



WONDER
DISCOVERY
PASSION

In this three-week series we'll look at the ways we're tempted to skip out on the real life that God has for us. As we do, we'll see that God's inviting us to stop avoiding our problems and just deal with it.

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TEACHING OUTLINE

DEAL WITH IT | WEEK 1

BOTTOM LINE

WHEN YOU FACE A CHALLENGE,
ATTACKING IS BETTER THAN AVOIDING.

SCRIPTURE

We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Romans 5:2b-5 ESV).

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters (Colossians 3:23 NIV).

The Apostle Paul gives us a different plan of attack when it comes to confronting opposition and stressors in life. And his plan won't just change what we do in the face of a challenge; it will change who we become.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that God can help them deal with the challenges of everyday life instead of avoiding them.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Distractions help us delay or avoid dealing with real life.

TENSION

Any time you and I bump into a challenge that we perceive as difficult or time-consuming, it's natural for us to turn to something easier and more fun.

When our distractions keep us from moving toward the life that God wants for us, they become a *problem*.

TRUTH

Paul says that suffering, challenges, pain, and tough circumstances aren't always a bad thing. In fact, the more of them we face, the more endurance we develop.

Essentially, Paul is saying that what you do affects who you become.

You need experience facing challenges with God to know that He can be trusted to get you through.

And that's why Paul says we can rejoice in our sufferings—not because suffering is fun, but because they produce something in us.

APPLICATION

I want to challenge you to do something else. Instead of avoiding, attack!

When you attack, you are developing your future character.

LANDING

I want you to ask yourself this question: What have I been avoiding that I need to start attacking?



TEACHING SCRIPT

DEAL WITH IT | WEEK 1

BOTTOM LINE

WHEN YOU FACE A CHALLENGE,
ATTACKING IS BETTER THAN AVOIDING.

INTRODUCTION

2 Minutes

So, what's trending on Netflix this week? I'm guessing some of you could name an entire list of awesome shows. And when a show is trending, we don't just watch the show, right? We go all in. We binge-watch. Especially if that show has a cliffhanger ending... Every. Single. Episode.

A good example? "Stranger Things." When that show came out I literally could not leave the couch. I mean, I was willing to give up *eating* and *sleeping* to keep watching. Before I knew it, I had spent eight hours watching the *entire* season.

Does that ever happen to you? It's like we get sucked into this vortex and lose all track of time.

Now, even if binge-watching TV isn't your thing, I'll bet you've still got a time vortex. Maybe you go to glance at Pinterest for five minutes and come out two hours later wondering what happened to your life (and when you can redecorate your room).

Or maybe your vortex is a gaming system. You plan on playing for just a few minutes and then, somehow, it's midnight. Or maybe you throw on headphones and just space out listening to Spotify. Maybe you stare at your phone and scroll through

app after app. Or maybe you grab a bag of Doritos and just veg out on the couch.

No matter which thing you're into, the truth is this: We all have a favorite distraction that we get lost in.

And however you relax, and whatever your time vortex is, a couple of things are probably true about that activity.

One, it's fun. No-brainer, right? We rarely get lost in things that aren't fun. Nobody makes dental cleanings their go-to for relaxing.

And second, it's convenient. When we need to chill for a while, we usually pick something that's easy to get to. Whether it's reaching for cheese puffs in the cabinet, the remote on the couch, or the phone in our pocket, we relax with things that are easily accessible.

But in addition to being fun and convenient, I think there's something else that all of our favorite distractions have in common...

They help us delay or avoid dealing with real life.



TENSION

2 Minutes

Now, before you start to worry, we're not going to talk about how Xbox and Pinterest are evil. Because the thing is, we choose our distractions because they're good things. Netflix is fun. Smartphones are fun. But because they're fun and they're easy, they're also the first things we reach for when we face something that *isn't* fun or easy.

For example...

- You get stuck on a homework problem you can't answer.
- Or you see the due date creeping closer on a project that seems impossible.
- Or your mom asks you to clean your room for the fifth time today.
- Or your coach asks you to work on something you're not that great at.
- Or you need to have a tough conversation with a friend.
- Or your parents start arguing...again, which seems like all they ever do anymore.
- Or you think about something you know God wants you to do, but it just seems too difficult.

In these situations, our go-to distractions become our escape: not from something bad, but from normal life. **Any time**

you and I bump into a challenge that we perceive as difficult or time-consuming, it's natural for us to turn to something easier and more fun.

Often, we do it before we even realize what's happening.

And while there's nothing wrong with taking a break, you've probably seen how distracting yourself from dealing with normal life can turn challenges into even bigger problems.

Maybe you put off...

- Studying...until you had to pull an all-nighter.
- Or practicing...until it was too late.
- Or apologizing...until the friendship was in bad shape.
- Or a bad habit...until it became an addiction.

There's nothing wrong with a little fun distraction. But when our distractions keep us from moving toward the life that God wants for us, they become a *problem*.

Think of it this way: **When something goes from being a temporary distraction to a consistent way of avoiding real life, it's time to deal with it.** And that's what this series is all about.

TRUTH

6 Minutes

Now, if you've been around church long at all, you've probably heard of the Apostle Paul. He's one of the most famous Christians in history. But before he became one of the biggest leaders of the Christian movement, he was a Jewish leader who actually *hated* Christians. But then he met Jesus. Specifically, he met Jesus *after* Jesus died and rose from the dead. That would be a game changer for anyone, and it definitely was for Paul.

After he encountered Jesus, Paul did a complete 180. He began to travel the world telling everyone the good news about Jesus. And during his travels, Paul wrote letters to small gatherings of Jesus-followers in different communities. Those letters make up a lot of what we now call the New Testament.

One of those letters was written to the Jesus-followers in Rome. Now, for a lot of people, Rome was a great place

to live. But it wasn't so great for followers of the Jesus movement. They were living in a time when being a Christian wasn't encouraged. In fact, it often put them in danger. Paul himself was imprisoned there twice.

So the church in Rome faced a lot of challenges and difficult moments. And as Paul writes to them, I think he uncovers something really powerful about distractions. And this idea can be really helpful for us when we face challenges that make us run for the nearest distraction. But before Paul gets to that idea, he says something kind of strange. He says this:

We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings... (Romans 5:2b-3a ESV).

So, Paul starts out by saying we have hope in God. That's great. So far, so good. But then, he rolls out "we rejoice in



our sufferings.” Um, what? Who *rejoices* in suffering? Who celebrates in...

- Tough math classes?
- Difficult coaches?
- Fights with their parents?
- Trips to the dentist?
- Or gut sprints at practice?

Who actually embraces suffering? And more importantly, *why* would anyone do that?

And then he says this:

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character (Romans 5:3-4a ESV).

Paul says that suffering, challenges, pain, and tough circumstances aren't always a bad thing. In fact, **the more of them we face, the more endurance we develop.**

If you've ever played a sport, you already know that endurance is a big deal. You also know that workouts are generally not fun. But if you want to win, if you want to succeed, workouts are absolutely necessary. And why? Because they produce endurance. They train your body to go farther and get through more than you thought it could. And the same is true in every area of life. **When we choose to do difficult things, we develop endurance.**

But Paul doesn't stop there. He says that endurance produces *character*. And that's huge. Because **character isn't about what you get done. It's about what you get through.**

Character is about *who you are* and who you are *becoming*.

Essentially, Paul is saying that what you do affects *who* you become. **What you do changes who you are.**

Every time you tackle a challenge head on, you become a person of character who isn't afraid of tough challenges.

But on the flip side, every time you distract, delay, or avoid, you miss out on a chance to grow into that kind of person.

And there's something else that facing challenges does for us. Paul says this:

...and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Romans 5:4b-5 ESV).

Paul goes on to say that this endurance—this strength of character—produces hope. Maybe you haven't thought to yourself lately, *You know what, I need some hope*. Or maybe you have. But when you face something difficult or challenging—or just the simple demands of life—you need hope. You need to be able to believe that things will be okay and that you can deal with it.

You need experience facing challenges *with* God to know that He can be trusted to get you through. And one of the easiest ways to get that hope is to look back at tough moments that you and God got through together.

Because when you remember how you worked through a challenge last time, you'll have the courage to face the challenge this time.

Every time you face something and take it head on—every time you get through something—you are putting hope in the bank for yourself. You're building a reserve of examples that you can look at next time. You're building a memory bank of times that you got through something that seemed impossible. And then you'll begin to face bigger and tougher challenges with confidence and hope, because you'll remember all of the times that you and God got through before.

And that's why Paul says we can rejoice in our sufferings—not because suffering is fun, but because they produce something in us. We don't rejoice because we're going through something. We rejoice because we're becoming someone who has the skills, the experience, and the trust in God to get through the next challenge.

And here's why this is such a big deal: **Whatever you're facing now won't be the last difficult thing you do.** You're going to face some really complicated situations, tough conversations, scary circumstances, and big moments. And even if you don't face something terrible, regular day-to-day life is going to get more complicated as you get older.

So when you face tough times or challenging circumstances, you're going to need some courage to get through it. You're going to need the kind of hope that comes from saying, *"I've been here before. I've done tough things before. God has been with me before. And He's going to help me deal with it now."*



APPLICATION

3 Minutes

Okay, so now we understand the value of endurance. So think about it. What challenging thing have you been avoiding?

- A homework project you think you can't figure out?
• Starting a new club that you think your school needs?
• Having a hard conversation with a friend or family member?
• Talking to a guidance counselor about how to get yourself out of a mess at school?
• Kicking a bad habit?
• Starting a good habit?

We all have something that our brains automatically want to avoid. That's normal.

In fact, for some of you, your brain is doing this right now! I mentioned the word "difficult" and your brain told you to look at your phone or think about something else. It doesn't take much for us to avoid and ignore. But today, I want to challenge you to do something else instead.

Attack! Go after it. Embrace it. Fight for it. Whatever that thing is for you, pray and ask God to help you with it.

And when you do this, when you attack instead of avoid, there may be more at stake than you realize. Why? Because when you attack, you are developing your future character. On the other hand, when you avoid facing reality, it can hold you back from becoming who you can be and developing the character traits that you need. It's not that what you're doing to avoid reality is bad. It's just that you were made for more!

And when you do difficult things, you become the kind of person who does difficult things. It becomes part of who you are.

And that's what I want for you. I want you to build character now so you can get through the even tougher things you'll face later. I want you to walk through circumstances, which will store up hope for whatever comes next. And believe me, you want to be equipped to tackle whatever comes next.

Will you have the character to walk through it? Will you have the experiences that give you the courage to do the next tough thing?

Today, that's what I want for you. And it all starts with a move forward.

And most of the time, the best way to move forward is to stop avoiding and start attacking the problem.

Maybe that's why later, as he was writing to a group of Jesus followers at Colossae, Paul wrote this:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters (Colossians 3:23 NIV).

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart. Paul said to go after that thing you're facing and fight for it with all your heart—as if God is right beside you, because He is! This is the kind of attack that helps you become the man or woman that God wants you to be, and it will help you build the kind of character He wants you to develop. So think of it this way:

When you face a challenge, attacking is better than avoiding.

Attacking gets the win, because it leads to character, and character leads to hope.

LANDING

1 Minutes

Listen, your Heavenly Father loves you, and He wants you to have the best kind of life: a full one. And part of experiencing a full life is facing difficult things, attacking them, and coming out on the other side with more endurance, character, and hope. So as you head out today, I want you to ask yourself

this question: What have I been avoiding that I need to start attacking? And remember: When we face an obstacle, we can choose to distract ourselves with something easier, or we can choose to dive in and deal with it.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS