

Memory Verse

“The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.”

Isaiah 58:11 (NLT)

Explore the Joys of Trials

Pain and suffering are unavoidable on this earth, and the Bible warns Christians that we’ll face extra hardships for our faith. Yet Scripture adds that we should “consider it pure joy” when we “face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2, NIV). So how can you—and your teenagers—make the leap from struggling with trials to embracing them as an important part of your faith journey?

Counselor and avid outdoorsman Steve Merritt says when you’re lost in the woods, there’s incredible relief at finding a trail, even though you still have a ways to go. “Life sometimes provides times when we know we aren’t home yet, but we know we’re on the way,” he writes. “God has us in his strong arms, and there’s a solid faith that the struggle, doubt, loneliness, or *whatever* befalls us here will someday be a faint, distant dream. I desperately need to remember times I’ve found the way—or maybe when the way has found me.”

Merritt recommends helping teenagers build “places of memory,” as the Israelites did in the Old Testament. “Help them drive a stake in the ground, where the fog of life’s fears, worries, and troubles lifts, and God’s presence and character shine through. Tell kids stories of when this has happened in your life and how you’ve chosen to remember those times—giving you hope for the times when the trail is hard to find.”



Practical Help

Tips, statistics, and discussion questions to help you connect with your teenagers

.02

Going Deeper

Insight on helping your teenager through the process of healing

.03

Media Spotlight

Information on some of the current musicians, popular movies, and hottest games out this month

.04

DGYM Calendar

After School Hang Time is back!, Plus Winter Advance, Project: Sing, Girls’ Cookie Service and MORE!

.05

TIPS

In his new book *Sifted*, *Group Magazine* editor Rick Lawrence explores the heavenly purpose of earthly trials:

Perseverance is the “produce” of suffering. For Christians, persevering through hardships is the “organic harvest that transforms our souls from a famine to a feast,” Lawrence writes. The apostle Paul addresses this cause-effect relationship in Romans 5:3-4.

God’s “sifting” reveals to us who he really is. When God allowed Satan to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31-32), the process revealed God’s love, “colossal goodness,” and purpose.

Jesus prays for us amid our trials. In the New Testament we can read Jesus’ prayer for his disciples. He fervently prays for our faith, which is the “vehicle that will propel us through our sifting.”

Trials lead us to turn back to God. “Until we have lost what we’ve taken for granted,” Lawrence writes, “we can’t really see it’s true value.” Peter’s denials of Jesus, although painful, led him back to intimacy with his Savior.

Trials offer us the privilege of strengthening other people. Just as Jesus told a restored Peter to “feed my sheep,” Jesus allows us to minister to friends and family members undergoing their own difficulties. Through our attachment to Jesus, we receive the courage to reach out and help others.

THE VIEW

Group Magazine asked more than 20,000 Christian teenagers what they’d like to do more of in their youth ministry. The top answer was “learn more about Jesus” (91%), but these other top vote-getters show young people’s desire for guidance as they face hardships and struggles:

- Get help dealing with tough issues in my life (79%)
- Pursue tough questions in the Bible (78%)
- Receive counseling for tough things I’m going through (70%)
- Receive mentoring (54%)



PONDER THIS...

- What types of trials or roadblocks have you faced in your walk with Christ?
- How have those experiences led to eventual joy or a closer relationship with God?
- What message would you like to share with your teenagers about persevering through life’s struggles?



ON THE JOURNEY: Expert Insight for Parents

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, Seattle youth pastor Mike Howerton, author of *Miles to Cross*, shares thoughts about traveling our faith path:

I've always loved heading out on new roads, enjoying the process of travel and my traveling companions almost as much as the destination. There's a faith connection here, although it's become cliché. We're on a spiritual journey.

Faith isn't a happy hop to heaven. It isn't checking a box on a card. Those are only steps in a long line of steps along the unpredictable, beautiful, exhilarating, exhausting, wild, personal journey of faith. God is infinitely bigger than we give him credit for, working long before we think to thank him.

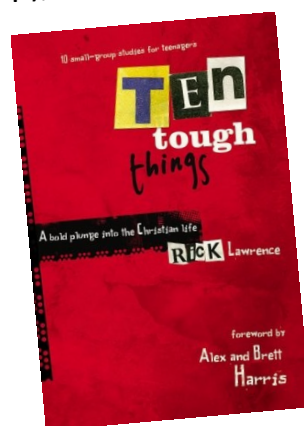
At times I've been amazed at the privilege of knowing God and living in communion with him. Other times, I've been frustrated with my noticeable lack of spiritual progress and distracted by my own disposition toward selfishness.

Faith isn't linear, an ever-ascending bar graph from frustration and disappointment toward progress and potential. Like any journey, exciting times co-exist with difficult times. Like any journey, it's always nice to know roughly where you are and where you're headed.

God longs to walk with you on this journey, to be with you in times of progress and in times of "stuckness." He wants to walk *with* you every step of the way. That's the relationship your heart longs for: to know and be known, to love and be loved. That's the relationship God provides. I pray that you will know God's love and experience the joy he provides along your unique path and journey with him.

Resource Source

In *Ten Tough Things* (Group), Rick Lawrence explores 10 challenges that God gives Christians, as well as the ways he equips us to carry them out. These Bible studies show that the "tough things" of the Christian life are actually the joys of the Christian life.



88 pages, Group Publishing (February 2009)
\$11.04 (Paperback), \$9.99 (Kindle) at Amazon

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

MAINSTREAM MUSIC



THE BLACK KEYS

Background: This rock band produces big sounds despite being only a duo, combining blues licks and modern rock to great effect. They formed in Ohio 10 years ago and remained barely known for years—although their songs were optioned for films, TV, and commercials. Their 2010 album *Brothers* vaulted The Black Keys into the mainstream and earned them three Grammy Awards, including best alternative album.

Albums: *El Camino* (2011), *Brothers* (2010), *Attack & Release* (2008)

What The Black Keys Says: In response to being called sellouts, the band says they'll license fewer songs on the new album. Drummer Patrick Carney says, "Once you start selling records, you can't really justify having two songs in Cadillac commercials. It looks greedy. And it is."

Explore: The band's offbeat humor is evident in the "Lonely Boy" video—www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_426RiwST8. The Black Keys don't stream music on sites such as Spotify.

POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE MUSIC



THE FRAY

Background: This crossover rock band started when three members met while leading worship at their Christian school in Denver. Epic Records eventually signed them. The Fray's debut went double-platinum, and they were #84 on Billboard's Artists of the Decade list. Many of their songs have been used in TV shows and in movies.

Albums: *Scars and Stories* (2011), *The Fray* (2009), *How to Save a Life* (2005)

What The Fray Says: Of the new album's title, singer Isaac Slade says, "We've been through a lot of stuff personally, and as a band we're still together... We like the idea of scars... because they're healed... They're still kind of a road map of where [you've] been, and sometimes kinda point to where you want to go."

Explore: You can listen to their albums on Spotify and can download "Heartbeat" at www.thefray.com.

MOVIES

Movie: *Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance*

Genre: Action Adventure

Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: Nicolas Cage returns as the devil's bounty hunter. He must embrace his new role to save a young boy from Satan.



Our Take: The first movie was terribly written and terribly acted but made tons of money—so here's the sequel! The film will likely offer muddled, inaccurate theology hiding in over-the-top action.

Movie: *Gone*

Genre: Thriller

Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: Jill, who escaped a kidnapper a year ago, comes home to find her sister gone. She sets out to rescue her sister and bring down the man who's responsible.



Our Take: Many books and movies now feature empowered girls who "kick butt." This film may whet people's appetite before *Hunger Games* hits theaters in March.

For more detailed, in-depth reviews visit: www.pluggedinonline.com

VIDEO GAMES



SSX (PlayStation 3, Xbox 360) — After taking a few years off, EA is attempting to reboot its hugely popular snowboard franchise this month. Players will tackle some of the craziest mountains in the world with big tricks, helicopter drops, and avalanches to outrun. This game should be full of family-friendly fun.

Mario Party 9 (Wii) — Speaking of family fun, Nintendo continues their hybrid board game with *Mario Party 9*. Instead of a reboot, this game will offer the usual fare: tons of mini games to play together—some competitive and some cooperative.

February

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 noomg night	2	3	4 Happy Birthday Hayden!
5 SUPER BOWL SUPER DEVO	6 Connec LIFE GROUP High School	7 after school HANG TIME	8 Setpoint Bible Bowl Practice	9	10	11 Sweet heart dinner
12 LITC PRACTICE	13 Connec LIFE GROUP Middle School	14 after school HANG TIME	15 Setpoint Bible Bowl Practice	16	17 GUYS NIGHT OUT	18
19 LITC PRACTICE	20 Connec LIFE GROUP High School	21 after school HANG TIME	22 Setpoint Bible Bowl Practice	23	24 WINTER FEST	25 Uprising
26 WINTER FEST	27 Connec LIFE GROUP Middle School	28 after school HANG TIME	29 Setpoint Bible Bowl Practice			
LITC PRACTICE						

NEWS AND NOTES

Super Bowl Super Devo

All 6th - 12th graders are invited to come hang out at Jeff and Kara's house for the "big game" from 3:00pm until 8:00pm or until the game's over (whichever is later). Girls need to bring some kind of snack food. Guys need to bring sodas. I'll order the pizza and Kara will make her yummy queso!

Connect LIFEgroup

All 6th - 12th graders and their parents are encouraged to join us for this encouraging LIFEgroup! Middle School and High School will be alternating back and forth on Mondays, but each time we'll be at Jeff and Kara's house from 6:00 to 7:30pm. We'll enjoy some light snacks and drinks, spend time in praise and worship to God, and have some great Bible study and discussion. Come join the fun as we hang out and connect with God and each other.

After School Hang Time

All 6th-12th graders are invited to come hang out together in the Youth Barn after school on Tuesdays until 5:00pm. Come enjoy some snacks, play some video games, card games or ping pong, watch a movie... or even do your homework! This is a great way to invite a friend and introduce them to the youth group in a very relaxed and nonthreatening atmosphere.

Leadership Training for Christ

Bible Bowl will continue to meet on Wednesday nights from 5:30pm to 6:30pm. Our Puppetry teams will meet on Sundays at 1:00pm, followed by our Drama teams at 2:00pm, and our Chorus at 3:00pm. We'll probably start adding Bible Readers Theater, Bible Reading, and Song Leading into the mix soon too. Be sure to check the weekly Family News bulletin on Sunday mornings for updates!

Sweetheart Dinner

Patty Welter is putting together a fabulous fancy dining experience at 5:00pm in the Small Auditorium. The cost is \$25 per couple, but she needs lots of teens to help serve as waiters and waitresses. Put on your positive attitude, get your smiley face on, and come help serve. Who knows... you might even get a good tip!

Guys Night Out

All High School guys are to join us for a night out! We'll meet at 6:00pm to fill our guts with a cheap, fast dinner, then head to the movie theater to watch something with guns, fistfights, and explosions. After that we'll head back to the Youth Barn for cards and video games until midnight. Don't miss it!

Winterfest

Winterfest is a weekend youth rally event hosted by the Northside Church of Christ in Spokane. Sunday, February 5th, is the deadline to turn in your registration forms for the discounted price of \$40. After that date the cost will increase to \$50. We'll be leaving the church parking lot on Friday, February 24th, at 5:00pm, and returning home around 1:00pm on Sunday, February 26th. Here's what the Northside church has to say about Winterfest: Uprising!

This will not be your ordinary weekend! This will be a spiritual experience that challenges your assumptions about faith. If you desire an opportunity to be called to a higher standard in your relationship with Jesus, and to be given the tools to take the next step, this weekend is for you. Here's the questions for the weekend. We believe that Jesus is the greatest person in all of history...big deal. We live in a world that wonders why we keep talking, but not doing. Winterfest 2012 will be an experiment in doing something that matters in the name of Jesus, because you believe in Jesus. Too long have we sang songs, offered prayers, and attended events in the name of Jesus. This weekend will call you to live your life and speak to your friends in the name of Jesus.

Coming in March...

