

FOUNDATIONS IN JESUS



An 8-Week Virtual Lesson Bundle

by Rick Lawrence

FOUNDATIONS no.2

“The Problem of Pain”

Introduction: *(You’re going to need your phone and a Bible close by for this)* We’re continuing our series on Foundational truths about Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

Experience: If you click on the arrow by the camera icon at the bottom, you’ll see a menu—click on the “backgrounds” link, and you’ll see three “standard” backgrounds you can choose (bridge, grass, space). Using just those three (no photos from your device), choose the one that appeals to you the most... *(Pause)* Okay, let’s see who chose what. Unfortunately, every person who chose the “Space” background is now infected with the Covid 19 virus, and what’s more, you all have underlying health issues that means you’re likely to end up in the hospital on a ventilator... *(Alternate: On some computers it’s not possible to access the “standard” Zoom backgrounds, so every person who is able to use one of those backgrounds now has the virus. For a face-to-face version of this, have everyone simultaneously choose either a thumbs-up or thumbs-down—those that choose the thumbs-down now have the Covid 19 virus.)*

Questions (Whole Group):

- How is this like and unlike what’s really happening in our culture right now?
- How is control related to fear?

Poll (Create in Polling Tool): What scares you the most about pain? (◇ The Unknown ◇ Threatens My Hope. ◇ Doubt I Can Face It. ◇ The Loss That Results)
Launch poll, collect results, share results.

- **Here in quarantine-land many have turned to Psalm 91 for comfort and hope**—it promises safety and “protection from deadly disease.” So, if God promises our protection, why do bad things still happen?

A little background, then let’s read Psalm 91 together. Tradition says this Psalm was written by Moses and included in David’s collection of Psalms. Moses wrote it after completing construction of the Tabernacle of God in the wilderness, then entering into it. The experience would be like entering into the presence of God in a visceral way...

Read Psalm 91 together...

Question ((Use Breakout Rooms to Put Kids In Pairs))—So, what are possible explanations for the contradiction of this “promise of protection” and our actual experience of life?

Debrief: I’d like you to post the explanation that stuck out to you in your conversation in the Chat Bar *(Pause)* Pick out three or four responses and ask the Pairs who posted them to give further explanation—ask clarifying questions and capture insights you think are important.

- **Video:** Baby bear climbs to Momma bear... *(Use the Screen-Share tool on Zoom to share with everyone—on YouTube.com at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JGZn8cTE1o>)*

Questions (Whole Group):

- What do you notice about the Momma bear’s response to struggle and pain?
- What do you notice about the baby bear’s response to struggle and pain?
- What’s fueling their responses?

• **Let's explore an iconic story—Jesus and the death of Lazarus in John 11:1-44.** It's a long story, but it will help us understand the heart of Jesus in the tension between His "protection" and His "permission" of pain. In your assigned Foursome, read quickly through the story, then discuss the questions on your handout.

Questions (Use Breakout Rooms to Put Kids In Foursomes):

-What do you notice about Jesus' attitude toward pain?

-In this story, how is He like, or unlike, the Momma bear in our video?

How are Mary and Martha like the baby bear?

What can you learn about Jesus' heart by paying attention to how He responds to pain in this story?

Debrief (Whole Group): Let's hear some feedback from the last question I had you tackle...
(Write their comments in the Chat Bar, and ask follow-up questions.)

Closing: Let's pinch the flesh between your forefinger and thumb now—til it hurts a little. *(Pause for them to do this)* I'll start by saying, like a child, "Daddy it hurts..." When I do, one by one, we'll each just offer up a few words that finish the sentence... *(Do this over and over, so each person can finish the sentence)*

Then: Like the widow, we give you what we have right now as an offering—our pain... *(Have them stop pinching now)*

The Problem of Pain

Psalm 91

<p>1 Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.</p> <p>2 This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.</p> <p>3 For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease.</p> <p>4 He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.</p> <p>5 Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day.</p> <p>6 Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday.</p> <p>7 Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you.</p> <p>8 Just open your eyes, and see how the wicked are punished.</p>	<p>9 If you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter,</p> <p>10 no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home.</p> <p>11 For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go.</p> <p>12 They will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.</p> <p>13 You will trample upon lions and cobras; you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!</p> <p>14 The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name.</p> <p>15 When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them.</p> <p>16 I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation."</p>
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Question: What are possible explanations for the contradiction of this "promise of protection" and our actual experience of life?

John 11:1-44—The Raising of Lazarus

11 A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. 2 This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. 3 So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick." 4 But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this." 5 So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, 6 he stayed where he was for the next two days. 7 Finally, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

8 But his disciples objected. "Rabbi," they said, "only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?" 9 Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. 10 But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light." 11 Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up." 12 The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!" 13 They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. 14 So he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him."

16 Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go, too—and die with Jesus."
17 When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. 18 Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, 19 and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. 20 When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day." 25 Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. 26 Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." 28 Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." 29 So Mary immediately went to him.

30 Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. 31 When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. 32 When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. 34 "Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Then Jesus wept. 36 The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!" 37 But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

38 Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. 39 "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible." 40 Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" 41 So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. 42 You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me." 43 Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

Questions:

- What do you notice about Jesus' attitude toward pain?
- In this story, how is He like, or unlike, the Momma bear in our video?
- How are Mary and Martha like, or unlike, the baby bear?
- What can you learn about Jesus' heart by paying attention to how He responds to pain in this story?

Further Exploration: Matthew 4:23; 2 Corinthians 1:3-8; 1 Peter 4:12-19; John 16:16-24; Romans 8:18-28; Matthew 10:29-31