

STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

NEVER GIVE UP

SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

Week 2 of a 4-week series
about resilience

BOTTOM LINE

Never give up on God.

SCRIPTURE

*I have told you these things,
so that in me you may have
peace. In this world you will
have trouble. But take heart!
I have overcome the world.*

- John 16:33 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To help students see the
importance of developing
resilience in their faith and
to encourage students to
find hope in what's true
about God when facing
challenges.

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: It's important to leave space for students to struggle with their faith and share honestly about it during your time together. You don't want to make them feel like they have to see the good in difficult things if they just aren't ready to yet. Though we know God can use those hard circumstances to grow their faith, your group may not yet see it themselves. Asking them to do so may feel like you're asking them to overlook the pain, struggle, or doubts they're experiencing as a result. The reality is that difficult things are going to happen all throughout their lives. Having a conversation like this one now will give students a chance to begin processing the way those things impact their faith. It's a skill that will serve and encourage them as they grow. The hope is that thinking through this now, even if they don't fully believe or experience it yet, will encourage them to keep digging in and staying the course with their faith as they grow up and experience challenges along the way. Be sure to emphasize that this isn't about what happens or how circumstances work out in the end. Rather, it's about remembering what is true: that God is present and with them in everything they face.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DO THIS:

Write down the phrase "Words that describe God" at the top of a piece of copy paper. Ask your students to list as many words as they can think of and write them on the paper. These can be words that were given during worship or additional words.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What words stand out to you on this list? Share about one way you have experienced God to be one of the things on this list.
- Think about something challenging you've experienced recently or are experiencing right now. Look at the list again. Does what you're going through change the words that stand out to you about God?
- When you think about your challenge, do you have any words to add to the list we created? Any you would like to take off the list?
- What are some reasons someone might question what they believe about God or about who God really is?
- Go around your group and ask everybody to give a short response to this statement: This is true about God no matter what.
- What is something you can do about the difficult thing you're facing?
- What is something you'll trust God to handle?

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THINK ABOUT THIS: Teenagers think like philosophers; they want to make meaning of their world and work to understand why things happen. As students process tough times, challenge them to consider that God is not the reason WHY tough times happen. Also, don't make promises that may not come true. If a student is in the middle of a tough situation, as tempting as it may be to try to assure them that everything will work out the way they want it to, sometimes the truest and the best thing we can offer our students is our empathy, presence, and a reminder that God is with them no matter what they are facing.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- Thinking back on the words that were used to describe God at the beginning of today's message, how closely do those words describe how you think/feel about God? What words would you add or subtract to the list? Why?
- Does the way you think/feel about God change when you're facing hard times? Why or why not?
- Why do you think some people tend to give up on God when facing difficult circumstances or challenges? Have you ever wanted to give up on God? What has kept you from giving up on God?
- Why do you think some people feel like God has given up on them? Have you ever felt that way? Do you feel that way now? Share more about your answer to these questions.
- Re-read John 16:33. In your own words, what does it mean to "take heart"?
- What are some things that still seem very wrong in the world today? What would it take for these things to be overcome? Are we able to overcome these things on our own?
- Is it hard for you to believe that Jesus has overcome the world when things still seem so wrong? How are you able to reconcile the seemingly contradictory phrases "in this world you will have trouble" and "[Jesus has] overcome the world"?
- What might choosing not to give up on God add to your life?
- How can choosing to never give up on God help you build resilience in your faith?

>> AFTER GROUP

This week, create a text group with your group members. Send them a text including John 16:33 and remind them that there is always hope for whatever they may face in life.