

PULLING ME APART

by Karissa Miller

KEY VERSE:

For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

FAITH STORY:

Romans 7:7–25

FAITH FOCUS:

In this passage Paul is discussing the law and whether it is good or bad. He sees that the law has revealed sin and made the temptation to sin come alive. In the previous passage, Paul talks about freedom from legalism and the law in that sense. Paul now acknowledges the good part of the law and that the law is holy; unfortunately, it also condemns humans. Paul talks about how frustrating it is that he knows the law and wants to follow it, but his sinful nature keeps him from doing what he want to do. In the end, he realizes that God can save him from this frustration and gives God thanks for doing so.

SESSION GOAL:

To help youth see sin patterns in their lives and that their sinful nature makes it hard to resist these sins. To help students realize that God can deliver us from our sin patterns.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- Identify specific sin patterns in their lives
- Read and discuss Romans 7:7–25
- Journal about the passage and how it relates to their lives
- Pray about the sin patterns they have identified.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Bibles for each student—at least one of them should be The Message.
- 2 Paper and pens
- 3 Two ropes—hemp would work—it should be strong but thin enough to be used for bracelets
- 4 Scissors
- 5 Copies of the verses from The Message (found at the end of this lesson) for each student

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to think of a time when they had great intentions to do something, but despite those good intentions, they failed. Ask them to plan a pantomime about that situation. Take turns watching the pantomimes while the rest of the class tries to guess what it is being portrayed.

CONNECT: (5 minutes)

Hand out paper and pens. Ask students to think about times in the past week when they really intended to be good and to do good things, but they failed.

Another way to state the same thing is to have them think about times when they know they sinned.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (10–15 minutes)

This is a long and somewhat confusing passage, so take your time going through it with the students. Read it one paragraph at a time, according to the paragraph divisions in the Bibles you are using. Stop after each paragraph to discuss it. Ask students to say what they understand, or don't understand, about each paragraph. The Message will probably be the most helpful in making this passage understandable.

If students don't raise questions, here are some to start with:

- If God gave us the ability to choose, why does Paul make it sound like we have no control over our actions?
- What does this passage say about the power of sin?
- Are you surprised by Paul's honesty and his struggles with sin? Doesn't it seem strange that a person like Paul would be writing something like this?

APPLY: (7–10 minutes)

Ask for a volunteer. Tie one rope to each hand of the volunteer, and have the person stretch their arms out to the left and right. Ask for a volunteer to pull on each rope, so the person is being pulled from both directions.

Ask: *What might these two ropes represent? (One rope represents sin, one represents our desire to follow God.)*

Ask students to look at what they wrote on their papers during the Connect time, and to reflect on that compared to what Paul wrote. Invite them to jot down their responses and comparisons between their thoughts and Paul's.

RESPOND: (10–20 minutes)

Optional: Invite students to get into small groups and share some of their reflections. Don't pressure them. Make sure they know it's okay not to share personal things they want to keep

to themselves. Ask them to pray for each other.

Hand out the copies of The Message verses to each student. Ask students to take their papers and go someplace alone. Depending on the weather and your location, this might be outdoors or to another part of the church. Ask them to read the papers and spend some time in prayer, asking Jesus for forgiveness for their sins and to help them set things right in their life.

When students return, invite them to cut small pieces from the rope to make a bracelet or necklace. Ask them to wear the bracelet or necklace as a reminder that when they are at the end of their rope, Jesus is there for them.

Close with a prayer.

I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING AND NOTHING HELPS.
I'M AT THE END OF MY ROPE.
IS THERE NO ONE WHO CAN DO ANYTHING FOR ME?
ISN'T THAT THE REAL QUESTION?

THE ANSWER, THANK GOD,
IS THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN AND DOES.
HE ACTED TO SET THINGS RIGHT
IN THIS LIFE OF CONTRADICTIONS
WHERE I WANT TO SERVE GOD
WITH ALL MY HEART AND MIND,
BUT AM PULLED BY THE INFLUENCE OF SIN
TO DO SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT.

Romans 7:24–25
The Message
By Eugene Peterson