

you'll
get
through
this

STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS

you'll
get
through
this

HOPE AND HELP FOR YOUR TURBULENT TIMES

MAX LUCADO

WRITTEN BY KEVIN AND SHERRY HARNEY



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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ISBN 978-0-8499-5998-1

Printed in the United States of America

13 14 15 16 17 RRD 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Of Note

The quotations interspersed throughout this study guide are excerpts from the book *You'll Get Through This* by Max Lucado and from the video curriculum of the same name. All other resources—including the introductions, small group questions, between-sessions materials, and the small group leader helps—have been written by Kevin and Sherry Harney.

Hitting the Wall

Marathoners call it “hitting the wall.” They come to a point where their bodies say, “No more.” Their legs feel like they are made of lead. Their respiratory systems scream, “Stop!”

Triathletes call it “bonking.” As they swim, then ride, and finally run, they feel their bodies begin to shut down. They’ve “bonked.”

You don’t have to be an extreme athlete to know how it feels to hit a point where it seems you simply can’t press on.

Brenda has lovingly walked beside her husband for years, poured her life into the family, and cared as best she can. Then she discovers that the man who said, “I do,” no longer does. She wonders, “How can I make it through this? Can I go on? Will I survive another day?”

Daniel has worked for the company for two decades. He has given his heart, soul, and countless late nights and weekends to help the business increase its bottom line. Now he stands at his car, a box of items from his desk in his arms. With no warning, he has been informed that his services are no longer required and walked out of the building by security. He’s in shock. “What will

I tell my wife and kids? How will I pay the bills? Can we survive this?”

Curtis lives for the Friday night lights. Football is not just a sport; it is the air he breathes. He has offers for college scholarships and his stock is rising. Late in the game, as a defensive end tackles him at the end of a run, he feels a searing pain run through his leg and hears a snap, loud as a firecracker. While being wheeled to the ambulance, his mind races: “What if I can’t play for the rest of the season? What if I don’t get a scholarship? I can’t imagine my life without football; can I make it through this?”

In large or small ways, we all come to moments of deep distress: a doctor’s report, a broken engagement, a poor personal choice, a shift in the stock market, a relational betrayal, a corporate down-size, or one of a million other unexpected events. In these times, the blue skies of life can seem to disappear behind the clouds of our circumstances and a chilly uncertainty runs down our spine. We begin to wonder if there is a way through the pain and heartache of what’s ahead. We look down at the fuel gauge on the console of our life and it registers “empty.” We might feel emotionally depleted, physically exhausted, relationally hopeless, spiritually barren, or mentally fatigued.

In these times the enemy of our soul wants to whisper, with sinister intent, “You will never make it. This is the end of the road for you.”

God speaks a radically different message. Through his Word, by his Holy Spirit, and through the lives of wonderful examples, God declares with heavenly wisdom, “You’ll get through this. It won’t be painless. It won’t be quick. But I will use this mess for good. In the meantime, don’t be foolish or naive. But don’t despair either.”

How are you doing today? Have you hit the wall? Have you

bonked? Does your challenge appear insurmountable? If so, there is a story you absolutely have to hear. It is about a young man named Joseph who discovered that God is near even when it seems there is no way to make it through.

In the six sessions of this small group journey, you will learn that God is ready and able to help you, whatever your dilemma. If you don't believe it, just ask Joseph—you will find him at the bottom of a pit.

You'll Get Through This

Introduction

No one travels far down the road of life without discovering that this journey is not always smooth or perfect. We can pray and wish for safety on the way. We should enjoy the stretches of the ride when the sun shines and things go beautifully. We ought to thank God for the times when we find ourselves singing, whistling, laughing, and smiling as we travel along.

But every single human being has discovered that there are bumps, detours, and even collisions that can bring our joy to a screeching halt. This is not fatalism. It is not negativity. It is certainly not a lack of faith. It is life on this planet.

If you meet someone—a preacher, teacher, or sales person—who tries to tell you otherwise, BEWARE! If someone is peddling promises of a life with endlessly calm seas, perpetual blue skies, freedom from back pain, a guarantee of financial security, and ear-to-ear smiles all of your days, be very, very careful.

The Bible is filled with faithful friends of God who suffered in this life. Moses was violently opposed by the people he spent his life loving and trying to lead. David learned to dodge spears hurled at him by a mad king. Ruth walked through the death of her husband and became a stranger in a strange land. Jeremiah was beaten and thrown into a pit. Stephen, an early church leader, was stoned to death. The apostle Paul was strapped up and beaten no less than five times. The list could go on and on.

Then there is Joseph. He discovered at a young age that the road of life is not always smooth. His story is peppered with rejection, false attacks, deceitful accusations, enslavement, imprisonment, and long stretches of loneliness.

If you have ever hit a hard patch of road and thought, "I'll never get through this," you just might want to look over Joseph's shoulder and learn from his journey. It was hard. It was not a weekend trip but a tour of duty that lasted about two decades! But his story echoes through the centuries to remind us that we can make it through even the toughest of times. We really can.

You'll get through this. It won't be painless. It won't be quick. But God will use this mess for good. In the meantime, don't be foolish or naive. But don't despair either. With God's help, you will get through this.

Talk About It

Tell about a situation you faced during which you felt, "I don't think I will ever make it through this." How did you feel when you made it through?

You'll Get Through This Study Guide

Video Teaching Notes

As you watch the video teaching segment for session 1 featuring Max Lucado, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

Ordinary people face very real pain!

Meeting Joseph's family, with all their warts

Spending time in a cistern

You meant it for evil, God re-wove it

The truth of the matter:

It won't be painless

It won't be quick

God will use this mess for good

Video Discussion and Bible Study

1. In the video, Max talks about the hard times we face on life's journey, and he says, "God will use this mess for good." How have you experienced this in your life?

Read: Genesis 37:12–24

2. Tell about a time you ended up in a cistern and how you got there. How did you feel while you were in the cistern? How did you plead with God and even with people in an effort to get out of that painful situation?

3. If you are in a cistern right now, briefly share the situation (if you feel comfortable doing so) and how your group members can support and care for you in this time.

Read: Genesis 37:1–11

4. Some of the pain we face in life comes from the very people who should love and care for us—our family. This was certainly true for Joseph. What dysfunctions and unhealthy patterns in Joseph's family led to heartache and pain?

9. Max talks about how God re-wove the evil planned by Joseph's brothers and redeemed it for heavenly good. How has God re-woven something that was done to you with evil intent? What good did he bring from it?

What Satan intends for evil, God, the Master Weaver and Master Builder, redeems for good.

10. Joseph's journey from a cistern in his teenage years to finally becoming a man of influence in Pharaoh's court lasted about twenty years. How did walking a hard road over time shape Joseph's character and outlook on life?

How has God used a journey of struggle in your life to shape who you are today? How have you looked up and seen God and drawn closer to him through your times in a pit?

Closing Prayer

Spend time in your group praying in any of the following directions:

- Turn your voice and eyes upward in prayer and ask for the ability to see the face of Jesus looking at you as you do.
- Ask God to be with your group members in the cisterns of life and pray for an attitude of grace, even in the darkest pits.
- Lift up prayers of forgiveness for those who have thrown you into a cistern, whether recently or as far back as childhood.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to unleash his power to re-weave the evil intents of others and bring good from them.

God gets us through stuff. *Through* is a favorite word of God's: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2 NKJV).

Between Sessions

Look Back Down the Road

Reflecting on your life, identify as many as three cisterns in which you have spent time. Then ponder the person who had a hand in putting you there. Pray for a heart of forgiveness toward these people. Also, think about how God has used their intended evil and turned it toward his glory and good.

Cistern #1

What cistern was I thrown into?

How can I pray for the person(s) who put me there and grow in grace toward them?

How was God with me in that dark time?

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What good did God bring through this bad situation? How has God shaped and formed me through what I experienced?

Cistern #2

What cistern was I thrown into?

How can I pray for the person(s) who put me there and grow in grace toward them?

How was God with me in that dark time?

What good did God bring through this bad situation? How has God shaped and formed me through what I experienced?

Cistern #3

What cistern was I thrown into?

How can I pray for the person(s) who put me there and grow in grace toward them?

How was God with me in that dark time?

What good did God bring through this bad situation? How has God shaped and formed me through what I experienced?

Let Vengeance Belong to God

If you have been harboring judgment, anger, or bitterness toward someone who wronged you in the past, reconsider Joseph's story as well as Romans 12:17–21:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

| God cares about justice more than we do. |

Self-Examination

Family history can repeat itself. Far too often the abused becomes the abuser, the neglected becomes the neglecter, and sins are passed

down to the next generation. Make a list of some of the patterns, sins, and dysfunctions that existed in your home as you grew up. Actually take time to write them down:

-

-

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-

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Next, look over this list and do three things:

1. Pray that you will not repeat these patterns in your family.
2. Get help from a pastor or Christian counselor if you have already begun to repeat the sins of the past.
3. As the Lord leads, talk with parents, siblings, or other family members who have hurt you and seek to build bridges of restoration and healing.

| History is redeemed, not in minutes, but in lifetimes. |

Journal

Use the space provided below to write reflections on any of the following topics:

- Ways you can extend grace and forgiveness, even to those who have thrown you into a cistern
- How God has shaped and formed you into the person you are today, even through the hard times (especially through the hard times)
- How God has been with you in the cisterns and pits of your life

Recommended Reading

As you consider what you have learned in this session, read chapter 1 of the book *You'll Get Through This* by Max Lucado. In preparation for session 2, you might want to read chapter 2.

Small Group Leader Helps

To ensure a successful small group experience, read the following information before beginning.

Group Preparation

Whether your small group has been meeting together for years or is gathering for the first time, be sure to designate a consistent time and place to work through the six sessions. Once you establish the when and where of your times together, select a facilitator who will keep discussions on track and an eye on the clock. If you choose to rotate this responsibility, assign the six sessions to their respective facilitators upfront, so that group members can prepare their thoughts and questions prior to the session they are responsible for leading. Follow the same assignment procedure should your group want to serve any snacks/beverages.

A Note to Facilitators

As facilitator, you are responsible for honoring the agreed-upon timeframe of each meeting, for prompting helpful discussion among your group, and for keeping the dialogue equitable by drawing out quieter members and helping more talkative members to remember that others' insights are valued in your group.

You might find it helpful to preview each session's video teaching segment (they range from 22–25 minutes) and then scan the discussion questions and Bible passages that pertain to it, highlighting various questions that you want to be sure to cover during your group's meeting. Ask God in advance of your time together to guide

your group's discussion, and then be sensitive to the direction he wishes to lead.

Urge participants to bring their study guide, pen, and a Bible to every gathering. Encourage them to consider buying a copy of the book *You'll Get Through This* by Max Lucado to supplement this study.

Session Format

Each session of the study guide includes the following group components:

- **“Introduction”**—an entrée to the session's topic, which may be read by a volunteer or summarized by the facilitator
- **“Talk About It”**—an icebreaker question that relates to the session topic and invites input from every group member
- **“Video Teaching Notes”**—an outline of the session's video teaching segment for group members to follow along and take notes if they wish
- **“Video Discussion and Bible Study”**—video-related and Bible exploration questions that reinforce the session content and elicit personal input from every group member
- **“Closing Prayer”**—several prayer cues to guide group members in closing prayer

Additionally, in each session you will find a **“Between Sessions”** section (**“In the Coming Days”** for session 6) that includes suggestions for personal response, a journaling opportunity, and recommended reading from the *You'll Get Through This* book.