

A SINGLE SESSION FOR A
CRISIS SITUATION



**IN CASE OF
EMERGENCY**
break glass

Ministry Leadership Center Press
Holy Disruptions: Gun Violence-In Case of Emergency: Break
Glass

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In Case of Emergency:

Community Gun Violence Reflection

**IN CASE OF
EMERGENCY**

break glass



Series Synopsis

This specific resource should be used when an incidence of gun violence has occurred in your community. This session uses our Holy Disruptions method to help your group navigate and reflect upon this event. You will notice that it does not include a disorienting dilemma because the event of gun violence in your community is already disorienting enough.

Session Supplies

- Post-its or index cards (two colors if possible: e.g., blue for helpers, yellow for sufferers)
- Pens or markers
- A wall, board, or large sheet of paper labeled with two columns: HELPERS | SUFFERERS
- Optional: soft background music to create a reflective atmosphere
- Extra adult volunteers on hand for support
- Printed copies of the God Section Worksheet for each participant

Topic / Theological Lens

What do we do with suffering? It's something we don't quite ever have the answer for. What we do know is that it is an inescapable part of life. Tragedies happen both personal and communal. It's natural and healthy to ask:

- "Why did God let this happen?"
- "Where is God?"
- "What should I do now?"

God doesn't promise that we won't be afflicted with suffering. However, the story of scripture and the event on the cross is clear: God will be with us and even suffer alongside us.

As you approach this session, know that God is with you, suffering alongside you and others. What that looks like can take on many forms. Sometimes, it is a shoulder to cry on, sometimes it is a friend to talk to, and sometimes it is doing the work that helps others heal or change situations. It could even be a comforting feeling you find in the midst of conversations or a church service. Regardless, God is with you.

Preparing

Leaders should only lead this lesson if something incredibly tragic has happened in your community, such as gun violence. To the extent that it has affected your church and your students, we cannot predict; only you know that. Therefore, first things first, be sure to take care of yourself and make sure you are in the right frame of mind to lead this conversation. Evaluate what help you will need for this reflection.

You will need extra adults, and if possible, a mental health professional to be present. If you don't have a mental health professional who can join you, you will need to know where and who to point young people toward if they need those resources. You may want to create a resource bank in advance for young people and their parents to access. Help them know what resources are available in your community.

Prepare yourself to be okay with a myriad of things: silence, pain, tears, anger, or confusion. Hold space for youth to feel what they need to feel. This space is holy ground. Therefore, trust that the Holy Spirit is with you, moving and working during the conversation, no matter which direction it needs to go. By no means is this a lesson where you have to get through the whole thing. Take what is helpful and leave what is not. Finally, prepare your heart, mind, and soul through prayer prior to leading this lesson.

Dilemma– Community Gun Violence

DISORIENTING DILEMMA (10 MIN)



INSTRUCTIONS

As you begin, use the four guidelines below to establish the tone of your conversation with your youth. As the conversation progresses, be okay with more questions than answers. Allow yourself to be vulnerable and honest with youth as an example of how you want them to approach the conversation.

A Holy Disruptions session typically begins with a disorienting dilemma, an event or activity that causes the participant to pause and ask some questions. It becomes the entry point into reflection. However, your entire group has been disoriented by the occurrence of gun violence in your community. Therefore, there is no activity. These are simply the guidelines below to help you enter into conversation and reflection.

If any participant becomes upset or uncomfortable during this conversation, please allow them to leave the room for a while. Be sure to assign a couple of adults the job of checking on any youth who have left the room after they have had some space.

Four Guidelines:

- **Love by listening:** Allow others to share their full thoughts and do not speak over them.
- **Be here or be somewhere else:** The nature of the conversation means you need to bring your whole self to it. So, put away phones and be fully present with the group.
- **Be honest or be quiet:** In this space, honesty is one of the most important components for the conversation
- **What's said here stays here:** No one should leave this space and tell others about what someone said. However, if someone does share something that is hurting themselves or others, there are reporting requirements.

Introduction for Students



Today, our topic of conversation is a heavy one. In light of recent events in our community, we thought it would be important to open our space for honest conversation and reflection. This is a safe space to be honest, to share your thoughts, and to ask questions. To ensure that space, we have four simple guidelines:

- **Love by listening:** Allow others to share their full thoughts and do not speak over them.
- **Be here or be somewhere else:** The nature of the conversation means you need to bring your whole self to it. So, put away phones and be fully present with the group.
- **Be honest or be quiet:** In this space, honesty is one of the most important components for the conversation
- **What's said here stays here:** No one should leave this space and tell others about what someone said. However, if someone does share something that is hurting themselves or others, there are reporting requirements.

What we've experienced as a community has been disorienting, to say the least. If at any point, this conversation becomes too much for you, you may leave the room. Please tell an adult that you are leaving and where you are going. Someone will come check on you in a few minutes.

Sharing our WOW

WOW MOMENT (5 MIN)



Gun violence is a tragic reality that we live with in our society. The fact that it has happened here in our own community makes it all the more clear for us. Whatever you bring to this space personally and emotionally, know that it is okay. Feel what you need to feel, speak if you want to, or simply listen and know that you're not alone. Our time together will not be spent recounting the events of our tragedy but helping you navigate how it has affected you. Now, to do that, I'll open us up by asking a few questions.



- What emotions have you been experiencing around the event?
- What have you been thinking about in light of what's happened?
- Did any of those emotions or thoughts surprise you? Why or why not?
- As you process these emotions, how do they make you feel in your person? In your body?
- What emotions do you feel now? Why?
- Where do you feel numb?

What would culture say?

WHAT? (10 MIN)



An event like this in a community can cause ripples that touch everyone's lives. It causes grief, questioning, and even anger. These are all normal and natural. However, our community response and even the response from outside our community greatly affect us and influence us.



- What are you hearing from your friends and family about this event? How are they navigating it? How has that helped or not helped you in navigating it?
- What have you heard from sources of news (print, digital, social media, etc.)? How has that helped or not helped you in this moment?
- If you could tell people who have not experienced something like this one thing about your experience, what would it be?
- Now that you've personally been impacted by gun violence, how does the reality of your experience differ from what you imagined it would be like before it happened?

What does God say?

GOD? (20 MIN)



SCRIPTURE REFERENCED

Lectio Divina: Psalm 102:1-22



SAY

In moments like these, words often fail. Some people need comfort, some people need to be angry, and some people need to act. The reality is that there is not one right or wrong way to be after a tragic event, like we've experienced in our community. Today, we will create space for collective listening and reflection. We trust that God is still speaking today and one way God speaks is through scripture.

We will embark on a journey of scripture exploration through a practice known as Lectio Divina. This Latin term, meaning Divine Reading, encapsulates a traditional and contemplative approach to scripture. It's a method that has stood the test of time, offering us a unique opportunity to delve deeper into the text's wisdom and encounter the presence of the Holy Spirit as we read. The practice is simple yet profound, consisting of four movements: read, think, pray, and live. You don't need to bring anything to this activity except your presence.



INSTRUCTIONS

Movement 1-READ

Psalm 102:1-22

Have someone read the passage aloud slowly. Tell the youth to simply listen to the words and take them in.



INSTRUCTIONS

Movement 2-THINK

This time, reread the passage aloud slowly. Have your youth imagine they are the person praying this prayer to God. Tell them to try to feel the words in their bodies as they listen to the words of the scripture, imagining what it would be like to pray this prayer.



SAY

Now listen to these words of the writer and theologian, Douglas John Hall.

Read out loud twice:

“But in whatever ways God continues to suffer with those who suffer—and they are numberless—we for our part know that this is our vocation. We are part of the response of God to the massive suffering of God’s world.”

Douglas John Hall. (1986). *God and Human Suffering*. Fortress Press.

**Movement 3-PRAY**

Let's take a moment and reflect on one portion of this passage of scripture by doing a breath prayer adapted from different parts of Psalm 102. We will do this once out loud together and once silently on our own. The prayer goes like this:

1. Breathe in - Hear my prayer, O Lord | Breathe out - Let my cry come to you
2. Breathe in - Do not hide your face | Breathe out - Incline your ear to me
3. Breathe in - Hear my prayer, O Lord | Breathe out - Let my cry come to you. Amen

[Begin by saying, "Let us pray and practice the exercise together."]

1. Breathe in - Hear my prayer, O Lord | Breathe out - Let my cry come to you
2. Breathe in - Do not hide your face | Breathe out - Incline your ear to me
3. Breathe in - Hear my prayer, O Lord | Breathe out - Let my cry come to you. Amen

[Once you have done that, together invite them to do the same prayer simply on their own. Once you have finished, move into the discussion.]

Where is God?



Let's take a few minutes and discuss the scripture and the quote.



- How do you relate to these words? Do they resonate with you? If so, in what way?
- Where do you hear God speaking to you in this passage? What might God be trying to say?
- Does this passage relate to what you experienced during the recent tragedy in our community? How so?
- Reread the quote. What do you think Douglas John Hall meant when he wrote this?
 - What does this quote mean for us at the moment in our community?

Alignment activity

ALIGNING WITH GOD (10 MIN)



SAY

Movement 4-LIVE: Who Is Who

Ultimately, God works in and through us as human beings. God uses us to fill in the gaps where they are needed. God uses us to comfort those who need comforting, to walk and suffer alongside those who are suffering, and to help when help is needed. In the same manner, God uses others to do the same for us.

So, to wrap up our time together, we are going to name the people who fill certain roles and meet certain needs during this time. These are not clear-cut roles, and you may find yourself in one or several, but it'll help give us all an idea of who is who in this moment and know where we can turn and what role we can play.



INSTRUCTIONS

For this activity, you will need a large white poster board. On that poster board, you want to draw two columns. You'll need to label one column **Helpers** and one column **Sufferers**.



SAY

Ultimately, God works in and through us. Sometimes the two overlap. This will help us know where we can turn and who is around us.



INSTRUCTIONS

Invite everyone to take a deep breath. Let them know that what they share can be anonymous or named, and that it's okay to be honest, unsure, or both at the same time.

Hand out Post-its (several of each color) to each person. Ask them to quietly reflect and write:

- On one note (e.g., **yellow**):
 - “Who do you know who is suffering right now? This could include you.”
- On the other note (e.g., **blue**):
 - “Who do you know who is helping right now—comforting, walking alongside, offering support? This could also include you.”

Encourage them to write names or initials—or simply descriptors like “a friend from school,” “my mom,” “me.”

Let them know it's okay if they write the same person on both notes. They may have multiple people for each column. Feel free to give them more Post-its.

You will invite them to come up one at a time (or all at once, depending on your setting) and place their notes on the wall or board in the appropriate column:

- HELPERS on one side
- SUFFERERS on the other
- If they see themselves or someone else in both, they can place a note in the middle or duplicate it in both places.

Encourage reverence and quiet as this happens—it's a sacred naming. Give them 3-5 minutes to do this part of the activity.

Once everyone has finished, gather back together and use the prompts below to debrief.



ASK

- What do you notice?
- Are there more helpers or sufferers right now? Why might that be?
- Where do you see overlap?
- How do you think God is working in the lives and through the lives of people we've named?
- Which of these spaces do you think God is calling you into? Are you called to be with the HELPERS or with the SUFFERERS? If not those places, where?

Prayer

CLOSING ACTIVITY (5 MIN)



READ

We will now take time to pray for your community using an adapted version of the [Healing prayer](#) from [commonprayer.net](#)

Use the prayer below. You can say it yourself or have printed copies for youth to follow along and assign different parts to different people.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 We enjoin your divine mercies.
 Lord, why do we suffer?
 Why do we hurt?
 Shall our only answer
 Be the eternal abyss of the cosmos?
 Shall our only answer be the whirlwind of unknowing
 Which engulfed Job?
 Why do the wicked flourish,
 While the righteous waste away?
 I am left speechless, left with the words,
 "I will trust in you, my God."

God, we ask for the sending of your healing Spirit,
 Which came to us through Jesus, as he breathed upon his disciples.
 This Spirit gathered in your people,
 To be warmed by the fire of divine presence.
 Around this warmth, may ____ (name of your community or people affected)
 Be healed and taken into your care.

Like the blind man whom Jesus healed,
 May ____ (name of your community or people being affected) become a sign
 of your glory, calling you the Anointed One,
 The one who also anoints us and points us to the Love of God.
 Grants us your healing peace, Amen.

God Section Worksheet

As you read the theological section, use the boxes below to take notes. As you listen or after completing the statements as a way to process the talk and quotes.

CONFUSED

These concepts, ideas, or points the author has made don't make sense to me...

ASK: Who can shed some light on this?

MY EXPERIENCE

This helps me see my own experience of people, the world, God or myself in this new way...

ASK: Who else has had this experience?

MY BELIEFS

I'd never before thought about this idea that the author presents:

Do you believe the author is correct? Why or why not?

ASK: Who else doesn't believe it? Who does?

GRASP IT

Another way to explain one of the author's main points is this...

ASK: Do others think that's the main point?