

Teaching resources for understanding **identity**



The Bible's answers to our big questions



Lesson 3

# I AM HURTING

John 11:17-37

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**faith****in****kids**

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Who Am I?

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We recommend the International Children's Bible for use with children during the lesson. Our leader's notes and Take Home Sheets use the New International Version.

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Living Out ([www.livingout.org](http://www.livingout.org)) commissioned Faith in Kids ([www.faithinkids.org](http://www.faithinkids.org)) to produce these resources to help children build a permanent identity based on God's word. Visit [www.faithinkids.org](http://www.faithinkids.org) to download these resources and look out for accompanying podcasts for both children and parents.

'All for the glory of God alone' (1 Corinthians 10:31)

# I AM HURTING

JOHN 11:17-37



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## Truth that changes me:

Life in a broken world hurts. Jesus knows how we feel because he lived here, too.



## Faith in Kids looks like:

Children who are not surprised by suffering. They choose to go to Jesus with their hurt.



## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Suffering and sadness are a normal part of life, even for Jesus. It's right to be sad about hard things and important to voice our questions. This lesson builds a vocabulary to discuss doubts, emotions and mental health. We can bring these things to Jesus - he's ready to listen and able to help. With older children, we touch on destructive responses to brokenness as well as talking about depression and anxiety.



## NOTES

Pray and read the Bible passage. Read **Where are we going, The world our children live in** and **Look at the passage** to give you a better understanding of how to apply the truth.



## THE WORLD OUR CHILDREN LIVE IN

Much as we'd like to, we can't protect our children from all suffering. Research suggests that almost 50% of UK adults have had at least one adverse childhood experience, such as abuse, neglect, parental separation or divorce, a parent with a mental health condition, or growing up in a household where parents are drug or alcohol dependent or in prison. Many children experience illness or bereavement. Children are still developing their understanding of their emotions and the world around them. When things go wrong, they tend to think it's their fault.

The Bible's perspective is liberating: suffering is not a surprise. It's an expected symptom of living in a broken world that's disconnected from God. There isn't always someone to blame and we can't always fix it. Instead, we have a saviour who doesn't leave us alone in our suffering. He's alongside us, completely understands us and will help us.



## LOOK AT THE PASSAGE

*'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'*  
**JOHN 11:21**

## Real Questions

Martha had hoped for Jesus to heal her sick brother. But instead of 'happily ever after' there was grief, loss and hard questions. As Jesus arrived, Martha met him



with her broken hopes. Jesus listened and offered her real truth.

Suffering shouldn't surprise us. We will all face days of doubt and struggle. Instead of burying our emotions we can pour them out to the Lord.

*'When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.'*

JOHN 11:33

## Real Emotions

Mary spoke the same words as Martha before she broke down in tears. Jesus wasn't overwhelmed or embarrassed by her brokenness. He was deeply moved. In these two sisters we see the reality of living in a broken world - suffering comes and Jesus feels it. Martha had questions and needed to talk it through. Mary expressed her deep sadness through tears. Their responses were different, but their direction was the same - to Jesus!

*'Jesus wept.'*

JOHN 11:35

## Real Jesus

Two small words, capturing huge emotion and significance. The sisters' grief broke Jesus' heart. He doesn't shut himself off from how we feel, but feels it with us. He sees our tears and weeps with us until the day when he will wipe all tears away.

Mary and Martha received a miraculous solution to their suffering when Lazarus was raised. Whilst we can still pray for miracles today, Jesus hasn't promised to take away all our pain in this life. But he has opened the door to a pain-free New Creation and promised to be our rock and comfort until we get there.

Jesus loves the broken, hurting, anxious and depressed. Whatever our experience of suffering, Jesus is a safe place to run to; there is nothing outside his ability to help.



## WIN MY HEART

When you're hurting, where do you look for comfort? The biggest bar of chocolate? The sympathy of friends? The distraction of keeping busy or the escapism of a box set binge? We have something better to do with our hurts - take them to the one who always understands. We don't need to have it all together to speak to Jesus. He knows the pain of living in this broken world. Martha came with her questions. Mary came with her tears. They went to Jesus because he understands and can help. When you're hurting, go to Jesus. He patiently listens, cares deeply, feels your hurt and weeps with you.

- Are you comfortable turning to Jesus with your questions and tears?
- What comforts you more, knowing he understands you, or knowing he can help you?



## 5 MINUTES TO FOCUS ON YOUR GROUP

Do you know of situations in the lives of those in your group where there is hurt and brokenness? Jesus understands what it's like because he lived in this broken world too. What would it look like for them to trust Jesus in their tears?



*This truth is for your heart too.*

*What do the children in your group need?*

*Pray for them:*

- to grasp the truth
- to live it out
- to rely on the Spirit





## ALL TOGETHER TIME



*Flexible resource: This has been written as an all-age slot to introduce the whole church family to what the children are learning today, but it could be adapted for the children's classes.*



### PROPS

A range of emoji faces (drawn/printed or put them in PowerPoint slides) and PowerPoint slides of the 3 story pictures (see Appendix).



### What to Say



### What to Do

What face is OK to show Jesus - a smiley one? A sad one?  
 Which emotions can we go to Jesus with?  
 I'm going to show you emoji faces. I want you to say if you think you can talk to Jesus when you feel that way.  
 Does this face go in the 'YES' or the 'NO' pile?

- Happy face - things are good
- Sad face - this is bad
- Angry face - that's not fair
- Laughing face - that's really funny
- Confused face - I don't get it
- Crying face - this really hurts

Hold up the happy and sad faces.

Encourage responses, e.g. 'where should it go? It's great you're telling me.'

Get a 'no' - 'Thanks for being so honest!'

Notice differences - where do they sound more confident or less sure? Are there any mixed responses?

Let me tell you about a day in Jesus' life and we'll come back to this question later.

Jesus was great mates with a brother and his two sisters.  
They'd hang out together, eat together and laugh together.

Hold up the happy and laughing faces.

One day Lazarus, the brother, got sick. Really sick.  
Surely Jesus will fix it - he's their friend!  
The sisters wanted Jesus to come and fix it straight away.

Sad face.

But Jesus didn't turn up. He was late.  
It got worse... Lazarus died.  
They wondered - doesn't Jesus care? Can't he help?

Angry face.  
Confused face.

continued →



## What to Say

## What to Do

Jesus went to them after Lazarus had died. What emotions would he find? Could he handle them?

Martha set out to meet Jesus on the road. She had faith but also questions and doubts. She needed to talk it through.

She brought it all to Jesus...

***'If you had been here, my brother would not have died.'***

*(John 11:21 NIV)*

Show story pic 1: Martha questions Jesus.

Jesus understood and cared about how she felt.

As Jesus got closer to their house, Mary came to meet him. She fell at his feet, sobbing.

What would Jesus do?

Show story pic 2: Mary weeps at Jesus' feet.

He cried. Tears flowed.

He knew the answer to their questions. He *is* the answer. Listen to what Jesus said:

***'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.'***

*(John 11:25 NIV)*

Jesus said there's life after death because of him. One day, sadness and suffering will come to an end. But knowing the answer didn't stop Jesus from feeling sad.

Show story pic 3: Jesus weeping.

While we live in this hurting world, Jesus feels our heartache and hears our big questions.

He doesn't just tell us the right answers without getting involved. He comes close and feels the pain of all our tears. We can come to Jesus with everything that makes us cry.

When you ask, 'Why is this happening? It shouldn't be this way' Jesus says, 'I feel the same.'

Tell Jesus how it is - write it down, talk to him in prayer, paint it in a picture, ask it in a question.

Show story pic 1: Martha questions Jesus.

And when you cry, because it's sad, unfair or lonely, go to Jesus with your tears. Tell him what's hard, write him a letter, tell him in a prayer, or just cry like Mary did and picture him next to you with his arm around you.

Show story pic 2: Mary weeps at Jesus' feet.

continued →



## What to Say

## What to Do

One day, we'll be with Jesus in a world with no tears,  
But until that day, sad things will happen.. We'll have tears. But we'll also have Jesus, right by our side, loving us, answering us, crying with us.

Show story pic 3: Jesus weeping.

So when I hold up these emoji pictures again, do you think you can talk to Jesus when you feel this way?

Hold up emoji pictures again and ask if they belong in the 'yes' or 'no' pile.

- Happy face - things are good!
- Sad face - this is bad!
- Angry face - that's not fair!
- Laughing face - that's really funny!
- Confused face - I don't get it.
- Crying face - this really hurts!

100 % YES!

Hopefully we get a resounding 'yes' to all of them!

We can go to Jesus with every question and every struggle we face.

We're in a series with our children called, 'Who am I?', finding out who God says we are. Today's session is called 'I am hurting' and looks at how we are affected by living in a broken world. With older children we will touch on anxiety, depression and self-harm. The Take Home Sheet will help you to talk about it at home.

Pray.





## UNDER 7's LESSON PLAN



### GET GOING

#### Make a Face

Have a mirror for the children to see themselves explore different facial expressions and emotions. Try the following faces:

- Teeth clamped together as hard as you can
- Make your face as long as you can
- Puff your cheeks out
- Suck your cheeks in
- Eyes almost shut
- Eyes wide open
- Mouth open wide
- Mouth pursed tight

Talk about how your faces feel as you try these out.

Then move onto emotion faces. Try some of the following: Happy, sad, angry, surprised, scared, disappointed, worried. Younger children will find it hard to understand some emotions. Start with the easy ones first. With older children, ask if the faces remind them of any experiences, places, feelings, or people.



**Link:** We all have times when we feel happy, sad, scared or excited. That's OK. The good news is that Jesus understands how we feel, because he felt that way too.



### TEACHING TIME

Use the play figures and props to tell the story (John 11:17-37). As you go through, pause for each of these three moments:

#### I don't understand

Show picture 1 and read John 11:21: Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

- Who are the people in the picture?
- How do you think Martha felt? Get the children to do an instant freeze frame of Martha at this moment
- Why was she upset that Jesus hadn't arrived earlier?
- Tell the children to pretend this had happened to them. What would they say to Jesus?
- In pairs talk about: When did you last feel angry when something went wrong?



### NOTES

*Flexible resource: look at both lesson plans, pick what works for your group.*

*Use this activity to introduce today's theme.*

*Use a suitable Bible translation - we use the International Children's Bible (found online at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)).*

**You will need:** play figures and props to tell the story, story pictures 1-3 (see Appendix) and a completed craft (see Heart & Hands Craft Time).





Martha didn't understand why bad things had to happen. Jesus listened to her questions. He helped her remember the truth: we will have sad days but one day in heaven there will be no more sadness or hard questions. Until then, we can shout our prayers to Jesus when we're angry, we can pray in tears when we're sad and we can be honest when we don't feel like Jesus is still loving us.

## I feel really sad

Show picture 2 and read John 11:33: *Jesus saw that Mary was crying... Jesus felt very sad in his heart and was deeply troubled.*

- How do you think Mary felt? How did Jesus feel?
- Split into pairs. Ask the children to make a sad face. How do they feel when a friend looks sad?

Seeing Mary so sad made Jesus sad. When we're sad, Jesus feels sad too because he loves us. We can always talk to Jesus when we are sad and crying.

## Jesus understands

Show picture 3 and read John 11:35: *Jesus cried.*

- What are the people doing?
- Why do you think Jesus felt like that?
- Imagine you are in the crowd and you see this. Turn to the person next to you and tell them what has surprised you.

That day, Jesus felt the sadness of a friend dying and the sadness of seeing people he cared about so upset. He knew there was a happy ending coming - he knew that he would raise Lazarus from the dead. But he still cried because it was sad and hard and he loved his friends.

Use the craft to name different emotions. Jesus understands how we feel. We can always talk to him about how we feel and he can help us.




## BRAIN BREAK

### Mixed Up Emotions

The aim is to make as many complete faces as possible as a team. Divide the children into groups. In their group they take turns to collect half a plate. They then match up halves to make as many faces as they can.

For older children you can take it a bit further by asking them to identify an emotion (from the faces) that they can relate to. Why do they relate to it? Can they think of a realistic scenario in their lives for each emotion? Did different children pick different emotions or the same ones? Reflect together.

 **Link:** We have lots of different feelings and emotions and Jesus understands all of them. We can bring everything that we struggle with to him because he understands and can help.



*A chance to rest the children's minds before Heart and Hands. Get moving and have fun with this game.*

**You will need:** paper plates with different facial expressions drawn on them. Cut the plates in half and scatter them across the room.





## HEART & HANDS

### Craft time - Make a changing emotions tube

**Prepare in advance:** cut out the craft pieces for younger children.

Give each child a strip of faces and a rectangle with text and the body outline. Let the children colour in the faces and body to look like themselves. Glue the sides of the rectangle together to make a tube. Glue the narrow ends of the strip together to make a ring of faces - this needs to be slightly larger in diameter than the tube so it fits around the outside of it. Put the tube inside the ring so the faces sit at the top, above the body. The ring of faces can be twisted around the tube to change the person's emotions.

Show the children how they can use the tube to remind themselves that they can go to Jesus with all of their feelings, e.g. 'When I feel sad (twist the ring so the sad face is above the body) I can tell Jesus. He understands and can help me.'

### Think time

**Big Question:** When you are sad, how does Jesus feel? *He feels sad too.*

**A follow up question:** How many feelings can you think of? Does Jesus understand them all? *Yes! Because he felt that way too.*

### Prayer

**Say together:** Say together: Dear God, thank you for giving us Jesus to understand us and help us. Amen.



*Make a craft and have a chat. Give the children time to reflect on today's big truth, so it can impact their hearts.*

**You will need:** the craft sheet printed onto card (1 per 2 children), scissors, glue/tape/ stapler, crayons/ coloured pens.





## OVER 8's LESSON PLAN



### GET GOING

#### Towering Emotions

Build the Jenga tower. Children take turns to pull out a block. Each time, ask them to describe the emotion or give an example of when someone might feel that way. As the tower falls explain that we will all face times when life falls apart and feels messy and broken.

**Link:** Today we are learning that Jesus understands all the feelings we have because he felt them too. He's not shocked by our questions or our feelings. He wants us to go to him.



### TEACHING TIME

Read John 11:17-37, acting it out with Lego figures or the children as characters. Then go through the 3 sections - let the children write/draw answers around the pictures.

#### Real Questions

Look at picture 1. Read John 11:21: *'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'*

- How do you think Martha felt? Why?
- What would you have said to Jesus in this situation?
- What do you think of Jesus' response (v23-27)? What is he telling her?
- Turn to your neighbour: When do you find yourself angry with Jesus or wondering if he's really there?

This world is broken by sin and disconnected from God. That's why things go wrong and people get hurt and sick. It isn't always our fault. Jesus gets it. We can tell him about our sadness and we can ask the biggest questions. He's also promised us life forever with him. We can look forward to the day of no more sadness or death.

#### Real Emotions

Look at picture 2. Read John 11:33: *When Jesus saw her weeping... he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.*

- What did Mary do that was the same as/different to her sister?
- What do you think of Jesus' response? What does that tell us about him?

continued →



### NOTES

*Flexible resource: look at both lesson plans, pick what works for your group.*

*Use this activity to introduce today's theme.*

**You will need:** A Jenga set with different emotions written on the sides (you could use sticky labels). Include the following - struggling, alone, happy, relaxed, excited, sad, afraid, embarrassed etc.

**You will need:** Bibles (we suggest you use the NIV for this age group as the emotions language is stronger than the ICB), Lego figures, pens and story pictures 1-3 (see Appendix) - stick each one to a large sheet of paper.



God gave us feelings and emotions. We don't have to hide them from him. Jesus is compassionate and loving. We can go to him with all our emotions.

- What are your biggest emotions? Which do you feel most often?

Before going on... read John 11:34. What do you expect Jesus to do/say next?

## Real Jesus

Look at picture 3. Read John 11:35: *Jesus wept.*

- Are you surprised?
- What do we learn about Jesus?

Jesus understands. He lived in this broken world, cried real tears, and felt the same emotions. One day, in heaven, he will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Until then, he's by our side, completely understanding and never leaving us.

- How does this change things on days you are sad or crying?

**Optional:** If you have children who are new to Jesus then read v38-44 to see him prove that he has the power to make all things new one day.



*A chance to rest the children's minds before Heart and Hands. Get moving and have fun with this game.*

**You will need:** 2 or 3 pebbles for each child, permanent markers and a bucket.

*A chance to reflect and chat about how the truth, through the Spirit's work, changes our thoughts (head), feelings (heart) and actions (hands).*

Use the **Chat Time** sheet – you could enlarge it and work on it together. Hand out sticky notes so children can still respond personally.




## BRAIN BREAK

### Feeling Pebbles

The children draw a different emoji on each of their pebbles e.g. happy, sad or angry face. They could also draw things that remind them of these emotions, e.g. a sun for happiness, or a storm cloud for anger. On the other side of the pebble, they write 'Jesus' to remind them that they can talk to him about any of their emotions. Play a game with the finished pebbles.

**Calm:** put the pebbles in the bucket. The children take turns taking out a pebble and copying the emoji face or acting out the emotion for the rest of the group to guess.

**Active:** put the pebbles in the bucket and make up actions for the different emotions on them. The leader takes a pebble and calls out the emotion, the children do the corresponding action. Keep increasing the speed so the children are moving non-stop!

 **Link:** However you feel, Jesus understands. You can talk to him about all of your emotions.



## HEART & HANDS

### Did you spot it?

- What different emotions were there in the story?
- How did Jesus respond to the different people and how they were feeling?

continued →



## Work it out

- Which emotions can we take to Jesus?
- When we feel angry, upset or confused, what are some helpful ways to respond? What can we learn from Mary and Martha's response?
- Because the world is broken, sometimes things go wrong with our bodies, like broken bones or cancer. Sometimes things go wrong with the way we think and feel (our mental health), like depression or anxiety. How do you think Jesus feels about people who experience physical health problems? What about mental health problems? Can he help?
- Take a moment to think about (and write down/draw) the part of your life which hurts the most. How does it change the situation to know that Jesus understands our feelings?

## Live it out

Look at case study picture A. Imagine what the boy is feeling. His parents have split up; they don't live together anymore. He lives with his mum. His dad is waving goodbye; he won't see him for a few days.

- What different things might he feel?
- Is this his fault?
- What do you think he would ask Jesus for?
- What truth could he remember in this moment that could help?

Or look at case study picture B. These two people are feeling sad because they miss the boy's Grandpa who has died.

- What different things might this boy feel?
- Is it OK to feel sad even if we know that the person who died has gone to heaven?
- What could this boy pray if he was being really honest with Jesus?

Whichever case study you use, end by discussing:

Jesus has given us adults to help when things are too hard to handle on our own; perhaps a parent, a teacher or a leader at church. Those people might be one of the ways that Jesus helps you through hard things.

- Who can you talk to about the hard things in your life?

**Optional:** When we're hurting, there are some helpful and some unhelpful ways to respond. For instance, we might shout at others and blame them. We might bully someone, to hurt them like we are hurting. We might deliberately hurt ourselves.

- Can you think of other unhelpful ways of handling our emotions? What might be more helpful ways to respond?

## Extra Stretch

- What parts of life do you feel like you can't take to Jesus? What are the things that you feel you couldn't talk about in church?
- Look up John 16:33 - how does Jesus prepare us to live in a broken world?
- Have you come across depression, anxiety and self harm? What are your questions about mental health? (You don't have to have answers for all of their questions!)



*These questions are designed to stretch the resource up to teenage years. Depending on the level of discussion in your group, you may want to consider using them.*



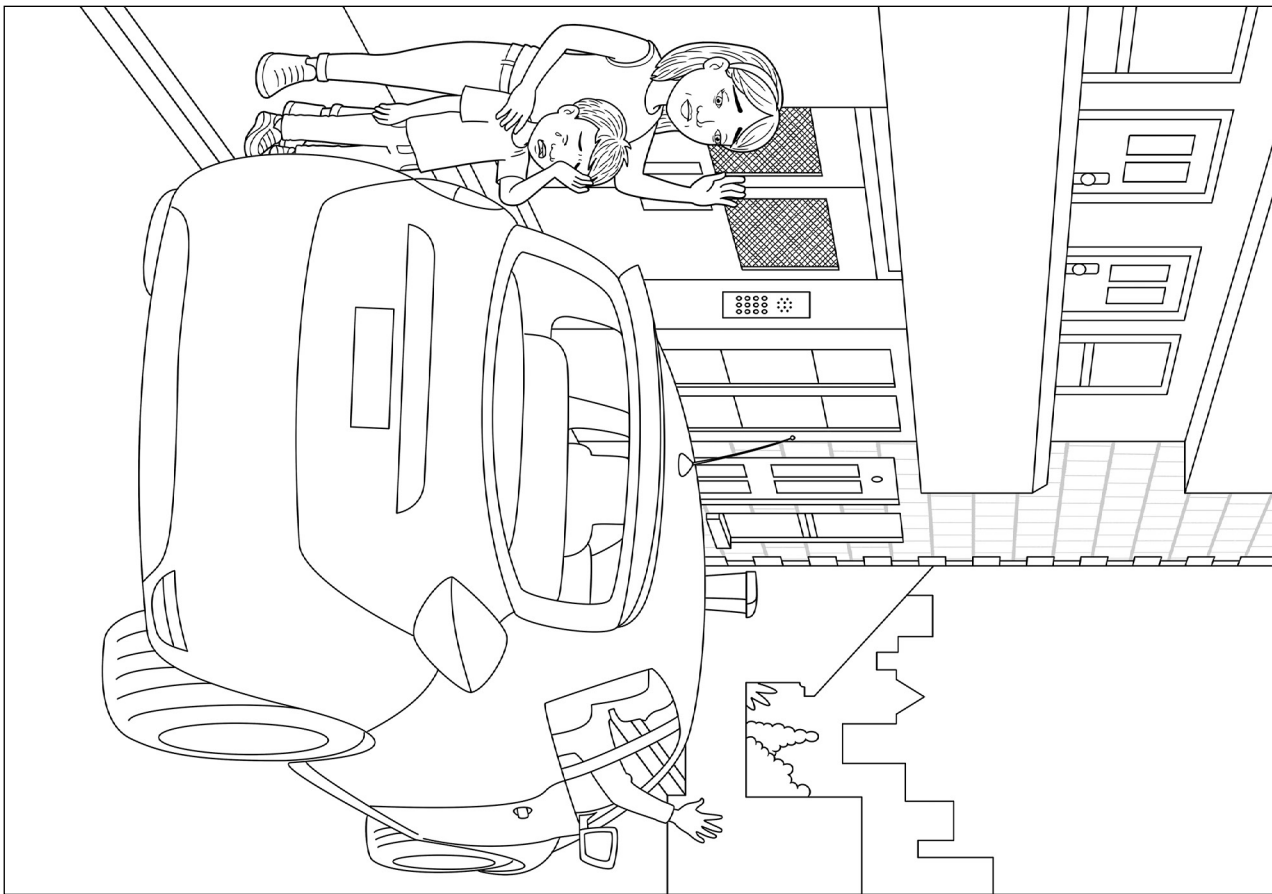
## Prayer

How will knowing that we can come to Jesus with all our struggles, questions and emotions change our prayers? It isn't always easy to pray about tough things in front of others. What could help you pour out your questions and feelings to the Lord? Pray quietly on your own? Start a prayer journal? Draw your feelings? Go for a walk and picture Jesus beside you?

Thank him for understanding, loving you and promising to one day wipe away all your tears.



A



B



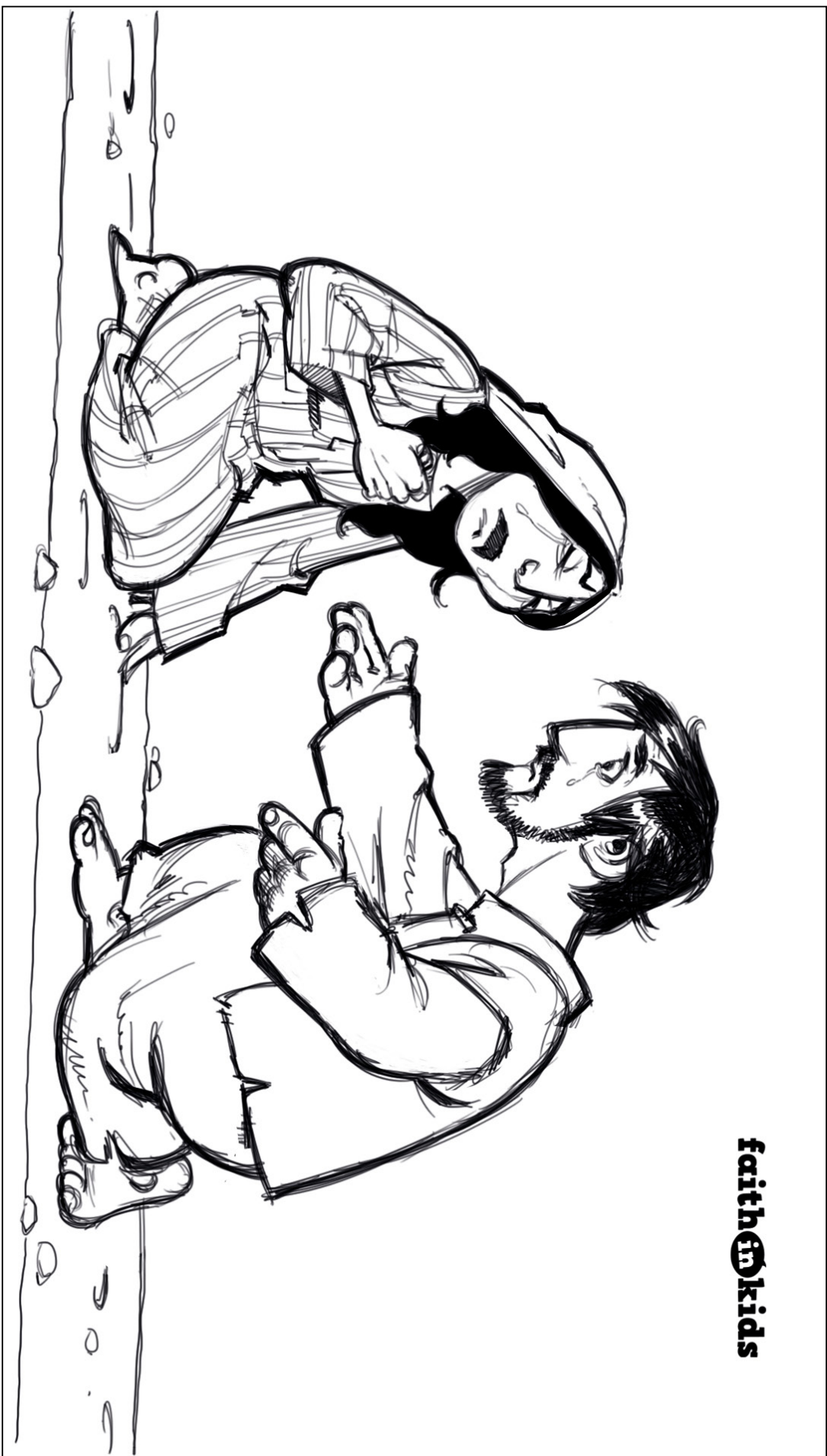




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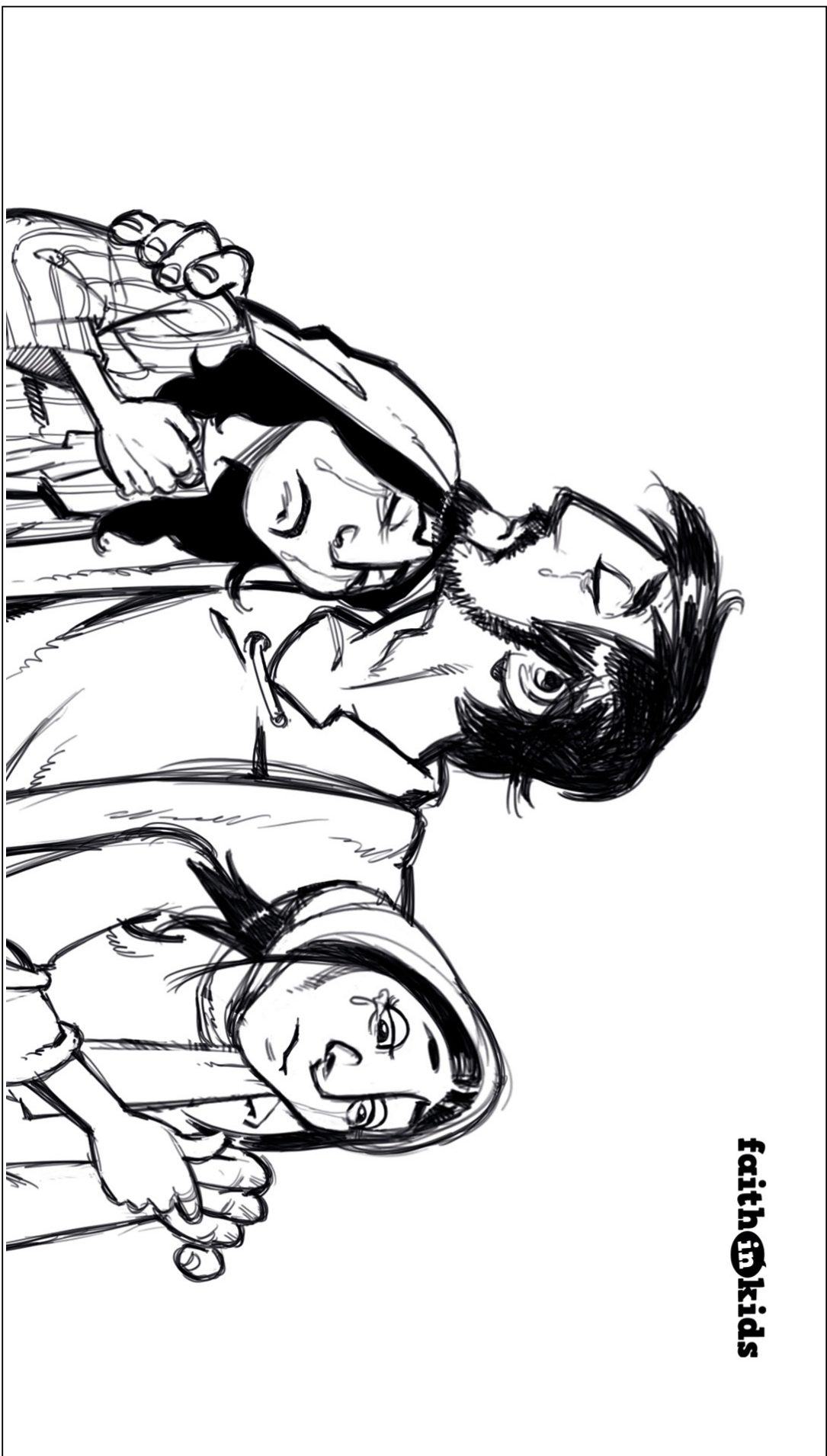






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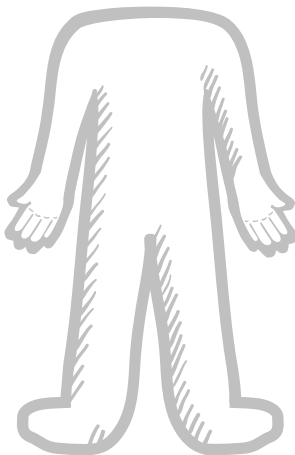


glue



glue

However  
I feel...



...Jesus  
understands

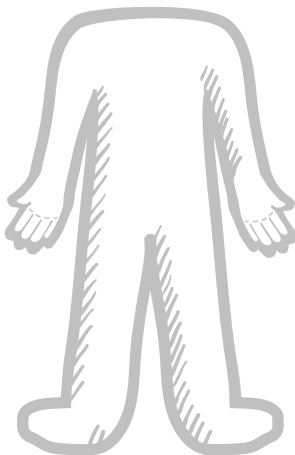
**John 11:17-37**

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However  
I feel...



...Jesus  
understands

**John 11:17-37**





## WHO AM I?

### I am hurting

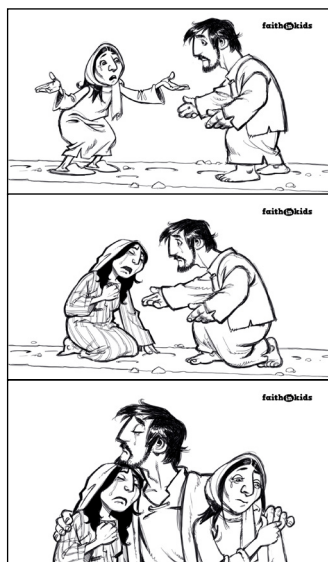
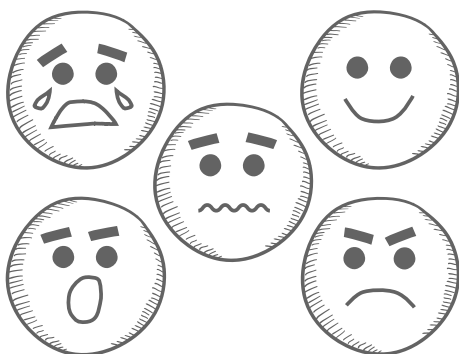
JOHN 11:17-37

Look at these verses together and find the answers



## DID YOU SPOT IT?

What different emotions were there in the story?



How did Jesus respond to the different people and how they were feeling?

Martha

Mary

Crowd



## WORK IT OUT

Give everyone a chance to answer...

Which emotions can we take to Jesus?

Joyful Excited Sad Confused  
Confident Hurt Happy Angry  
Frustrated Bitter Embarrassed  
Irritated



When we feel angry, upset or confused, what are some helpful ways to respond? What can we learn from Mary and Martha's response?

Sometimes things go wrong with our bodies or the way we think and feel.



How do you think Jesus feels about people with physical health problems? Can he help?



How do you think Jesus feels about people with mental health problems? Can he help?

What part of your life hurts the most?



How does it change the situation to know that Jesus understands our feelings?







# HEART & HANDS CHAT TIME

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## LIVE IT OUT

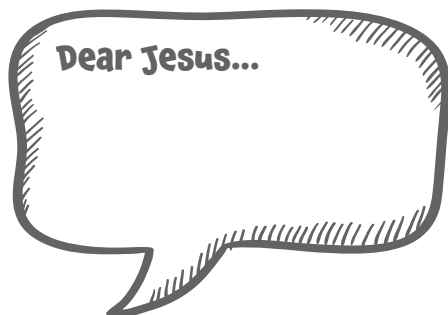
Give everyone a chance to speak...



What different things might this boy feel?



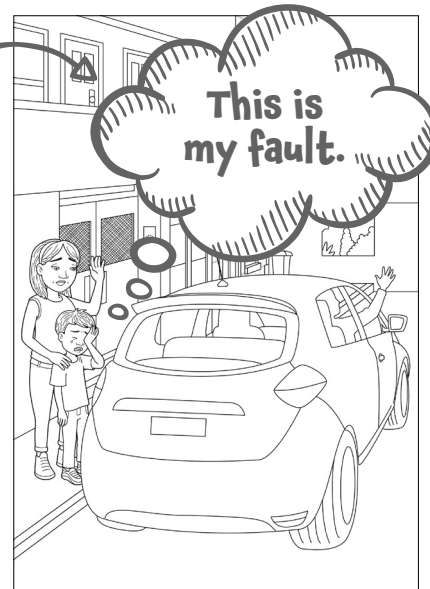
What do you think he would ask Jesus for?



Is this true?

### Remember!

What truth could he remember in this moment that could help?



What different things might this boy feel?



Is it ok to feel sad even if we know the person who died has gone to heaven?

What could this boy pray if he was being really honest with Jesus?

Dear Jesus...

Who can you talk to about the hard things in your life?

Can we talk?





I am made  
by God



I am made to  
love others



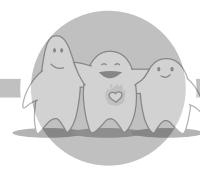
I am  
hurting



I am given  
a body



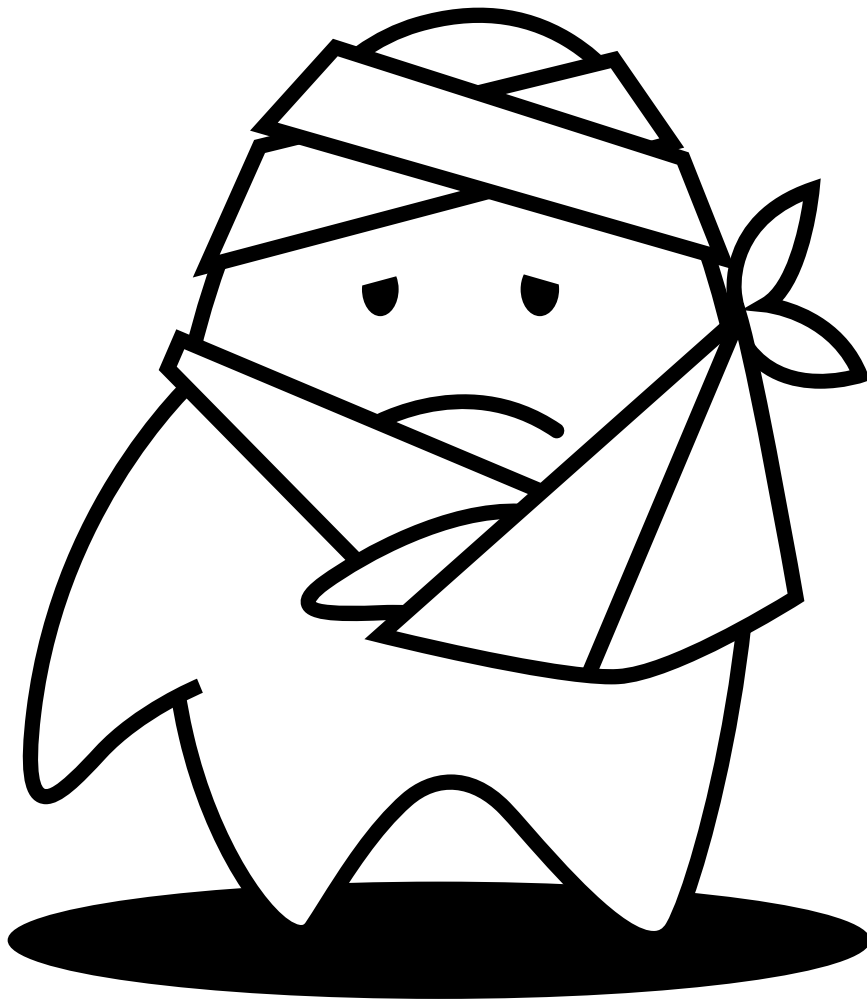
I am loved  
and forgiven



We are  
not alone



We will be  
like Jesus





Faith in Kids exists to encourage, inspire and equip influencers of faith in children with support, training and resources.

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