seventy-year period. At last, the enemies won and they took some of the Israelites to live in their country. They destroyed the temple and much of Jerusalem. Those who were left in their homeland lived in miserable conditions of poverty, famine, attacks, death, and despair. They felt abandoned by God and hopeless. They lamented.

(Sing the rest of the story as a song.)

CHORUS
Remember, O LORD, remember what happened to us.
Look at us, and see our disgrace.

VERSE 1
Our property is in the hands of strangers;
foreigners are living in our homes.

VERSE 2
We must pay for the water we drink;
we must buy the wood we need for fuel.

VERSE 3
Our wives have been raped;
our daughters have been forced to submit.

VERSE 4
Grief has taken the place of our dances.
Our hearts are sick and our eyes full of tears.

CLOSING REFRAIN
But you, O LORD, are king forever
And will rule to the end of time.
Why have you abandoned us so long?
Restore our glory that we knew then.
Or have you rejected us forever?
Is there no limit to your anger?
Remember, remember us, LORD.

(See Lamentations 5.1–22)
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. How do the Israelites feel towards God?
5. Has your community ever felt like the Israelites? If so, explain.
6. Do Christians in your community tell God how they really feel? If not, why not?

EXERCISE: COMPOSE A LAMENT

A lament is a way to pour out your complaints to God. There are many laments in the Bible. Jewish laments could contain several parts:

- Address to God
- Review of God's faithfulness in the past
- The complaint
  - A confession of sin or claim of innocence
  - A request for help
  - God's response (often not stated)
  - A vow to praise, statement of trust in God

1. Listen to the lament from the Bible story again and identify each part.
2. Compose a lament in your language about your own painful experiences. It may be a written lament, a song, or a song and dance. Share your lament with the group. Remember, a lament must include a complaint.

5. HOW CAN WE LISTEN WELL?

Rose and the pastor’s wife

Simon and Rose lived in a village in the north of Bingola. It was in a valley surrounded by hills. One year there was far more rain than usual. To start with, all the people in the area were very happy as they thought they would get a very good harvest. But the rain just kept coming, and after a certain point, fields were flooded and crops ruined.

One morning, Simon, Rose, and their four children got up as usual, and the three older children ran off to the village school. Simon went off to his fields to work, and Rose was in the house with their youngest child, when suddenly there
was a loud roaring sound. Rose ran outside in time to see a mudslide swallowing up the village. She only had time to grab the baby and run before the mud covered up her house completely.

Simon saw all of this happening from the fields and started to run towards the village with some other men. When they arrived, they found that the school had been completely covered by the mud and already some people were frantically trying to dig out the children who were buried in the mud. They saved a few children, but most of them were already dead.

NGOs came quickly to help. After a short time, most of the villagers had been helped to find shelter but they knew by then that half the villagers had been killed, including most of the children in the local school. Simon and Rose had lost their three older children. They were too shocked and numb to talk much, and the little energy they had was needed to find food and survive. After a month, the villagers were given help to rebuild their houses in a safer place, further from the mountains. Neither Simon nor Rose had talked to anyone yet about how they felt, but they felt worse and worse inside.

The local church pastor and his wife had been on a trip the day of the mudslide, but when they got back they tried to help people. One day, the pastor’s wife sat down with Rose and encouraged her to talk about her pain. First she asked Rose, “What exactly happened that day?” Rose started telling her in a timid voice, so after a while the pastor’s wife asked, “And how did you feel?” As Rose started to describe her feelings of panic and despair at the moment of the mud slide, she cried and cried, but also felt like a big burden was being taken away. The pastor’s wife went on to ask, “What was the hardest part for you?” Rose answered, “That they have never been able to find the bodies of our children!” She started to cry even more than before, like something very deep was coming out of her. After that she felt exhausted, but relieved. After they had prayed together, the pastor’s wife said gently, “I’ll come again next week and we can talk more. Until then, I will be praying for you.”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What questions did the pastor’s wife ask Rose?
5. How did these questions help?
6. With what kind of person would you share your pain?
LISTENING EXERCISE

Divide into groups of two. Have each person tell about one bad thing that has happened—a small event rather than something very big. The other person listens, asking these three questions as appropriate:

1. What happened?
2. How did you feel?
3. What was the hardest part for you?

The listener must be careful to listen properly and show he or she has understood and is sharing in the speaker’s pain. After ten minutes, switch roles.

Then reflect on how you felt during the exercise.

1. Was anything difficult? If so, what?
2. Did you feel you were heard?
3. What did the listener do well?

Job suffers

There was a man whose name was Job. He was the richest man in his region with many farms and animals. He had a big family. He was a good man who respected God and refused to do evil.

One day Satan was with God, and God asked him if he had noticed how faithful and good Job had been. Satan replied, “Why shouldn’t he respect you? You make him successful in whatever he does. Try taking away everything he owns and he will curse you to your face.” God told Satan, “All right, do what you want with anything that belongs to him, but don’t harm Job.”

Soon after that, a messenger came to Job and said, “Enemies have attacked and stolen your oxen and donkeys and have killed your servants.” While he was still speaking, a second messenger said, “God sent down a fire that killed your sheep and your servants.” While he was still speaking, a third messenger came and said, “Enemies stole your camels and killed your servants.” While he was still speaking, a fourth messenger came and said, “Your children were having a party and a storm came and blew the house down, crushing all of your children.”

After hearing all this, Job tore his clothes and shaved his head because of his great sorrow. He knelt on the ground, worshiped God and said, “We bring nothing at birth; we take nothing with us at death. The Lord alone gives and
takes. Praise the name of the LORD!” In spite of everything, Job did not sin or accuse God of doing wrong.

A little while later, God asked Satan what he thought of Job now. Satan said, “Try striking Job’s own body with pain, and he will curse you to your face.” So the LORD replied, “All right! Make Job suffer as much as you want, but just don’t kill him.” Then Satan went and made sores break out all over Job’s body.

Job took a piece of broken pottery to scrape his sores as he sat by the garbage dump. His wife said to him, “Why don’t you curse God and die?” Job answered, “Don’t talk like a fool! If we accept blessings from God, we must accept trouble as well.” In all that happened, Job never once said anything against God.

Soon after, three of his friends came to comfort him. When they saw how much he suffered, they cried and wailed. Then they sat with him for seven days in silence. Finally Job broke the silence and cursed the day he was born.

Then his friends told him that his suffering was because of his sins and the sins of his children. Job insisted he had not sinned, but they were sure that if he were innocent, God would not have let these things happen. They accused him over and over to try to get him to confess. Finally Job says, “You are terrible comforters!” Rather than comforting Job, they increased his pain.

Finally Job asked God to explain what was happening. God responded by asking him, “How did I lay the earth’s foundation? Were you there? Can you order the clouds to send a downpour, or will lightning flash at your command? Did you give horses their strength?” On and on, God asked Job question after question that showed he was more powerful and wiser than Job. Job answered, “I have talked about things that are beyond my understanding.”

God was angry with Job’s friends because their advice was not wise. He told them to bring a sacrifice to Job and Job would pray for them so that they would be forgiven. Job forgave them and prayed for them.

After this, God blessed Job with ten new children and twice as much land and animals as he had before. He lived to an old age and saw his great-grandchildren.

*(Based on the book of Job)*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?
5. What did Job’s three friends do that helped Job? What did they do that didn’t help him?
6. Often when we suffer we want to know why. What does this story tell us about the reasons for suffering?
7. When you have been grieving, how have your friends helped you? What have they done that was not helpful?

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6. HELPING TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN

Kasi

A seven-year-old boy named Kasi lived in the Bokada region of Bingola. His father is a pastor and he has four brothers and sisters. When this story begins, he has just started school. He enjoys going off with his friends each morning. The teacher tells his father he is a bright boy and is already learning to read. In the afternoon, Kasi runs around with his friends and does small jobs for his mother until it is time to eat.

One day Kasi notices that his father is spending a lot of time talking with the men of the village. He doesn’t really bother to listen, but he begins to worry about what is going on. No one talks to him about it. Suddenly one night, his older brother shakes him awake shouting, “Kasi, Kasi, let’s run quickly into the bush! Quickly! Quickly!” The whole family runs out of the house. As he and his family run for safety, he hears some shots. He looks around and sees another family running after them, but their little boy drops to the ground dead.

By the next day his whole family, along with four other families, reaches a place in the forest where some crops are growing. Kasi’s father takes charge, and everyone works hard to make grass shelters. No one talks to him about seeing his friend shot dead, and he tries to forget it. One of the fathers tells his children that their mother is off visiting another village, but everyone knows she has been killed. Every day Kasi’s father leads prayers and singing with everyone, and they read the Bible.

After a month, Kasi’s father sends a couple of men back to the village to see what is happening. They find that it is safe to return, though the soldiers have burned down most of the buildings. They get back to the village and work hard
to rebuild their houses. After a month, school starts again, but Kasi doesn’t really want to go. When his father makes him go, he gets into trouble with his teacher because he is not learning as well as he used to. He is scared to leave the house and jumps at every loud noise. At night, he wakes up the whole family with his screaming and crying. He sometimes wets the bed, though he never did that before the attack. He walks around looking sad and seldom wants to play with his friends. When he does, he wants to play war and often finishes up fighting with his friends. Every night he puts his things together in case they have to run away again, even though his brothers laugh at him for doing this.

Kasi’s parents and schoolteachers don’t understand why he is behaving like this or what to do. When he wets himself, his mother beats him. This makes him cry more but doesn’t change his behavior. Some people say he’s a witch.

Finally, a woman named Alice comes from the capital. She asks Kasi’s parents, “What is Kasi thinking now about the war?” His parents look at each other blankly. Finally his father says, “I’ve no idea!” “Kasi needs to talk about what he experienced,” answers Alice. “For children, the best way to do this is to get him to draw a picture of what happened when you had to run into the bush.”

Kasi’s parents go home and give him some paper and markers. He draws a series of pictures, and then his father sits down with him and says, “Tell me about what happened in this first picture.” Kasi tells him about what he remembers on the night of the attack. Then his father asks, “How did you feel?” Kasi tells how he was so afraid. His father asks, “What was the most difficult part for you?” Kasi begins to cry and say, “I couldn’t help my friend!” As Kasi explains the pictures, his feelings come out and finally he cries and cries as his father holds him.

This was just the beginning, but as Kasi talks about what had happened, his behavior starts to improve. After a while, he became the playful boy he once was.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. How did Kasi’s behavior change after this attack?
5. What helped Kasi to find healing?
6. How do people in our community behave towards children like Kasi? Are these reactions helpful?
7. Should we tell children the truth about bad things that have happened? Explain.
8. What is the most important thing you can do to help a child like Kasi?
Jesus listens to the children

When Jesus was teaching the crowds, some people brought their children to him so that he could bless them by placing his hands on them. But his disciples told the people to stop bothering him. When Jesus saw this, he became angry and said, “Let the children come to me! Don’t try to stop them. People who are like these little children belong to the kingdom of God. I promise you that you cannot get into God’s kingdom, unless you accept it the way a child does.” Then Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them by placing his hands on them.

(Mark 10.13–16)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. How did the disciples behave towards the children?
5. How did Jesus behave towards the children?
6. How do people in our community respond to children? Is it more like the way Jesus responded or more like the way the disciples did?

SONG

Make up a song based on Mark 10.14b.

“Let the children come to me! Don’t try to stop them. People who are like these little children belong to the kingdom of God.”

7. RAPE

Ama

Some time ago, Bingola was invaded by foreign troops. They killed people, looted the village, and raped women. Many of them took drugs and got drunk. They thought that raping women was a way to show how strong they were.

A woman named Ama lived in a village in Bingola and took care of her elderly mother-in-law. When the soldiers arrived in her village, her husband George was away on a trip. The other villagers fled quickly, but it took Ama some time to get her elderly, sick mother-in-law out of bed.
Just as they came out of the hut, the soldiers arrived. They ignored the old woman but grabbed Ama and three soldiers raped her, one after another. Ama tried to fight back so much that she broke her arm, but they were much too strong for her. After a while, the commander called his men to come and help carry away the loot, so Ama was able to escape into the forest. She quickly found her mother-in-law and together they tried to find the rest of the villagers. Ama was in shock, both from the rape and from the pain of her broken arm. After walking in the forest for hours, they eventually found the others. They helped care for Ama’s arm, but she didn’t dare tell them about the rape.

After two weeks they were able to return to their village and began to rebuild it. By this time George had returned home as well, and his mother told him what had happened. He knew in his head that the rape was not Ama’s fault, but he didn’t want to sleep with her anymore. Ama felt ashamed, ruined, and dirty. She was so sad she thought about killing herself. She even wondered if an evil spirit was inside her. She was angry with God and no longer felt she could trust him.

Finally, she went to the doctor and he said, “If you had come in the first two days after the rape, we could have given you some medicine to keep you from getting HIV. But let’s do some tests.” When the results came back, Ama breathed a huge sigh of relief: she was not HIV-positive, but she was pregnant. She could not imagine how she could love this child.

Ama couldn’t keep her pain a secret any longer and so she went to talk to the pastor’s wife. The pastor’s wife was very understanding and listened carefully as Ama told her about what happened. As she talked she started to cry and couldn’t stop for a long time. Afterwards she felt like the pressure was released and she felt a bit better.

The pastor’s wife asked Ama for permission to tell her husband about this, so that he could help George. Ama agreed. The pastor took time to be with George and to let him express his feelings about what had happened. As George was able to express his pain, he and Ama were able to come together again and comfort each other.

Nine months after the rape, a little baby boy was born to Ama and George. They decided to call him Nathan, which means “Gift of God.” By this time, many people knew what had happened, and some of them saw the child as a bad, dirty thing. When the time came to dedicate the baby, the pastor arranged a very special service. He talked openly about the origins of this baby and then said how
the baby was a gift from God for the whole church. He asked the people to stand up if they would help bring up this child to know and love the Lord.

Many years later, Nathan became a well-known pastor and teacher in the region, and his parents were very proud of him. As time went on, with God’s help, Ama was eventually able to forgive the men who had raped her, although on some days memories of the rape still trouble her.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What is rape exactly?
5. Why was Ama afraid to tell anyone what happened to her?
6. What effect did the rape have on Ama?
7. What effect did the rape have on George?
8. How did Ama begin to find healing?
9. If a church in our area followed the example of the church in this story, what would happen?

Amnon and Tamar

Amnon was King David’s firstborn son. He was handsome and first in line for the throne. He fell desperately in love with his beautiful half-sister, Tamar, who was a virgin. He loved her so much it made him ill, but he couldn’t think of a way of being alone with her. When his cousin saw how sad he was, he asked, “What’s the matter? You’re the king’s son! You shouldn’t have to go around feeling sorry for yourself every morning?” Amnon said, “I’m in love with Tamar.”

His cousin thought of a plan to solve Amnon’s problem. He said, “Lie down on your bed and pretend to be sick. When your father comes to see you, ask him to send Tamar to prepare some food for you.”

Amnon did just that, and King David agreed to send Tamar to take care of Amnon. She came to his house and made food for him there. Then he said to her, “Now serve the food in my bedroom.” She did, but as she was taking it to him, he grabbed her and said, “Come to bed with me.” She cried, “No! Please don’t force me! This sort of thing isn’t done in Israel. It’s too disgusting. I’ll be disgraced forever! Just ask the king and he will let you marry me.” But Amnon wouldn’t listen to her, and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her.
Then Amnon hated her even more than he had loved her. He told her, “Get up and get out!” Tamar said, “Don’t send me away! That would be worse than what you have already done.” But Amnon wouldn’t listen to her. He shouted for his servant and said, “Throw this woman out, and lock the door!” So the servants made her leave.

She was wearing a long robe. She tore her robe and put ashes on her head to show how sad she was. Then, with her face in her hands, she went away crying.

When her brother, Absalom, heard about what had happened, he tried to calm her down by saying, “Since he’s your brother, don’t tell anyone what happened. Just try not to think about it.” Absalom took her to his house where she lived the rest of her life sad and lonely.

When King David heard what had happened, he was very angry, but he did nothing to punish Amnon, because Amnon was his favorite son.

Absalom hated Amnon deeply because of what he had done and decided he would kill him. Two years later, he was able to trick Amnon and kill him. Afterward, he had to run for his life to another country to escape his father’s anger. He stayed there for three years. Finally, David called for him to come back to Jerusalem. But even then, David refused to see him. Absalom became bitter against David and tried to take the throne from him. He died in the attempt. This made King David even sadder.

*(See 2 Samuel 13 and following)*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What effect did this rape have on Tamar, Amnon, and the whole family?
5. What do you think of Absalom’s advice to Tamar?
6. How could a community help a raped woman?
7. How could a community help girls and women avoid being raped?

**SONG**

Make up a song based on Psalm 71.20–21 (NIV).

> “Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.”
Didier and Mary

Didier and Mary were happily married with five children. They were both committed Christians. One day their village asked Didier to do a course on better farming methods in the capital city. Didier was very happy to be chosen and went off for four months to do the course.

By the second month, Didier missed his wife very much and began to spend a lot of time daydreaming about women. During the course he had made friends with some other men who weren’t Christians and they kept inviting him to go out with them in the evenings. So far he had refused, but he began to worry when they told him that if a man didn’t have sex regularly, he could go mad! One evening the temptation and his loneliness was too much for him. He went out to a bar with these friends, and afterwards he had sex with a prostitute. The next day he felt awful about it and resolved never to do this again.

At the end of the course Didier returned to his family, and after two years, Mary became pregnant again. At the same time, Didier began feeling unwell. At first he was just tired and started losing weight. Then he started having strange rashes and diarrhea. He went to the doctor who examined him and gave him a blood test. Finally the doctor called him into his office and broke the sad news that he was HIV-positive and that he might already have infected his wife and even the unborn child. The doctor carefully explained that there were three fluids that could carry the virus of HIV: blood, fluids from the sexual organs, and breast milk. Suddenly Didier remembered the evening he has spent with the prostitute.

Didier went home shocked and numb. At first he didn’t want to tell anyone at all, but after a while he realized he must tell his wife. At first, she couldn’t believe it. Then she was angry and sad.

Mary went to the hospital for the HIV test and found out that, indeed, she was HIV-positive. They told her that if she took some special medicine during the rest of her pregnancy, the baby was less likely to be born HIV-positive. She faithfully went to the hospital for these medicines and the baby was born healthy. However, Mary began to feel sick herself.
Didier and Mary despaired as they thought of the future of their six children. They heard of some special medicines called ARVs that would help them be healthy again for some years, but unfortunately they couldn’t get them in their town.

They were afraid to tell anyone of their problem for fear people would start avoiding them. Soon, though, the problem was too big for them to bear, and they told their pastor. The pastor spent a lot of time with them over the next months, reading the Bible to them and discussing who could look after their children. As they were able to express their pain, they felt a real relief in their hearts. Didier gave the rest of his life to teach children and young people about AIDS so that they would not make the same mistake as he did.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What is the only way we can know if a person has HIV?
5. What do people in your area believe about how a person gets HIV?
6. What are the only three ways a person can contract HIV?
7. Is there a way to be healed of HIV?
8. How can we help people who have HIV?
9. How can we help young people avoid HIV?

**EXERCISE: BLOOD WARS**

Give out labels saying “blood soldier,” “HIV,” and “ARV” (two or three of each) and labels saying “Flu,” “TB,” “Malaria,” “Pneumonia,” and “Diarrhea” (one or two of each). The labels need to be large so all can read them. Fasten them to a shirt (with a pin or sticky tape) or hang around the neck. Designate a large space as the body of Didier. Those participating should sit or stand so they can easily move forward to play their part in the drama.

Say: “God has created us with blood soldiers to protect us. Didier has his blood soldiers in his body that will fight against sicknesses. Their job is to protect Didier from illnesses. They must prowl around looking for intruders.” Then, invite Flu to invade—he is quickly thrown out (do not be too violent). Ask Malaria to invade—he is thrown out after a short struggle.

EVERYONE FREEZE.
Didier is doing fine and is able to defeat diseases using his blood soldiers. In real life these are known as leucocytes (white blood cells) and antibodies.

Now say: “Didier went and slept with a prostitute and is infected with HIV.” Then, have HIVs sneak in and hide without the blood soldiers noticing. Invite Flu to return—he is thrown out as quickly as happened earlier. Now have Malaria invade—he too is thrown out after a little struggle.

EVERYONE FREEZE.

In real life Didier does not realize he is ill. He feels well. He is, however, infectious and can spread HIV to other people. After a while—a few months or even up to ten years if he is otherwise fit and well—HIV starts to cause trouble.

Have one HIV stand up and hold one of the blood soldiers so he cannot do anything. Invite Flu to return—he finds there is a struggle. Then, invite Pneumonia to join in. It takes a long struggle for the remaining blood soldier to throw them out.

Invite another HIV to stand up and hold the remaining blood soldier. Then, invite Flu, Pneumonia, Malaria, and Diarrhea to invade Didier’s body. The blood soldiers are held down and Flu and all the other illnesses have a dance of victory around the body of Didier.

EVERYONE FREEZE.

That is what it is like in real life. HIV, a tiny virus, disables the body’s ability to fight infection, so many other illnesses invade. This is called AIDS—it is not one disease but a combination of diseases, especially infections and some cancers. The body cannot manage; appetite is lost or eating becomes painful. The body wastes away. Diarrhea, skin rashes, and many other serious problems develop.

Now let us see what happens when drug treatment is used.

Have everyone sit down except the blood soldiers, who prowl around, and HIV, who hides. Didier has a blood test and is found to have HIV, but fortunately he is not yet ill. He is given ARV—a drug that helps control HIV.

Invite ARVs to come into Didier’s body. They hold down HIV so that when Flu, Malaria, and other viruses invade the blood soldiers can throw them out.

EVERYONE FREEZE.

Blood tests are important as that is the only way to know if someone is HIV-positive. ARVs are drugs that do not rid the body of HIV but control it. The medicine has to be taken life-long and if stopped the HIV will escape and will again cause trouble. After some years, the ARVs may lose their strength and different ARV’s need to be found.
Zacchaeus

In the time of Jesus, the Jews were ruled by a colonial power. Some Jews worked for the colonial government as tax collectors. Often they made people pay very large amounts of taxes and kept part of the money for themselves. The other Jews considered them traitors and looked down on them.

In the village of Jericho, a man named Zacchaeus was a tax collector. He had become very rich but had no honor.

When Jesus passed through the village, Zacchaeus wanted to see him. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a big tree.

When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, “Zacchaeus hurry down! I want to stay with you today.” Zaccheus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

Everyone who saw this started to grumble, “This man Zacchaeus is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him!”

Later that day Zacchaeus stood up and said to Jesus, “I will give half of my property to the poor. And I will now pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated.”

Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “Today you and your family have been saved. I came to look for and to save people who are lost.”

(See Luke 19.1–9)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. When someone is looked down on by others, what effect does this have?
5. Why were the people unhappy that Jesus visited Zacchaeus?
6. Why did Jesus want to visit Zacchaeus?
7. What changed for Zacchaeus when Jesus visited him?
8. What changes do you think Jesus hoped for among the people of Jericho as a result of his visit to Zacchaeus?
9. Compare this story with your society and people living with HIV or AIDS. Are you more like Jesus or more like the people of Jericho?

SONG

Make up a song based on Luke 19.10

“[Jesus] came to look for and to save people who are lost.”
8A. DOMESTIC ABUSE

Ann leaves Joe

“You need to leave him!” Mary said. She was tying a bandage on her neighbor Ann’s arm after Ann’s husband had beaten her yet again.

Ann had been married for three years. For the first year of their marriage, Ann and Joe were happy together. They were both Christians—Joe having come to Christ in recent years out of a troubled past. As a child, he saw his father beat his mother all the time. Problems erupted for Ann and Joe when two things happened at once: Ann gave birth to a baby boy that cried all the time, and Joe lost his job.

Joe chose to respond to these problems by going out and drinking with his friends. When he came home, Ann smelled perfume on his clothes. He also became angry more easily, especially as he had to deal with the difficulty of finding another job.

Ann tried to do things to please Joe, but whatever she did just seemed to irritate him more. He began to shout at her a lot. There was little money coming in for food, so Ann found a part-time job and someone to care for the baby, but this only seemed to make things worse. He kept telling her that she was a bad wife and mother.

One night, Joe came home drunk and hit her so hard that she fell against a table and broke her arm. Joe was beside himself as he took her to the hospital. He said over and over, “I didn’t mean to do that! Please forgive me and don’t tell the doctor!” Ann still loved Joe and thought that maybe now he would change, so she told the doctor that she had tripped and fallen outside the house.

Then for a few weeks, Joe didn’t hit Ann, but his anger came out in harsh words. He said, “You’re so stupid. You can’t even look after the baby properly!” She began to think she should leave him for the sake of the baby, but then she thought, “How could I live without Joe? I’m so stupid. How could I earn enough money to survive? Besides, our pastor said that wives should submit to their husbands as the head of the home!” Just then, Joe came and said he was sorry for yelling at her again, and they made up. Ann lived for those brief moments.

Before long, Joe came home drunk again. The baby was crying when he walked in the door. First he hit Ann hard, and then he said, “That stupid baby!”
He picked up the little boy and slapped him. The baby screamed louder. Ann grabbed the baby from his arms and ran outside. Joe followed her, yelling.

Ann banged on Mary’s door. As soon as it opened she jumped inside. “Don’t let Joe in!” she gasped. Mary’s husband barred the door as Joe tried to bash it in. After a few minutes, he gave up and walked back to his house, kicking the neighbor’s dog as he went.

Finally, Ann had had enough! Mary suggested she call a kind older lady in the church that she knew and find out if Ann could go and stay there for the moment. Ann agreed to that, and as the woman was happy to welcome her there and then, Mary’s husband took Ann and her baby to the woman. She also suggested that she phone her pastor’s wife and ask her to go and see Ann the next day, and Ann agreed to this as well.

The next morning the pastor’s wife went to see Ann and they talked for a long time. In the end, the pastor’s wife told Ann that she could not take responsibility to make their marriage work on her own, because Joe had broken the vows they made when they wed. He had promised to love and to cherish her, and clearly he was not doing so. She read from Ephesians 5, which showed not only that wives are to submit to their husbands, husbands are to love their wives, “just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.” This was like a soothing ointment to Ann’s heart.

The pastor’s wife continued to meet with Ann, listening to her story and helping her see that the abuse was not her fault—and that she was not stupid! The church helped Ann and her baby find a place to live, and she was able to pay the bills by working longer hours at her job. Then one night Joe called her, and she began to waver. Should she go back to him?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. Why do you think Joe abused Ann?
5. Why do you think Ann stayed with Joe?
6. What helped Ann leave Joe?
7. How can your church help people suffering from domestic abuse?
8. How could Joe be helped?
Abigail and David

Saul was the first king of Israel. He did such a poor job that God had the prophet Samuel go to David's family when David was still a young man, and anoint David as the next king. Many years passed, however, before David actually became king, and during those years Saul did everything he could to kill David.

In this story, David and his men are hiding from Saul in the countryside. They had voluntarily protected the sheep and shepherds in the area, and it was now time for the sheep-shearing festival. That's when the shepherds got paid.

One rich man owned all of the thousands of sheep and goats in the area. His name was Nabal, and David sent him a message: “We have protected your shepherds. We haven’t taken anything from them. Now please send us some food to thank us for our help.” Nabal replied, “Who is this David? Why should I send anything to him? I don't know where he is coming from!” And Nabal went back to feasting.

When David heard what Nabal had said, he was insulted. He said to his men, “Get ready to fight!” He took four hundred men and set off to attack Nabal.

Meanwhile, back at the feast, the servants saw what had happened. They knew it was useless to try to talk to Nabal, so one of the servants went to Nabal’s wife, Abigail, and told her what had happened and how David and his men had protected them in the fields. He asked her to do something because he was sure they were in for trouble.

Abigail wasted no time. She collected together a generous gift for David and his men: bread, wine, meat, grain, raisins, figs, and five sheep ready to cook. This was far more than David had hoped Nabal would give him! She put it all on donkeys and sent her servants off to take it to David. She followed the servants. Nabal didn’t know a thing.

David and his men were already on their way to kill Nabal and all his men, and then they saw Abigail coming towards them. She got off her donkey and bowed down in front of David, and she said, “Please don’t pay attention to my husband. He is a fool! Please accept this gift and my apologies. I see that God is with you and pray that he will continue to bless you. Please don’t take revenge and kill innocent people, because when you are king, you won’t want to be guilty of that!” David thanked her for coming, and for her good judgment, and for keeping him from killing people needlessly.
When Abigail got home, she found her husband was drunk, so she didn’t tell him anything that night. The next morning when he was sober, she told him all that had happened. He was so shocked that he had a heart attack on the spot, and ten days later he died. When David heard that Nabal had died, he praised God! Then he sent a messenger to ask Abigail to be his wife, and she accepted.

*(See 1 Samuel 25)*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. Normally in the Israelite culture, women submitted to their husbands. Do you think Abigail did the right thing in this situation?
5. How can this story help us today?

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**9. CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER**

**Pastor Bamba**

Pastor Bamba and his family were off on a one-year study program when their village was attacked by a neighboring ethnic group. They’ve been back home now for five months. As the pastor, he feels guilty for not being there when his members went through this difficult experience. Since his return, he works day and night. He does his best to receive everyone who comes to him to tell him what happened to them. Many are helped by talking about their experience, but some of them get mad at him for no reason. Others tell him long complicated stories to see if they can get him to give them money.

Two months ago his best friend came and told him, “My wife and my children were killed before my eyes.” Ever since then, Bamba can’t get the images of what his friend told him out of his mind. His wife has noticed that he has not been sleeping well for the last few weeks and awakens at the slightest noise. He no longer has the energy he used to have and wakes up feeling tired. Three times in the past month he has awakened in the middle of the night after a nightmare in which people from the neighboring ethnic group are chasing him.
Last week, his wife said to him, “Let’s go as a family to my aunt’s house so you can rest a bit. Our children never see you anymore!” He shouted at her, “But I can’t go away! Everyone relies on me. They couldn’t manage if I went away.” His wife sighed, “Well, at least eat meals with the family regularly. You’ve lost so much weight!” He said to her, a bit irritated, “I’ll do my best.”

For the past month he has felt more and more discouraged. He no longer wants to preach. When the church leaders came to go to church with him, he gave the excuse that he didn’t feel well. He’s been thinking of resigning. Last week, while bicycling to a neighboring village, he ran his bike off the road, broke his arm and ruined the bike. He came back to his house very discouraged.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What sort of problems do people who help others encounter?
5. When people are overloaded, how do they behave?
6. How is Pastor Bamba’s family affected by his behavior?
7. Have you ever felt overloaded? Describe how you felt.
8. How can you take care of yourself so you can continue to help others?

**TAKING TIME TO SHARPEN THE MACHETE**

1. *(Hold up a machete and sharpening file.)* What will happen to this machete if it is never sharpened?
2. Is the time it takes to sharpen it wasted or well-used?

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**Moses accepts advice**

When Moses was leading the Israelites across a desert, his father-in-law Jethro came to visit him along the way. They had a very happy reunion. Moses told Jethro everything God had done and Jethro realized that the God of Israel was the greatest God.
While he was there, Jethro noticed that the people stood all day waiting to see Moses, from the morning until the evening. Moses sat and decided their cases, one after the other.

Jethro asked, “Why are you the only judge?” Moses answered, “When the people have a problem, they come here to find out what God wants them to do. I make a decision on the basis of God’s laws.”

Jethro replied, “This isn’t the best way to do it. You and the people who come to you will soon be worn out. The job is too much for one person; you can’t do it alone. God will help you if you follow my advice. You should be the one to teach them God’s laws and show them what they must do to live right.

“You will need to appoint some competent leaders who respect God and are trustworthy and honest. Then put them over groups of ten, fifty, a hundred, and a thousand. These judges can handle the ordinary cases and bring the more difficult ones to you. Having them to share the load will make your work easier. This is the way God wants it done. You won’t be under nearly as much stress, and everyone else will return home feeling satisfied.”

Moses listened to Jethro’s advice and put it into practice. The men he made responsible served as judges, deciding the easy cases themselves but bringing the more difficult ones to Moses.

After Moses and his father-in-law said goodbye to each other, Jethro returned home.

(See Exodus 18.13–27)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What was Moses’ problem?
5. Why might a church leader not delegate responsibilities to others?
6. In twos, discuss how you could take better care of yourself. Think of at least one thing you could do, and share it in the large group.

SKIT: MOSES NEEDS ADVICE
Choose two people to be Moses and Jethro. Everyone else makes a long line and thinks of a problem to take to “Moses.” Moses and Jethro greet each other and talk a bit, then Moses starts listening to the problem of the first one in line, then the next, then the third. The rest show they are restless and tired. After
a while Jethro gives his advice. Moses then reorganizes everyone into groups, each with a leader to listen to the problems.

**SONG**

Choose the part you like from this passage to make up a song:

“If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light” (Mt 11.28–30).

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**10. TAKING OUR PAIN TO THE CROSS**

**God’s promised savior**

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden, suffering entered the world. But God told the serpent that one of the descendants of the woman would crush his head—that is, put an end to him, Satan. The people of God waited in hope of this promised descendant for a very long time. The prophets kept telling them that he would come one day.

Finally, it happened! The prophets had said he would be born in the town of Bethlehem, to a virgin. And that is just what happened. Jesus was born to a young girl named Mary. When he grew up, he went around the countryside teaching the people about God, healing the sick, and doing other miraculous things that showed God had sent him. He did not agree with the religious leaders who taught that to please God, you had to carefully obey a long list of rules. They were offended by this, but many of the people believed Jesus was the promised one for whom they had been waiting. In the end, the religious leaders arranged for Jesus to be killed by being nailed to a cross. They thought that would put an end to the problems he was causing them.

But three days after Jesus died on the cross, he rose from death. He appeared to many of his followers to encourage them and let them know that he was really alive. After some weeks, he took his followers to a place outside Jerusalem. He told them that the Holy Spirit would come to them to help them. He also told them that one day he would come back again. Then he went up into heaven.
When Jesus died, he took the sins and the suffering of the whole world on himself. This is why we can take our pain to the cross and ask him to forgive our sins and heal our wounded hearts.

EXERCISE: TAKING OUR PAIN TO THE CROSS
After the story, give people time to reflect silently on the pain(s) they want to bring to Christ for healing. Have them represent each pain with an object that can burn—for example, a small stick, or a drawing on a paper. Some may prefer writing their pain in words on a piece of paper (give them a small piece of paper if so). Then have them share in groups of two or three and pray for one another. Afterward, come back together as a large group and sing the songs below, reflecting on the fact that Christ died to take our suffering and sins on himself. Invite people to bring their pain to the cross (have a simple cross) by either nailing the objects to the cross or putting them in a basket at the foot of the cross. When everyone has finished, gather up the papers and objects, take them outside, and burn them. Say a prayer of thanksgiving that Jesus has taken our pain and suffering upon himself when he died on the cross.

SONG
Make up a song using the following passages:

“The Sovereign LORD has filled me with his Spirit.
He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor,
To heal the broken-hearted,
To announce release to captives
And freedom to those in prison. . . .
He has sent me to comfort all who mourn” (Is 61.1–2b, GNT).

“But he endured the suffering that should have been ours,
the pain that we should have borne.
All the while we thought that his suffering
was punishment sent by God.
But because of our sins he was wounded,
beaten because of the evil we did.
We are healed by the punishment he suffered,
made whole by the blows he received.” (Is 53.4–5, GNT).
The goat story

James and his wife Amy lived in a small village with their six children. They just barely scraped out a living from a patch of land that James had inherited from his father. Amy kept chickens and two goats to help the family survive. She had four hens, and one of them had a brood of small chicks. Every night, Amy was very careful to put the hens and the chicks into a pen to keep them safe.

One morning when she went to let the chickens out, one of the hens was gone! Her chicks were peeping loudly! As Amy looked around for the missing hen, she heard James shout, “Our goat’s gone!” They looked everywhere, but neither the hen nor the goat were to be found.

Over the next days, some friends said they had seen the goat tied up behind the hut in their neighbor Lambo’s field.

After some time, Lambo sent a friend to see them. The friend told James that Lambo had stolen the animals and was sorry. He would like James to forgive him.

“Well,” said James, “Losing the goat and hen has been very difficult for us.” “Yes, yes,” the friend said. “We really depended on those eggs, and on the milk from the goat. Our children are hungry at night now.” “Yes, yes,” the friend said, as if in a hurry. James said, “I’ll ask God to help me forgive Lambo, but he needs to bring our animals back.”

“Oh, dear!” said the friend. “He’s already eaten the hen! And besides, if you really forgave him, you wouldn’t make him return those animals. There’s that Bible verse that says, um, let’s see, forgive seventy times seven.”

“Well, I can forgive Lambo, but he still has to face the consequences of what he has done. Have him buy another hen and bring it to us, along with the goat. He could add a rooster, if he’d like to!”

The following week in church, the pastor preached about forgiveness. He said that if we don’t forgive people, we’re the ones who suffer. Amy listened. She knew she was suffering. She felt bitter. Whenever she thought about Lambo, she got a headache.
Back at the house she said to James, “I know that if I forgive Lambo, I’ll forget what happened. I’m trying to forgive him but I can’t forget what he did!” James said, “Who told you that? How can you forget what happened? You had a goat, and now you don’t! We’ll always remember what happened, but when we’ve forgiven, we don’t feel bad anymore.”

But James was struggling, too. Every time his children cried with hunger, he felt angry at Lambo. Then he’d pray and ask God to help him forgive again.

About a month later, Lambo’s friend came to see them again. This time Lambo was with him, and they were leading a goat with its kid! Lambo said, “The more I thought about your family being hungry, the worse I felt. I’m really sorry I stole from you. My family had been without meat for a week when I walked past your compound and saw the animals. I was tempted to take them and I thought I wouldn’t get caught. Now I know I did wrong. Please forgive me and accept this goat and the kid. I’ll bring a hen as soon as I can.”

James smiled. Amy smiled. Now they had their goat and their friend back! But they kept a close eye on their animals, at least for a while.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened in this story?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. Based on this story, complete the following: Forgiveness is not...
5. Complete this statement: Forgiveness is....
6. Does the offender have to apologize for real forgiveness to take place?
7. If we forgive someone, the offender still needs to face the consequences of their actions. What might that look like?
8. How can we tell when we have completely forgiven someone?
9. Is there anyone you need to forgive?

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**The unforgiving servant**

Peter came up to Jesus and asked, “How many times should I forgive someone who does something wrong to me? Is seven times enough?”

Jesus answered: “Not just seven times, but seventy times seven times! This story will show you what the kingdom of heaven is like”:
One day a king decided to call in his servants and ask them to give an account of what they owed him. As he was doing this, one servant was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. But he didn’t have any money to pay what he owed. The king ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he owned, in order to pay the debt. The servant got down on his knees and began begging, “Have pity on me, and I will pay you every cent I owe!” The king felt sorry for him and let him go free. He even told the servant that he did not have to pay back the money.

But as this servant was leaving, he happened to meet another servant, who owed him a few dollars. So he grabbed the man by the throat. He started choking him and said, “Pay me what you owe!” The man got down on his knees and began begging, “Have pity on me, and I will pay you back.”

But the first servant refused to have pity. Instead, he went and had the other servant put in jail until he could pay what he owed. When some other servants found out what had happened, they felt sorry for the man who had been put in jail. Then they told the king what had happened. The king called the first servant back in and said, “You’re an evil man! When you begged for mercy, I said you did not have to pay back a cent. Don’t you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you?” The king was so angry that he ordered the servant to be tortured until he could pay back everything he owed.

“That is how my Father in heaven will treat you, if you don’t forgive each of my followers with all your heart.”

(See Matthew 18.21–35)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happened in this story?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What do you learn from this story about why we should forgive people who hurt us?
5. When we are bitter towards others, who suffers?
6. What do you find hard about forgiving people?
7. What does your culture teach that helps you forgive others?
8. What does your culture teach that makes it difficult for you to forgive others?
ROPE EXERCISE

Get two volunteers. One plays the part of Sam who has been offended by his friend. Tie the friend and Sam back to back with a rope. Now say:

- When Sam takes a walk, his friend is there.
- When Sam eats supper, his friend is there.
- When Sam tries to do his work, his friend is there.
- When Sam prays, his friend is there.
- When Sam tries to run away, his friend follows.
- When Sam tries to hide, his friend is right there.

The actors should follow the leader’s instructions listed above to show that no matter where Sam goes he cannot escape his thoughts and feelings about his friend. He cannot escape them until he forgives, for the Bible teaches that God is the one to judge people—not us. Forgiveness is a gift that we have received from God, and one that we should also pass along to others. At the end Sam forgives his friend and unties the rope. If there is a cross in the room, he can put the rope by the cross.

SONG


“If you forgive others for the wrongs they do to you, your Father in heaven will forgive you. But if you don’t forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

12. HOW CAN WE LIVE AS CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT?

The Liwi and Oki

In the country of Bingola, two ethnic groups—the Liwis and the Okis—had been fighting over one area of land which both groups claimed. This fighting had been going on for over a hundred years. The government wasn’t doing anything about this. Nearly every family had a member who had been killed or injured in the conflict. Parents taught their children from an early age how savage the other group was. All the schools were either for Liwi children or for Oki children. They never mixed together.
Jonah Nga was a Liwi teacher and a Christian. As part of a development committee, he was elected to go to a government meeting in the capital. Bozon was an Oki and was the pastor of a small church. He was also chosen to go to the same meeting.

There were twenty-five people from Bingola in the meeting—four of the group were Liwi, five were Oki. Each group sat as far away from the other as possible and didn’t talk to each other at all. After two days, Jonah and Bozon were asked to serve on a small subcommittee of four members. At the beginning, Bozon and Jonah wouldn’t talk to each other directly but, as the meeting went on, they got more interested in the subject they were discussing and started getting to know each other.

As Jonah and Bozon went on talking, they discovered they were both Christians! In their whole lives, they never imagined someone from the other group could be a Christian. They started to share the many things they had heard as children. Bozon asked Jonah, “Do Liwis really eat old people when they are too old to work?” Jonah laughed at that, but in return asked Bozon, “Do Okis always go to bed with a spear in their hand?” Soon they discovered that many of the stories they had been told weren’t true at all.

One evening the two men were sitting together. Jonah began thinking aloud. “You know, I used to want to kill Okis because they killed my grandfather. But now I don’t want to take revenge any more. The verse ‘Revenge is mine, says the Lord’ keeps coming to my mind, and something inside me has changed. Even the headaches I always have seem to have gone away!” “I know what you mean,” said Bozon. “Perhaps we could serve as a bridge to help bring our groups together.” Jonas agreed, “What an excellent idea!”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What do you think caused the conflict between these two groups?
5. How did Bozon and Jonah begin to realize they were both “real” Christians?
6. What are the other Liwis and Okis going to think and do when they see Bozon and Jonah talking together?
7. How could Jonah and Bozon live as Christians in the midst of this conflict?
8. Are there conflicts in your community? What are the roots of these conflicts?
Church conflict

(If possible, act out this story spontaneously—without preparation. Choose someone to be Peter and have him read Acts 6.1–7. He should be prepared to say, “Stop! It’s not right for us to stop studying and preaching God’s word in order to distribute food. Choose some wise men to put them in charge of this problem.” Don’t explain to anyone else what the story is about. If you can’t act it out, just tell the story.)

In a large church in the capital city, trouble was brewing. This church was known for taking care of the widows in the congregation. At this time there were two groups of widows, and both groups were good Christians.

The first group of widows had always lived in the homeland. (Choose a group of people and send them to one side to look like sad widows.) Every day, the church sent some workers to give these widows food and the other things they needed. (Choose a group of people to carry food and clothes to the widows. The widows look happy.)

The second group of widows was made up of women who were displaced by war and had lived in another country so long that they no longer spoke their own language. (Choose a group of people to be the second group of widows. Put them at a distance from the first group. They should act like widows as well: worried, unhappy, etc.) The church sent them food as well. (Have another group of people start taking them food and clothes.)

One day the widows who used to live abroad started complaining that they were getting less food than the widows who had always lived there. (Have the second group of widows start yelling and complaining.) Soon many in the church got involved in the argument. (Have the servers of food start arguing, some on the side of one group of widows, some on the other—by now all of them should be shouting and arguing.)

(Now have Peter walk in with two or three other people.) Peter says, “Stop! It’s not right for us to stop studying and preaching God’s word in order to distribute food. So, choose some wise men and put them in charge of this problem.” The church members thought this was good and chose some people from each ethnic group. (Have them do this.)

(Ask the listeners:) Did you recognize this story?
(Explain:) It’s from Acts 6! When Israel lost its independence, some of the Jews stayed in the homeland and others were displaced to other countries where they stayed a very long time—such a long time that they took on the language and culture of their new country. They looked down on those who stayed in the homeland because they were poor, and those in the homeland looked down on them because they had lost their culture and language and were no longer pure. Those living in other lands still liked to be buried in their homeland, however, so they came back when they were old. And, as usual, the men died before the women. That led to a large number of widows for the church to look after. All this led to conflict within the church, which the apostles worked through, and in the end, the church grew.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What were the causes of the conflict in this story?
5. What did the church leaders do about it?
6. How did the fact that the seven men did not all come from the same ethnic group help bring reconciliation?
7. What tensions are you aware of in your church or community?
8. A prejudice is when you judge someone as being bad even before you meet them. Do you have any prejudices? Explain.

SONG
Make up a song using the following verse:
“...But if we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away” (1 Jn 1.9).

EXERCISE: FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION
Do this exercise as the closing ceremony.
As appropriate, use the songs you have composed on 1 John 1.9, Isaiah 53.4–5, Isaiah 61.1–4, and Matthew 6.14–15 during this exercise.

Give people time alone in quiet reflection to think about any personal sins to repent of, or any individual they need to forgive. They should write these on a piece of paper that they keep. Say 1 John 1.9, Matthew 6.14–15, Isaiah 61.1–3.

Then explain that groups can sin against other groups. The groups need to forgive one another. Divide into ethnic groups and have people discuss any
ways their group has sinned against others that they feel they need to repent of, or any other group who has offended them and they would like to forgive. If they are not able to forgive now, they should ask God to help them be willing to do so. Have one person in each group write these on another paper.

Come back in the large group and offer the opportunity for groups to ask forgiveness of other groups or to forgive other groups that have offended them.

Bring all these papers to the cross, as a way of bringing your pain to the cross. Say or sing Isaiah 53.4–5.

Go outside and burn the papers. Pray. Offer the opportunity for some people to testify of their healing.

13. PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Trouble is coming to Tenisa

To the east of Bingola was the country of Tenisa. The problems in Bingola started to spill over the border and there was real concern that civil war might break out there soon.

Joseph Bubute was a Catholic priest working in Tenisa. As he looked at the deteriorating political situation, he wondered: Is there any way I could prepare my parish for future troubles? One day he was invited to the capital to take part in a conference and some leaders from Bingola were there, too.

As they listened to the news one evening, they became very concerned that war was about to erupt in Tenisa. Pastor Peter from Bingola was sitting with them and he said, “When the war came to our country, we had an idea it was coming for a number of months. Later I wished so much that we had prepared our church members for what was to come, but at the time we had no idea how to do this. I could give you some ideas about how to prepare for trouble.”

One of the other Tenisa pastors spoke up, “If we go home and start preparing our people for war, won’t the government say that we want war to come?” “Not if you are careful in the way you do it,” said Peter.
The whole group agreed that it would be good to learn from Peter, and, for three evenings, Peter explained how they could help prepare their people practically and spiritually.

At the end of the conference the participants all went home, and Father Joseph immediately started sharing what he had learned with the Christians. Many of them made practical preparations like packing up medicines, important documents, and other items ready to take at a moment’s notice. They also discussed and made a plan how to warn the whole community when there was danger.

As Father Joseph thought about these things, he remembered a terrible story he’d heard from one of the Bingola pastors. The rebels caught a man and his family and told the man he had to choose one child and kill him, otherwise they would kill the father. The man did as he was told, but later he couldn’t get over having done it. He was ill and so upset inside he couldn’t do his normal work. “I’d never thought that people would do such a horrible thing. I was shocked and didn’t know how to respond!” he said.

Father Joseph decided to start a new Bible study. First he had people make a list of “What if . . .” situations that might occur during a war: What if someone told you to kill another person? What if someone wanted to take all your possessions? In no time, they had a long list of situations they could imagine. Then they searched through the Scriptures and discussed how a Christian should respond.

Two months later, war broke out in Tenisa and Father Joseph’s congregation scattered into the bush. Life was very hard for everyone.

After a year, peace was restored to the country. People were able to go back home and rebuild their lives. Father Joseph had a stream of people coming to greet him. Everyone wanted to tell him that the preparation they did together for trouble helped them very much. One man said, “If you hadn’t told us to have a packet of medicines ready to take, most of my family would have died in the bush!” Another said, “Those studies about ‘What if . . .’ helped me so much. When a rebel soldier told me to kill my wife, I knew I must refuse. In the end, God delivered us all.”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. Some people say that if we prepare for trouble, it shows we don’t trust God. What would you say to that?
5. If people think trouble is coming, how can they prepare?
6. What if someone told you to kill someone? How would you respond? Give biblical support for your response.
7. What if robbers told you to give them all of your money and your cell phone? How would you respond? Give biblical support for your response.

**EXERCISE: EVACUATION PACK**

In small groups, imagine you have ten minutes to flee from your home into the bush. You have to walk twenty kilometers to get to a safe place. Make a list of the things you would take. Compare the lists and discuss which items are essential.

**Nehemiah prepares for the future**

When this story begins, the Jewish people had been conquered, and many had been displaced. They had lived in their enemy’s country for a very long time. Some Jews had been given important positions in the government. A new king who was friendlier towards the Jews was on the throne.

Nehemiah was one of the Jews who had been given an important position. One day, some Jews from the homeland came to talk with Nehemiah. They said, “We are having all kinds of troubles. People around us look down on us, and Jerusalem’s walls are broken down and the gates have been burned.”

When Nehemiah heard all this he wept, and mourned. He didn’t eat for several days. Then he prayed to God. The king noticed how sad he was and asked him, “Why do you look so sad?” Nehemiah answered, “Your majesty, I hope you live forever! I feel sad because the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and its gates have been burned down.” The king asked him, “What do you want me to do?” Nehemiah prayed to God and said, “Send me back so I can rebuild the city.”

The king agreed. Nehemiah asked him for official letters to show to officials along the way, so that everyone would know the king had authorized the trip. He also asked for a letter to the person in charge of the royal forest to ask for wood. The king agreed to everything and even sent soldiers with Nehemiah to protect him on the way.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Nehemiah went out at night with just a few men to inspect the city’s walls. Then he called together the leaders of the
people and they agreed that they would build up the walls again and put the gates back in place. They agreed and together made a plan. Then they decided which group would build each section of the wall.

Enemies of the Jews were still living in the land. Their chief was a man called Sanballat. First he tried to stop them by saying that the civil authorities would stop them, but, since Nehemiah had letters from the king, that did not work. Then he tried to mock them, saying, “Even a small animal could knock over this pile of stones!” But they took no notice.

Finally Sanballat’s group threatened to attack those building the wall. Nehemiah called all the people working on the wall together and told them, “From now on, half of the men will work to build the wall, and the other half will stand by him with their weapons ready to fight. We are a long way from one another, so if you hear the sound of the trumpet, come quickly and gather around me. Our God will help us fight.” They continued building the wall, but were on alert and prepared in case the enemies attacked them.

Finally the wall was completed and the new gates put in place. Then the Jews could live in safety.

(Based on the book of Nehemiah)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. What happened first in this story? Next? Next?
2. What do you like about this story?
3. What do you find difficult about this story?
4. What steps did Nehemiah take to prepare for his mission? Make a list.
5. How did Nehemiah keep the Israelites from panicking or becoming discouraged when Sanballat was causing trouble?

SONG
Make up a song based on the following verse:

“When you see trouble coming, don’t be stupid and walk right into it—be smart and hide” (Pr 22.3).
APPENDIX: MAIN POINTS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here are the main points of each story and possible answers to discussion questions that can be answered by reflecting on the story. If the group discussion does not bring up these answers, add them to the discussion before moving on to the next question.

Lesson 1—If God loves us, why do we suffer?

PASTOR MARK

When we suffer, some things can make it very hard to know that God loves us:

- Our relationship with our earthly father
- Sermons that only teach about how God judges us and not also how he loves us
- Sermons that teach that we are saved by the good things we do
- Our traditional beliefs and customs

5. What effect did Mark’s father and uncle have on his feelings toward God?

Mark thinks that God is far away, that God has abandoned him, that God is angry against the Bingolans, that God doesn't like them. When Mark was three, his father died, so he may feel like his father abandoned him and he might feel like God will abandon him. In addition, Mark had bad experiences with his uncle who took his father’s place. He never knew a father who loved him, so it is hard for him to believe his heavenly Father loves him.

6. How did the traditional beliefs of Mark’s culture affect his thoughts about God?

When Mark suffered, he started to doubt what he knew the Bible said about God because he couldn’t understand why God didn’t protect him or bless him. The traditional beliefs came to mind and seemed to explain what happened to him better.

7. Compare your traditional beliefs with what the Bible says about what God is like. How are they similar and different?

For example, some cultures may have these traditional beliefs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Bible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We should not bother God with small requests but rather address these to ancestors or divinities.</td>
<td>We can present our large and small requests to God. He is interested in all of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God created the world but then went far away. He is angry with people.</td>
<td>God loves us. He watches over us. He sent his Son to die for our sins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. What sort of teaching is unhelpful when Christians are suffering?

Teaching that:

- Speaks about God’s judgment but never mentions his love.
- God only loves us when we do good things. (God’s love is unconditional.)
• We suffer because we don’t have enough faith, or that God never wants us to experience anything difficult or painful.

CREATION

• God is all-powerful
• Suffering in the world has come from man’s disobedience when he listened to Satan’s voice.
• God gives us the choice to obey or disobey him.
• God loves us, even when we disobey him.
• God is a just God.

4. What do we learn about God from this story?
   God created a perfect world, but humans ruined it. God loves us even when we sin. Our sins separate us from God. God is just; God punishes disobedience.

5. Who do we learn about the snake from this story?
   The serpent lies, tricks us, and tries to get people to disobey God. He cites Scripture in ways that twist the meaning.

6. What do we learn about the origin of sin and suffering in this story?
   God gives us the choice to obey him or disobey him. When we choose to disobey, we suffer and/or others suffer. Disobedience brought the first suffering into the world. Satan tries to get people to disobey God.

7. Where is God when we are suffering?
   God is always with us, even when we sin. He comes looking for us. He cares for our needs; he provided Adam and Eve with clothes. He takes care of us when we suffer.

Lesson 2—Healing the wounds of our hearts

JOHN MBA

• Wounds of the heart are like physical wounds.
• We can tell when someone has a wound of the heart by his behavior.
• When someone has a heart wound, it is normal to have problems like John and his family.
• The first way of helping someone with a heart wound is to help them talk about what has happened.
• Other Christians and our cultural background may stop us from expressing our pain.

4. Apart from the loss of his arm, what else has John lost? What has Mary lost? What has the older son lost?
   John has lost his sense of security, his physical appearance and sense of wholeness, his dignity, his status, his ability to feed his family, his friends, his sleep, his sense of peace inside.
   Mary has lost her security, her happy family, her inner well-being, her sleep, her friends, her faith, her church.
The older son has lost his security, his inner peace, his work, his sense of meaning in life, his health.

6. How can you tell when someone has a wound of the heart?

By their behavior. They can stay by themselves, be angry, cry a lot, think of killing themselves, talk a lot or not at all, eat too much or nearly nothing, have trouble sleeping and nightmares, sleep too much or not enough, be startled with fear for no obvious reason, avoid things that remind them of the painful experience. They can have headaches, stomachaches, and other physical problems. They can try to kill the pain with alcohol, drugs, or overworking.

7. How is a wound of the heart like a physical wound? Try to give five ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Wound</th>
<th>Heart Wound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is visible</td>
<td>It is invisible, but shows up in the person’s behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is painful, and must be treated with care.</td>
<td>It is painful, and must be treated with care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If ignored, it is likely to get worse.</td>
<td>If ignored, it is likely to get worse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It must be cleaned to remove any foreign objects or dirt.</td>
<td>The pain has to come out. If there is any sin, it must be confessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a wound heals on the surface with infection still inside, it will cause the person to become very sick.</td>
<td>If people pretend their emotional wounds are healed when really they are not, it will cause the person greater problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only God can bring healing, but he often uses people and medicine to do so.</td>
<td>Only God can bring healing, but he often uses people and an understanding of how our emotions heal to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not treated, it attracts flies.</td>
<td>If not treated, it attracts sin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It takes time to heal.</td>
<td>It takes time to heal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A healed wound may leave a scar.</td>
<td>A healed heart wound also may leave a scar. People can be healed, but they will not be exactly the same as before the wound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

- Jesus knows when we suffer.
- The first thing we should do to help people who are traumatized is to listen to them.
- Our own culture or mind set can blind us so that we do not see God’s plan.

4. When we lose something or someone important to us, we feel sad. When Jesus died, what were all the things the disciples lost?
The disciples thought they had lost the person who could set them free from the oppression of the Romans. They lost a charismatic leader, a friend, hope, and so forth.

Lesson 3—What happens when someone is grieving?

NDRI

- After a loved one dies, it is normal to feel angry, to deny they are dead, and to feel very sad
- It is not healthy to avoid passing through the various stages of grief after a loss.
- It takes time and energy to grieve.

4. How did the behavior of Ndri’s church members change after they lost loved ones?
Some of them were sad and lost interest in life. Another could not belief that her son had died. Others felt guilty and angry that their loved ones had died. They said, “If only . . .” Another person heard the voice of their loved one. Ndri had nightmares, was mad at people, God, his wife, and the rebels. He had headaches and stomachaches.

5. What made it hard for Ndri and his church members to grieve?
They couldn’t hold the funeral and do the normal burial while they were in the bush. Some had not seen the corpse of their loved ones and sometimes could not be sure the person was actually dead. Many deaths and losses at the same time made it more difficult for them.

6. When Ndri held his tears & feelings inside, what effect did it have on him?
His bad feelings gave him nightmares and pain in his body.

7. How did Ndri feel after he had cried?
He felt better, like the pressure inside him had been released.

LAZARUS

- Just as Jesus cried, so we need to cry sometimes, even men. The tears show the pain
- It is normal to think and say “If only I had . . .” after a death.
- Jesus knows all our suffering, even when we don’t feel as though he is near.

5. How did Jesus express his sadness?
He cried.

6. How does Jesus’ behavior compare with what is taught in your culture? Are people allowed to show when they are sad or troubled? Are men allowed to cry in public?
This depends on the culture, but in many places people think it is not good to cry.
Lesson 4—Getting our pain out through laments

LAMENTATIONS

- We can express all types of emotion to God, including negative ones.
- God’s people have been severely traumatized in the past.
- We can use the laments in our own culture as a structure to express our pain to God.

4. How do the Israelites feel towards God?

They felt angry at God because they were displaced and felt like God had abandoned them.

6. Do Christians in your community tell God how they really feel? If not, why not?

In many cultures, people feel that it isn’t good to complain to God or be angry with God. The Bible, however, shows us that this is acceptable.

Lesson 5—How can we listen well?

ROSE AND THE PASTOR’S WIFE

There are three questions that help us listen to others.

4–5. What questions did the pastor’s wife ask Rose? How did these questions help?

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- What was the most difficult part for you?

These questions helped Rose express her pain.

6. With what kind of person would you share your pain?

Each person will have a different answer, but many will want someone who listens without correcting them and without making it seem like their pain is nothing compared to the pain of others. Many will want someone who keeps things confidential (i.e. does not tell others).

JOB SUFFERS

- We can’t always explain why we are suffering.
- It is good to visit those who are suffering and mourn with them.
- Good helpers do not insist that someone suffering has done something wrong.

4. What do you learn about God from this story?

That God knows what is happening to us; his wisdom and power is greater than ours; our suffering doesn’t always mean that God is punishing us for sin; God likes it when we discuss things honestly like Job did; God doesn’t accept simplistic explanations like those of Job’s friends; etc.

5. What did Job’s three friends do that helped Job? What did they do that did not help?
His friends sat with him for seven days without speaking. They did not help him when they insisted that his suffering meant that he had sinned.

6. Often when we suffer we want to know why. What does this story tell us about that?
   This story shows that God is bigger and wiser than we are, and he has a plan even if we don’t understand what is happening.

**Lesson 6—Helping traumatized children**

**KASI**

- Children who have been traumatized often have a change in their behavior.
- We need to listen to children who have been traumatized so that they can talk about their pain.
- We need to explain to children what is happening.
- Sometimes children find it easier to tell us how they feel by drawing pictures.

4. How did Kasi’s behavior change after this attack?
   He was not happy; he was afraid to leave his house; he didn’t want to go to school; he couldn’t concentrate at school; he didn’t play well with his friends; he was afraid, especially at night. He started doing things he did when he was younger, like wetting the bed.

5. What helped Kasi to find healing?
   He started to feel better when he drew pictures of what happened and then talked about it with his father.

6. How do people in our community respond to children who have experienced bad things? Are these reactions helpful?
   Often people tell children what to do but don’t allow children to say how they are feeling.

7. Should we tell children the truth about bad things that have happened?
   Yes, it helps them. Say just enough so they know what is happening and their curiosity is satisfied. Don’t tell them too much.

**JESUS LISTENS TO THE CHILDREN**

- Jesus cares for children.
- It is wrong to chase away children from following Jesus.

4. How did the disciples behave towards the children?
   They wanted to chase them away.

5. How did Jesus behave towards the children?
   He encouraged them to come to him and he listened to them and blessed them. He touched them.
Lesson 7—Rape

AMA

- Women who are raped often are deeply hurt and feel dirty and full of shame.
- Women who have been raped need a safe person to talk to over a period of time.
- Husbands of raped women need to realize this is not the fault of the wife.
- Children born of rape are innocent and need to be accepted by the Church and helped.

4. What is rape exactly?
To force a person to have sexual relations without their acceptance at any point in the process.

5. Why was Ama afraid to tell anyone what had happened to her?
She was very ashamed, and she may have feared that if she told them, they would reject her.

6. What effect did this rape have on Ama?
She felt dirty, ruined, ashamed, sad, suicidal, and maybe felt an evil spirit was in her/bothering her. She no longer had faith that God would protect her. She was pregnant with a baby that reminded her of the awful experience.

7. What effect did this rape have on George?
He felt that he could no longer have sexual relations with his wife. His marriage was affected. He may have felt guilty he didn’t protect Ama.

8. How did Ama begin to find healing?
She told the pastor’s wife how she was feeling. Her healing continued when George began to accept what had happened. When the church accepted Nathan, this helped too. When Nathan became a pastor, this helped even more.

9. If a church in our area followed the example of the church in this story, what would happen?
This will differ according to the situation. When the rape has been done by outsiders, it is easier for the community to understand and support the woman. When the rapist is within the community, the pastor needs lots of wisdom to help the group accept the woman and the child. In some situations, it is better to not deal with it publicly.

AMNON AND TAMAR

- Rape between family members often causes major conflict.
- It is not right to let a person who has raped a woman go without punishment.

4. What effect did this rape have on Tamar, Amnon, and the whole family?
Tamar: She could not get married, her life was ruined, she was sad for the rest of her life.
Amnon: He was killed. He lost the throne.
Family: conflict, death, coup d’état (overthrow of the government)

5. What do you think of Absalom’s advice to Tamar?
To tell her to forget what happened and never tell anyone was not helpful. To take revenge was not helpful. But it was good that he took her into his house and provided for her.

6. How could a community help a raped woman?
Train some wise women to care for rape victims. Form a support group of raped women if possible. Prosecute rapists. Encourage the government to apply its laws.

7. How could a community help young girls and women avoid being raped?
Differs according to context but often: teach girls to say no; to dress modestly; to avoid being alone with a man; to share what happens to them rather than to keep it secret.

Lesson 8—HIV and AIDS

DIDIER AND MARY
- The Church has a responsibility to warn its members, especially the youth, about the dangers of contracting HIV.
- The Church needs to help those who are dying of AIDS or other diseases, and care for the resultant orphans.

4. What is the only way we can know if a person has HIV?
By a blood test.

6. What are the only three ways a person can contract HIV?
Through blood, sexual fluids, and mother’s milk (of someone infected)

7. Is there a way to be healed of HIV?
No. ARVs slow the development of the virus but do not heal it. Be careful of people who say they can heal HIV with traditional medicines or through prayer.

8. How can we help people with HIV?
Help them express how they are feeling. Provide a safe place for this, and don’t tell their secrets to everyone. Use the three questions that help in listening. Visit them; help them find a useful role in society; help with their physical needs; etc.

9. How can we help young people avoid getting HIV?
Help them understand how people get HIV and AIDS. Help them help others with HIV and AIDS. Teach biblical principles of marriage. Teach them about sex before they begin being sexually active.

ZACCHIEUS
- Jesus cares about marginalized people and so should the church.
- It is wrong to reject some people because of who they are or what they do.

4. When someone is looked down upon, what is the effect on them?
They are angry, depressed, alone, sad, may want to hurt others, etc.
5. Why were the people unhappy that Jesus visited Zaccheus?
   Tax collectors were considered traitors to the Roman government. Tax collectors extorted money from people—more than they should have taken. The people thought Jesus should avoid someone like this.

6. Why did Jesus want to visit Zaccheus?
   Jesus wanted Zaccheus to become a part of the Kingdom of God. He saw that Zaccheus needed this. He wanted others to see that he accepted Zaccheus.

7. What things changed for Zaccheus when Jesus visited him?
   Zaccheus changed the way he did his work. He was honest. His whole household became disciples of Jesus.

8. What changes do you think Jesus hoped for among the people of Jericho as a result of his visit with Zaccheus?
   That people would not marginalize others. They would know God accepts everyone.

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**Lesson 8A—Domestic abuse**

**ANN LEAVES JOE**

- Abusers often have problems in their lives that need to be addressed.
- Abusers are responsible for their actions. They could choose to solve problems in more healthy ways.
- If partners abuse their spouse, they have broken the marriage agreement to love and to cherish. One spouse cannot fix a broken marriage on his/her own.
- Abusers may promise to stop but, without help, are usually not able to do so.
- People in abusive relationships need to take action to protect themselves and their children.

4. Why do you think Joe abused Ann?
   He grew up in a troubled home and saw his father beating his mother. He may not know how to relate to another person in a healthy way. The loss of his job and the baby crying were like kerosene on a fire, and sparked his response. He chose to respond in this way.

5. Why do you think Ann stayed with Joe?
   Joe made her feel helpless, stupid, and unable to live without him. She did not have another place to live or a way to support herself and her baby. She was taught that wives should submit to their husbands as the head of the home and thought it was sinful to leave Joe. She really loved Joe as a person.

6. What helped Ann leave Joe?
   She had a place to go and someone who listened to her and helped her think about her situation and how dangerous it was. She saw the pattern of abuse and was not willing to let Joe hurt the baby.

7. How can your church help people suffering from domestic abuse?
   (They can answer for themselves.)
8. How could Joe be helped?

Joe needs to stop making excuses and see that what he is doing is wrong. He needs to get help to address his own problems, and find healing. He needs to take responsibility for the pain he caused Ann and the baby and apologize to her sincerely. Joe and Ann should not do marriage counseling until all this has happened.

ABIGAIL AND DAVID

• Sometimes husbands are foolish.
• Sometimes God uses wives with courage and intelligence in surprising ways.

4. Normally in the Israelite culture, women submitted to their husbands. Do you think Abigail did the right thing in this situation?

(They can respond as they see fit.)

Lesson 9—Care for the caregiver

BAMBA

• Leaders who feel they are indispensable are in danger of becoming depressed and discouraged.
• If we listen to very vivid upsetting stories of other people’s trauma, we too can become traumatized.
• As leaders, we need to take time to rest and look after our physical bodies.
• Leaders should not neglect their own families.

4. What sort of problems do people who help others encounter?

They can experience secondary trauma when they hear the problems of others. People can be mad at them, even though they are not guilty of anything. They can face too many problems to manage, too many people to help. People can try to manipulate them. They can have problems of confidentiality when they need to tell authorities about dangerous situations (suicide, abuse).

5. When people are overloaded, how do they behave?

Irritable; angry; not able to concentrate; neglect their family and friends; get sick and have accidents; not able to sleep; lose appetite (or overeat); etc.

6. How is Pastor Bamba’s family affected by his behavior?

His wife is frustrated and worried. The children are neglected and angry with their father. They risk rejecting Christianity.

MOSES AND JETHRO

• Leaders need to learn to delegate parts of their jobs to others.
• It is good to listen to advice from respected people.

4. What was Moses’ problem?

He didn’t delegate. He was overworked and tired, no doubt.
5. Why might a church leader not delegate responsibilities to others?

He/she could think they are the only one who can do things. They could want to keep all the power. They could not have enough time to make a plan to delegate and train others. The congregation could want him to do everything, etc.

Lesson 10—Taking our pain to the cross

GOD’S PROMISED SAVIOR

• Jesus took our pain and suffering on the cross as well as our sins.
• As we bring our pain to Jesus, he will begin to heal us, but normally this will take time before we are healed completely.

Lesson 11—Forgiving others

THE GOAT STORY

It is important to understand what forgiveness is and is not.

4–5. Based on this story, complete the following sentences:

• Forgiveness is not saying that it didn’t matter. It is not easy. It does not depend on the other person saying he/she is sorry. It is not forgetting what happened. It is not reconciliation. It is not letting the offender escape the consequences of his/her action. It is not trusting the other person again immediately.
• Forgiveness is a process that takes time. Forgiving involves accepting that the pain hurt you, bringing the pain to the cross, and asking God to release you from it. It is something we do regardless of whether the offender apologizes or not. When we forgive someone, he or she will still need to face the consequences of their action (facing the law, payment, and so forth as appropriate).

6. Does the offender have to ask for forgiveness for real forgiveness to take place? Why or why not?

No. Reconciliation requires that both parties forgive, but we can forgive someone without them being sorry. Examples: Jesus on the cross, Stephen.

7. If we forgive someone, the offender still needs to face the consequences of their actions. What might that look like?

We may need to bring a person to justice or have them restore what has been lost.

8. How can we tell when we have completely forgiven someone?

We can remember the experience but no longer feel the pain of it.

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

• When we forgive others, it shows we understand the forgiveness we have received from Jesus.
• If we don’t forgive, we are the ones who suffer.

4. What do you learn from this story about why we should forgive people who hurt us?
Because God forgives our sins as we forgive others.

5. When we are bitter towards others, who suffers?
   We do. We may think we’re punishing the other person, but actually we are just hurting ourselves.

**Lesson 12—Living as Christians in the midst of conflict**

**THE LIWI AND OKI**

- As Christians, we need to be peacemakers in situations of conflict.
- If we try to be a bridge between two groups, we may suffer rejection from our own group.
- Many conflicts are caused by deep-rooted prejudices about certain groups that are often not true.

4. What do you think caused the conflict between these two groups?
   They were taught as children that the other group was bad. They inherited a long history of conflict. They mixed together their faith in God and their culture.

5. How did Bozon and Jonah begin to realize they were both “real” Christians?
   When they were able to talk to each other in a neutral setting, they developed a personal relationship. They worked together.

6. What are the other Liwis and Okis going to think and do when they see Bozon and Jonah talking together?
   They may think Bozon & Jonah are traitors. They could become violent toward them.

7. How could Jonah and Bozon live as Christians in the midst of this conflict?
   By gathering Christians from each side and trying to understand each other. By making a bridge between the groups. By relating to both groups and remembering that Christians don’t belong to any group completely.

**CHURCH CONFLICT**

- Church conflicts need resolution as soon as possible.
- Church leaders need to step in when conflicts arise and ask God for wisdom to find good solutions.
- Solutions to church conflicts should take into consideration all those involved.

4. What were the causes of the conflict in this story?
   A history of rivalry between two ethnic groups in a church. Accusations of favoritism.

5. What did the church leaders do about it?
   Addressed the problem. Chose people to take care of the problem.

6. How did the fact that the deacons did not all come from the same ethnic group help bring reconciliation?
   The Greek-speaking Jews felt represented.
Lesson 13—Preparing for the future

TROUBLE IS COMING TO TENISA

• The Bible teaches that a wise Christian will prepare for the future.
• Church leaders have a responsibility to help their Christians prepare if trouble is coming.
• There are both practical preparations that we can make, and spiritual preparation, both are important.

4. Some people say that if we prepare for trouble, it shows we don’t trust God. What would you say to that?

The Bible tells us in many places that a wise person prepares for the future (Proverbs 22.3). Also, church leaders are responsible to God for their people (Acts 20.26–31).

5. If people think trouble is coming, how can they prepare?

Make practical preparations, like medicines; make a plan of how to communicate in case of attack; prepare spiritually by doing Bible studies on problems that could arise.

6. What if someone told you to kill someone? How would you respond? Give biblical support for your response.


7. What if robbers told you to give them all of your money and your cell phone? How would you respond? Give biblical support for your response.


NEHEMIAH PREPARES FOR THE FUTURE

• When Nehemiah was involved in helping in a bad situation, he first surveyed the problems and got the facts.
• When Nehemiah was threatened by enemies, he both prayed to God and set up practical defenses.

4. What steps did Nehemiah take to prepare for his mission? Make a list.

Nehemiah got a letter of authorization from the king. He got wood for construction. He got an armed guard for protection. He observed what was happening before starting work.

5. How did Nehemiah keep the Israelites from panicking or becoming discouraged when Sanballat was causing trouble?

He showed them how to work and defend themselves at the same time.
HEALING/LISTENING GROUP REPORT

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<thead>
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<th>Main facilitator(s)</th>
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<td>12a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12b</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host organization</th>
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| Begin date | |
| End date   |   |

| Meeting times & duration | |
|                         |   |

| Total number who started | |
| Total number who completed | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number who completed who are</th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
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<table>
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<th>Primary language</th>
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<tr>
<th>Other languages used</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding: If external, by whom? If community-funded what %?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of participants who are</th>
<th>Anglican</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What successes did you experience? What challenges did you face?

Please provide at least 2 testimonies with photos & authorization if possible. Submit to your local coordinator or to traumahealing@americanbible.org