

Biblical Truth #4—Disease, Disasters, and Calamities Point to Our Desperate Need for Jesus

Introduction for Parents:

The world makes much of independence and self-sufficiency. Yet we are to our very core, by God's good design, dependent and needy creatures. But we often don't recognize the breadth and depth of this neediness until a crisis arises. Two months ago, who would have ever imagined people desperately needing to find toilet paper for sale? And how many of us thought that the world would be in desperate need of facemasks or life-saving ventilators?

As tragic as all these circumstances are, they are loving, merciful reminders from our sovereign Creator. The world is under a curse because of sin, and no amount of technology, intellectual know-how, hard work, or lending a hand to our neighbor, while all good things, will satisfy or provide for our greatest need—the need for salvation in Christ alone. The world is in turmoil, pain, and suffering. We desperately need Jesus!

Supplies:

- I Am/I Need Cards (Page 1 of [PDF handout](#))
- I Am Worksheet (Page 2 of [PDF handout](#))
- I Need Worksheet (Page 3 of [PDF handout](#))
- Brown construction paper, or something similar
- Scissors
- Pencil/marker
- Optional: Package of saltine crackers and a box of facial tissue

Pique Their Interest (3 to 10 minutes):

Place each I Am Card face down on the table. Do the same with the I Need Cards near the I Am Cards. Play a concentration-type matching game. Have a child pick up an I Am Card and then an I Need Card. If the cards do not match, the child should put them back face down in their places. If the cards do match, put them face up in their places. Have the children take turns until all the cards are matched. (Keep the I Am and I Need Cards in their separate sections throughout the devotional time.) Below is the list of correct matches:

- I am thirsty/I need a glass of water
- I am cold/I need a jacket
- I am hungry/I need food
- I am lonely/I need a friend
- I am badly hurt/I need a doctor
- I am tired/I need sleep
- I am a child/I need parents
- I am in the dark/I need a light

Can you think of other things we could have added to the list of “I am” and “I need”?

Why do you think that “I need candy” wasn’t given as a matching card for “I am hungry”? Why do you think “I need a vacation to a warm tropical island” wasn’t given as a matching card for “I am cold”?

Are all of the “I need” things of equal importance? Which ones might be more important than others at times? For example, if a person were lost in the dark and desperately trying to find his way, what would be more important at that moment, an apple or a flashlight?

Conclusion:

We have many needs. Some are more important than others. Certain situations cause us to be more desperate for a particular need.

Can you give any examples from the events happening right now in our world in which people are more desperate to find help for a particular need?

But most of all, when difficult things and tragedies happen in our world and in our lives, they are all meant to remind us of what we need more than anything else.

Study the Scriptures:

(Read and talk about the following Scriptures. Depending on the age of your children and the time available, you may choose to have children look up one or more of the texts in their Bibles. Make sure to define any unfamiliar words or terms after reading each text.)

Mark 2:1-4—And when [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

What need did this man have? [He couldn’t walk.] Who did he believe could meet his need? [Jesus] Was the paralytic man eager or even “desperate” to be healed? What did his friends actually do? [They removed part of the roof and lowered him down to Jesus.]

This is what happened next...

Mark 2:5—And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

The man had come to Jesus because he had a need: "I am a paralytic. I need Jesus to heal my legs so I can walk again." So why did Jesus respond to him by saying, "Son, your sins are forgiven"? Didn't Jesus understand how desperate the man was to walk again? Didn't Jesus understand the man's need? [Encourage some responses.]

- Jesus knew that the man had a much bigger problem than not being able to walk.
- That bigger problem is true for every person in the whole world.
- It is our greatest problem and our most desperate need.

(Complete the I Am Worksheet together: Read through the verses and see if the children can complete the missing words. Write in the answers.)

Romans 3:10—...“None is righteous, no, not one;”

I am not righteous. I am un_____ . [unrighteous]

Romans 3:23—for fall have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

I am a s___er. [sinner]

Romans 1:18—For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...

I am deserving of God's w_____. [wrath]

2 Thessalonians 1:9—[sinners] will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

I am deserving of eternal _____ [destruction] in hell.

(Review a few of the I Am Cards from the beginning activity. Talk about how the new “I am” statements compare. Which presents a more desperate situation? Place the completed I Am Worksheet on top of the I Am Cards from the beginning activity. Now direct their attention to the I Need Cards.)

We are all sinners deserving God's judgment. Experiencing God's fierce anger in hell forever is the most terrible thing imaginable—worse than hunger, thirst, sickness, or anything else. Could having more food solve this problem? A warm jacket? Friends? Your parents? What about a doctor? Why not?

(Explain that when Jesus encountered the paralytic man, Jesus knew that he had a much greater need than having his legs healed. The man was a desperate sinner who deserved to experience God's

righteous and everlasting anger in hell. Healing his legs would not solve that problem—although Jesus did go on to heal His legs also.)

Think again of the broken and “groaning” world we live in. There is a terrible disease called “Covid 19” spreading throughout the world. Millions of people are desperate. Some are lonely from having to stay at home and desperately want to visit friends and family. Some have lost their jobs and desperately need money. Some are sick and desperately need doctors and hospitals. But all these things are meant to remind us of the greatest problem sinners have and our most desperate need of all. If we are to be truly happy this need must be met.

(Show the children the I Need Worksheet.)

Acts 4:12—“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:12 tells us there is something we need more desperately than anything else. It is a nine-letter word. What is it? (Write “salvation” in the corresponding spaces on the worksheet.)

Who alone provides the salvation we so desperately need? (Write “Jesus” in the corresponding spaces of the worksheet.)

(Place the completed I Need Worksheet on top of the I Need Cards from the beginning activity.)

Why is salvation in Jesus our greatest need? Do you see that as your greatest need? Or do you think you can just ignore this need and pretend it doesn’t really matter? What are some ways people try and ignore their greatest need? [Encourage some responses.]

What did Jesus do to save sinners like you and me?

(Fold the brown construction in half vertically. As you are making the points below, use the scissors to cut out a half-cross shape—the paper fold being the vertical center of the cross.)

- When Jesus died on the cross, He took upon Himself all of the sin and unrighteousness of His people (1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- On the cross, Jesus willingly received all of God’s just wrath at sin on behalf of God’s people (1 John 2:2).
- God’s people are completely forgiven because of what Jesus has done (Colossians 1:13-14).
- Instead of death and hell, God’s people will now receive eternal life—enjoying God’s wonderful presence forever (Romans 6:23; Psalm 16:11)!

(Unfold the brown paper to reveal the complete cross shape. Place the cross on top of the I Am Worksheet.)

Our greatest need is salvation in Jesus. Salvation in Jesus is the only way to be saved from our sin and eternal punishment. Salvation is the only way to receive eternal life— enjoying God’s presence forever and being more happy than you could ever imagine! Salvation is your greatest need whether you are a boy or a girl, 8 years old or 80 years old, no matter where you live.

Optional illustration:

Without comment or explanation, place the box of facial tissues in the middle of the table. Tell the children you are going to have a contest. Pass out several saltine crackers to each child. When you give the signal to begin, they should eat as many saltines as possible in one minute. Hand out more saltines if necessary. Ask them if they would like some facial tissues to help wash down the crackers. Why would that be silly? What would a thirsty person be calling out for? And if you were really, really thirsty how would you be calling out for and asking for water—in a half-hearted way or with great urgency?)

When you recognize that your greatest need in the whole world is salvation in Jesus, what should you do? What does the Bible tell you to do?

(Read and discuss one or more of the following verses not only on a personal individual level but also the implications for friends, family, neighbors, and the world and the mission of the church.)

Mark 1:15—...“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Ephesians 2:8-9—For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 10:9, 13—...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved...For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

John 20:31—but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Pray Together:

Come before Him with in a spirit of humbleness, acknowledging your brokenness and sin. Express thankfulness to Him for His love and goodness in meeting your daily needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit would be at work in your family bringing about genuine repentance and belief, and a deeper love for Christ. Ask for opportunities to share the gospel with those around you.

Apply the Truth this Week

As you go through the week, draw attention to “I am” and “I need” moments. Use these as opportunities to remind your family that we need Jesus most of all. How does God want you to think about this? What does His Word say? How should our hearts respond—what feelings and desires does God command? What does God call us to do?

Optional Activity Pages:

- [“Promise: Salvation for All Who Call” \(lower-elementary age\)](#), Lesson 6 from [Faithful to All His Promises](#)
- [“Seek for Lost Sinners”](#) (upper-elementary) – Lesson 32 from [To Be Like Jesus](#)

Next week’s devotional will be **Biblical Truth #5—God Is with His People in the Midst of Suffering.**

This lesson is part of an eight-part devotional series, which was kicked off with this [post](#).