



# THROUGH THE DARKNESS

WONDER  
DISCOVERY  
PASSION

When tragedy strikes, it can feel like we're walking through total darkness. In this three-week series we'll discover the way through the darkness to the other side, to healing, by trusting the One who is leading us.

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# TEACHING OUTLINE

## THROUGH THE DARKNESS | WEEK 3

### BOTTOM LINE

NOTHING CAN PULL YOU FROM A GOD WHO LOVES YOU.

### SCRIPTURE

*What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all. (Romans 8:31-32a NIV).*

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:35,37 NIV).*

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39 NIV).*

The Christians in Rome had the same questions and fears back then that we have today: Where is God when terrible things happen? This passage gives us the answer to that question: He is with us. He's with us in the midst of difficulty and nothing can separate us from Him or His love.

### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students know that nothing can separate them from God's love; He will never leave them, and He will always be with them . . . especially in the middle of a tragedy.

### TEACHING SCRIPT SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Whether we're facing tragedy directly, or we're on the outside looking in, it's easy to feel hopeless, adrift, disconnected, and out of control.

#### TENSION

Each time I faced these tragedies, some big fears dominated my mind—all centering around three things: 1) Will it ever end? 2) Will it happen to me? 3) Will it happen again?

In the middle of a tragedy, most people want to ask this question: *God, where are you?*

#### TRUTH

Paul says that when tragedy happens, remember what God has already done for you.

He gave us Jesus. Jesus, who put on human flesh and experienced pain, hurt, loss, and even death WITH us.

When we wonder, *where's God in all of this?* He's there. And His love proves it.

#### APPLICATION

There is something you can do in the darkness. It may seem simple at first, but it's extremely powerful: create an anchor.

When you're hurting, find a truth to hold on to. And hold on to it as tightly as you can.

#### LANDING

Think about this: What if you were *sure* that God is with you?

God is bigger than the darkness! And He is with you, no matter what.



# TEACHING SCRIPT

## THROUGH THE DARKNESS | WEEK 3

### BOTTOM LINE

NOTHING CAN PULL YOU FROM A GOD WHO LOVES YOU.

### INTRODUCTION

1 Minute

When's the last the last time you went to the beach? I love the beach, but I'll never forget the last time I went. I was hanging with the fam and some good friends. One of my friends brought an inflatable raft, so I took it out in the shallow water to soak up some rays. Or so I thought.

After having my eyes closed for several minutes, I lifted my head to realize that not only was I FAR away from the shallow end, but I was also what seemed like a mile down the beach. It was crazy. I started freaking out because I realized I had

been caught in a rip tide. I mean, I was lucky that I had a raft keeping me afloat, but I can't tell you how scary it was to feel helpless and completely at the mercy of the ocean.

When we're going through "the darkness"—the hard times and tragic circumstances that we've been talking about in this series—my runaway float is a great picture of how we feel, isn't it? Whether we're facing tragedy directly, or we're on the outside looking in, it's easy to feel hopeless, adrift, disconnected, and out of control.

### TENSION

2 Minutes

I remember in elementary school when one of my close friends passed away from cancer. In middle school, a classmate of mine also passed away from cancer. In high school, a guy on my baseball team died in a car accident. Each time I faced these tragedies, some big fears dominated my mind—all centering around three things:

1. **Will it ever end?** Whether the tragedy is happening to us or we're watching it happen to someone else, we can't help but wonder, *Will this pain ever fade? Will it always feel as bad as it feels right now?*
2. **Will it happen to me?** I had never thought about dying from cancer until my friend passed away. Then I thought about it a lot.

3. **Will it happen again?** Growing up, I thought about this when I saw tragedies of all sorts. In fact, I still think about it today. There's a fear in the back of my mind that I'm never completely safe, and neither are the people I care about.

Even worse, I remember feeling totally aimless and disconnected from the one person who mattered most: the one person who I thought was most capable of doing something about the darkness I was facing—God. **In the middle of a tragedy, most people want to ask this question: God, where are you?**

When you're in the middle of a time of darkness, it challenges your ability to trust God like nothing else can. It also really



messes with your emotions. You may *know* something in your head, but what you *feel* may seem to go against everything you once thought was true.

In a lot of ways, things that once seemed stable suddenly feel completely out of control . . . just like being caught in

a riptide that's pulling you away from where you want to be. That's why today I want to give you an anchor. The passage we're going to look at today can offer you just that when it comes to walking through the darkness. And it could potentially change the way you see pain, and the way you see God in the middle of it.

## TRUTH 7 Minutes

The apostle Paul was one of the central figures in getting the church started—not the church you currently attend, but the entire movement of Christians. And more than anyone else, Paul put “Church” on the map. He spent his entire life getting the message of Jesus out to as many people as possible.

In the first century, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Rome. During that time, Rome was a powerhouse empire. You've probably heard about Rome in school. But when I say empire, I don't just mean a really powerful country.

Rome had complete control over much of the world. And they didn't play around—getting on the wrong side of the Roman Empire meant you'd die painfully. So during that time, people would generally keep a low profile and just go with the flow. But the church and the Roman Empire didn't exactly see eye to eye.

The Emperor of Rome at the time was Nero. Many people believe that Nero had a strong hatred for Christians, and even went so far as to torture and execute them. So it's safe to assume the Christians in Rome were really familiar with tragedy—and lived in constant fear of tragedy striking them or their loved ones.

At the time Paul wrote this letter, he was about to travel to Jerusalem—knowing in advance that because of his outspoken faith, his life would be in danger there. Some people believe Paul wrote his letter to Rome believing it was the last thing he would write.

So when you read the following words, understand they weren't written—or read—on a lounge chair beside a pool. They are written *from* the darkness of fear and pain. For the writer and the reader, life was very unstable. Tragedy was real and personal. And with that in mind, Paul wrote this:

*What, then, shall we say in response to these things (Romans 8:31a NIV)?*

Now, when Paul refers to “these things,” he's talking about suffering. Pain. Heartache. Tragedy.

Then he makes an interesting statement:

*If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all (Romans 8:31b-32a NIV).*

When tragedy strikes, we don't know how to respond. We don't know what to do. We ask big and heavy questions. And in response, Paul gives us the answer. It doesn't feel like an answer, though; it feels like he missed our questions completely. But Paul says that when tragedy happens, when pain happens, when you're going through the darkness, remember what God has already done for you.

**He gave us Jesus. Jesus, who put on human flesh and experienced pain, hurt, loss, and even death WITH us.**

In the death of His own Son, God entered into our pain, tragedy, and hurt. Our hurt doesn't surprise Him, and it's not foreign to Him. He is WITH us in our darkness.

But God isn't just in it *with* us. **Paul says God is FOR us.** He did not spare His own Son, He gave His Son so that we would have an incredible promise to hold on to. Here's how Paul says it:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:35,37 NIV).*

When Jesus rose from the dead, He defeated the darkness. And He didn't just defeat the darkness for Himself. He did it for us.

**He defeated OUR darkness.** And because He conquered the darkness, we can too. We are, as Paul said, more than conquerors. And it's not because we're able to get a grip on



darkness and figure it out. No, it's because He has a grip on us. And nothing is ever going to separate us from Him. This is how Paul says it:

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor **ANYTHING** else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39 NIV, emphasis added).*

You see, we live in a world full of darkness—a world where not everything is as it should be. But the one thing that remains strong and steady is the love of God. In darkness, remember this . . .

**Nothing can pull you from the God who loves you.**

No matter how threatening the pain. No matter how slippery or scary the conditions. When we wonder, *where's God in all of this?* He's there. And His love proves it.

The Christians in Rome had the same questions and fears back then that we have today: *Where is God when terrible things happen?* And the answer is the same now as it was then: **He's right there with you. Right in the middle of it. You can't be separated from Him.** So you can face whatever happens.

- Even if it feels like it will never end, you can get through it because God is with you.
- Even if you're scared it will happen to you, you can trust that God is with you and He cares for you. He won't let go of you.
- Even if you're afraid it will happen again, God is with you now and He'll be with you then—no matter what.

A tragedy might separate you from a loved one, but it can't separate you from God's love. A divorce might separate you from a member of your family, but it can't separate you from God's presence. Sickness might separate you from health, but it cannot separate you from the comfort of your Heavenly Father. **Nothing can pull you from the God who loves you.**

Your fear, your worry, your uncertainty in what comes next, *does not compare to what we know to be true.* God's love is bigger. And He is for you.

This doesn't make tragedy easy to go through. It doesn't answer all the questions. And it doesn't guarantee an easier life. In fact, Emperor Nero eventually took Paul's life. But even as he died, Paul held on to this anchor. Even when he felt devastated, he never felt hopeless. Because he knew God was beside him every step of the way.

## APPLICATION

### 1 Minute

As we've said throughout this series, there's no quick or easy answer when you're dealing with tough or tragic times. But that doesn't mean there's no hope!

There *is* something you can do in the darkness. It may seem simple at first, but it's extremely powerful:

**Create an anchor.** If you're on a boat in the middle of a storm, an anchor can keep your boat from drifting. It can help steer it in the right direction against wind.

In the same way, when you're going through the darkness, you need something to hold on to. Something solid—a phrase or an idea—that can provide a dose of hope when

you're feeling hopeless. Something that brings peace when you're afraid and security when you're anxious.

So when you're hurting, **find a truth to hold on to.** And hold on to it as tightly as you can. Write it down. Put it on the lock screen of your phone. Put it on a notecard and tape it to your bathroom mirror. Don't just create an anchor—hold on to it!

For me, that truth is the very thing we talked about today: the idea that **nothing can pull me from the God who loves me.** That's one of my anchors when I walk through darkness. It's truth that I hold on to. And you can hold on to it as well.



**LANDING**

**1 Minute**

Wherever you find yourself, whatever you face, remember: **Nothing can pull you from the God who loves you.** He will *never* leave you. *Nothing* can separate you from Him. And when you realize that, your fears will begin to shrink and your confidence in God will grow.

As you head out today, think about this: What if you were 100% confident of this truth? What if you were *sure* that God is with you? Because no matter how unclear life is, no matter what you're facing, you can hold on to this: God is bigger than the darkness! And He is with you, no matter what.



**TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS**