WHEN THE SQUEEZE IS ON!

RESPONDING IN TIMES OF TRIBULATION

- Object: Sponge
- Primary Scriptures: John 16:33, Romans 5:1-5, Romans 15:13
- Main point: What comes out of us when the “squeeze” is on – clean, pure thoughts & actions that please God or something not so clean & pure?

Begin this Bible object lesson by giving each person a small piece of a clean, unused sponge. A regular size sponge can be cut into 10-12 nice size pieces and look like mini sponges for them to keep as a reminder of the lesson.

THE “SQUEEZE” – TRIBULATIONS

Ask what sponges are used for or what they do. Answers may include many things, but make sure it is mentioned that they soak up liquid and then release the liquid when squeezed.

Ask – do we ever get “squeezed” in life? If so, how? Allow time for answers and thoughts; these will vary of course for different age groups, but may include - when others (friends, parents, children, teachers, spouse, etc.) pressure us to do something, when we let anger or frustration build up until we can’t hide it any longer, when we have too many obligations or responsibilities, when bad or unexpected things happen in our life, etc.

The Bible uses the term – “tribulation”, which comes from the idea of when grapes were squeezed under pressure to release the juice.

Jesus tells us that in this life we will have tribulation, but He also gives us hope:

**John 16:33** “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

So if we get “squeezed”, what comes out? What comes out of a sponge when it’s squeezed? Tie in answers to eventually conclude that whatever is in the sponge or in us, that which has been soaked up, will be what comes out.

If we have bad attitudes and negative thoughts, “the squeeze” will bring out angry and hateful words and actions that do not bring God glory or honor. However, if we spend time being filled with His goodness and grace, “the squeeze” will bring out good things like love, joy, peace, patience, and other fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

Squeeze the clean water from the sponge into the colored water and notice what happens. The clean water affects or dilutes the colored water. If we soak up the colored water and then squeeze into the clean water, it changes it. In the same way, whatever is being "squeezed" out of us whether good or bad, affects those around us. Think of some ways our actions & attitudes, good or bad, can affect those around us.
Examples: Our anger at someone can cause them to be angry or hurt. A younger sibling may be watching and copying what we do. Someone may see kindness and love in us and be drawn closer to God.

THE “SOAKING” – BAD VS. GOOD
So what are some negative things we may be soaking up?

Ideas may include things like: negativity from others, anger or frustration, bad language, bad attitudes & ideas from TV, movies, music, etc.

[Place your sponge into clean water until it is full, then place it on a shallow dish that has a colored liquid like grape juice, Koolaid, or coke.]

Point out that if a sponge is already filled with clean water, it won’t soak up other things. How can we soak up what is good and be so full that we won’t soak up what’s bad?

It begins and continues by trusting in God. Romans 15:13 has become one of my favorite verses about being "filled":

“I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Be filled with His Holy Spirit –

Ephesians 5:18

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

Be filled with God’s Word –

Psalm 1 19:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

Be filled with God’s presence through prayer –

Luke 6:12

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.”

When we are filled with His goodness and grace, we can rejoice when the “squeeze” or tribulation comes. It will make us stronger in Christ!

Look at the key verses in Romans 5:1-5 from the New Living Translation:

“Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials (tribulations), for we know that they are good for us -- they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character
strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.”

ANOTHER DANGER

One other danger to be aware of... is becoming dry, hard and empty.

It's good if we are staying away from soaking up negative thoughts and bad things, but if we're still not being filled with His goodness, there will be no joy or peace.

Encourage each person to take their sponge with them and place it somewhere they will see it so that it will remind them of these things.

Take time to pray Paul's prayer he prayed over the Philippians in Philippians 1:9-11:

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.”

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