



Session 1: His wounds answer our wounds

1-9 MAR

ICEBREAKERS

- What is your favourite part of springtime – eg longer, warmer days, daffodils, birdsong, lambs etc?
- Would you say that the best drugs counsellors are reformed drug addicts or those who have never taken drugs?

5. Why may those in need especially concern Jesus? (See Luke 4:18-19.)
6. Is involvement a prerequisite for empathy?
7. Why may people not respond to our Christian principles?
8. Why is the incarnation important?
9. Why is God easier to meet than the Queen?

KEY THOUGHT

God knows how we feel because in Jesus He too has suffered physical, emotional and spiritual pain.

KEY VERSE

'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.'
Hebrews 4:15

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Discuss the verse from 'Jesus of the Scars'.
2. Why can God fully understand our human condition?
3. Are manual workers and people such as waiters sufficiently valued in modern society?
4. Why is Christ's humanity as important as His divinity?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.' Isaiah 53:5

PRAYER POINTERS

- Ask God to reveal more about how Jesus suffered for you and therefore how He can empathise with and comfort you.
- Pray for those you know who are currently experiencing difficult circumstances.

Session 2: Combating loneliness

10-15 MAR

ICEBREAKERS

- Which is your favourite Christian symbol – eg fish, dove, candle, cross etc? Do you have one on your car or at home?
- Discuss the phrase 'Some feel lonely when they are alone, whilst others feel lonely when they are in a crowd'.

KEY THOUGHT

Rejection, betrayal and loneliness are extremely painful emotions, but Christ can truly identify with and relieve these feelings because He too has experienced them.

KEY VERSE

'The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."' Genesis 2:18

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why may Christ be able to comfort us even if He did not share all our experiences?
2. To what extent can God's companionship compensate for the lack of human companionship?
3. Identify different causes of loneliness and how it may be relieved.
4. What is the difference between faith and the denial of reality?

5. Contrast the experiences of Stephen and James with Peter's experience (Acts 7:54-60; 12:1-11).
6. How can we cope with the betrayal and desertion of friends?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Then everyone deserted him and fled.'

Mark 14:50

'And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice ... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"' Mark 15:34

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for the comforting presence of God.
- Pray for those who are alone that they will know both the companionship of God and the fellowship of other believers.
- Pray for God to show you people whom you could befriend and share His love with.



Session 3: Resisting temptation

16–20 MAR

ICEBREAKERS

- What are your favourite foods of the Easter season – eg pancakes, simnel cake, chocolate eggs, hot cross buns etc?
- Why does someone on a diet often give in to the temptation of food?

KEY THOUGHT

We all experience difficult trials and powerful temptations but we do not have to give in to them because through Jesus we have the ability to resist and overcome them.

KEY VERSE

'No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it.' 1 Corinthians 10:13 (*The Message*)

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What makes temptation so hard to resist? (See Hebrews 11:24–25.)
2. Give examples of the difference between a trial and a temptation.
3. How could television and magazines be areas where you need to exercise self-control?

4. What is our responsibility in resisting the devil?
5. Consider how at the root of all types of temptation there is the same basic issue.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."'" Matthew 4:10

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for God's strength to overcome temptations in your own life.
- Pray for others to find strength to overcome their own temptations.
- Pray that you will develop the Holy Spirit's fruit of self-control.

Session 4: Suffering and criticism

21–29 MAR

ICEBREAKER

Do you agree with the saying 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me'? Can you give examples from your own life to support your view?

KEY THOUGHT

Jesus can fully identify with us and help us through suffering and criticism because He experienced them too.

KEY VERSE

'Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.' 1 Peter 4:12–13

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why can we 'derive enormous strength from the fact that the God we serve has also endured pain'?
2. How would you like the Lord to touch you?
3. What is the 'kinship of suffering'?
4. What is the purpose of 'gazing on those glorious scars' of Jesus?
5. Should we ever criticise church leaders?
6. How should we respond to criticism?

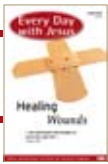
7. Should becoming a Christian make us immune from problems and pain?
8. Why may an attitude of vengeance be self-destructive?
9. How can we react like Jesus to criticism?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.' 1 Peter 2:23

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God that because He too has suffered, He is able to understand and provide you with comfort in your own suffering.
- Pray for those who have criticised you, and bless them.
- Pray that you will be able to react like Christ to personal criticism.

**Session 5:** The message of the cross

30 MAR – 5 APR

ICEBREAKER

Which is your favourite Easter hymn or chorus and why?

KEY THOUGHT

'However deep the pit, God's love has gone deeper still.' Corrie ten Boom

KEY VERSE

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' John 3:16

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How can we reconcile a God of love with suffering and pain?
2. Is free will a blessing or a curse?
3. Consider the true story of a boy born without the ability to feel pain because of incorrectly formed nerves. Would that be a blessing or a curse?
4. Read or sing the words of the Easter hymn 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross'. Which lines speak most powerfully to you?
5. How might Christ's wounds relate to your own wounds?
6. What does the resurrection mean to you?
7. Contrast the messages of Elie Wiesel and Corrie ten Boom.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.' 1 Peter 2:21

PRAYER POINTERS

- Worship God for His supreme self-sacrifice and thank Him for the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- Pray that at this Easter time others will hear and respond to the message of the cross.

Session 6: Bigotry and prejudice

6–10 APR

ICEBREAKERS

- How did you spend the Easter holiday?
- What is the difference between preference and prejudice?

KEY THOUGHT

We must stand against prejudice and bigotry and allow the wounds of the rejected Christ to heal our own wounds of rejection.

KEY VERSE

'My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism.' James 2:1

DISCUSSION STARTERS

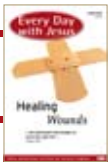
1. Have you ever faced prejudice? How might prejudice arise?
2. Is there a link between prejudice and jealousy?
3. How could you build bridges to people in your community who are different?
4. How could you build bridges to other Christians in your area who are from different churches?
5. What are the most successful antidotes to the poison of bigotry?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners'.'" Luke 7:34

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for those who are the subject of bigotry and prejudice.
- Pray for the healing of rifts between believers.

**Session 7: The pain of grief and bereavement** 11–15 APR**ICEBREAKER**

Discuss the Queen's comment when New York's Twin Towers collapsed: 'Grief is the price we pay for love.'

KEY THOUGHT

Grief is an inescapable part of life, and so because Jesus experienced grief He can help us in our own times of sorrow.

KEY VERSES

'The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted ...' Isaiah 61:1
'You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy ...' Psalm 30:11

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Should we avoid or embrace grief?
2. Why may silence be comforting? Can you share a relevant experience?
3. Why could simply making someone a cup of tea be the best form of counselling?
4. How may we avoid excessive grief?
5. How may we help different personalities cope with grief?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus wept.' John 11:35

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for those you know who are experiencing grief.
- Pray that God will show you how to help those experiencing grief.
- Thank God that because He experienced grief He is able to help us also.

Session 8: Misunderstanding 16–20 APR**ICEBREAKER**

What misunderstandings have you experienced that have been humorous, and have any been painful?

KEY THOUGHT

Misunderstandings can paralyse us or be the catalyst for our spiritual growth to be more like Christ.

KEY VERSE

'Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."' Luke 23:34

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Should we try to correct misunderstandings?
2. Outline the dynamics of misunderstanding.
3. Why is verbalisation important?
4. How can the concept of spiritual adoption help us?
5. Try to list the different people who misunderstood Jesus and how He responded.

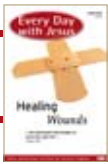
THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked.
"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's

house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.' Luke 2:49–50

PRAYER POINTERS

- Forgive those who have misunderstood and hurt or frustrated you.
- Pray that God will help you when faced with misunderstandings.



Session 9: He's been there!

21-30 APR

ICEBREAKER

What has most impacted you from our studies of 'Healing Wounds'?

KEY THOUGHT

Because Christ has been there before us, He is able to help us when we too feel wounded.

KEY VERSE

'Keep your eyes on *Jesus*, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed – that exhilarating finish in and with God – he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he's *there*, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. *That* will shoot adrenaline into your souls!' Hebrews 12:2-3 (*The Message*)

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why might Christians feel abandoned by God?
2. Find and read a copy of the poem *Footprints*. What are your feelings about its message?
3. How might your physical condition affect you emotionally and spiritually?

4. How might your thought life affect you emotionally and spiritually?
5. What does Christ's 'cry of dereliction' mean for us?
6. Contrast Christ's response with a natural response to being wounded.
7. What do you have to offer others who are hurting?
8. How can we reconcile miracles and suffering?
9. How has God turned your pains into pearls?
10. What does this line mean to you: 'Is the whisper, "I've been there"?'

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way ... Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.'
Hebrews 2:17-18

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God that Jesus understands our wounds because He has stood where we now stand.
- Pray for God to comfort those who suffer.