N|H

When Everything Falls Apart, God Doesn't

A Study & Reflection Guide | New Hope Church

Introduction

The tragedy at Silver Rail Elementary has left our community grieving and asking difficult questions. Where is God when something terrible happens? How do we hold on to faith when life doesn't make sense?

In his message following the tragedy, Pastor Brandon reminded us of an important truth: **When everything falls apart, God doesn't.**

This guide is an invitation to engage with Scripture, process what you're experiencing, and consider how we can care for one another. Whether you're working through it individually or with others, there's no pressure to have the right answers. Give yourself permission to grieve, ask questions, and be honest with God.

Before You Begin

Take a moment to consider: How have the events at Silver Rail affected you? What emotions or questions have been most present? You don't need to share more than you're comfortable sharing.

1. Grief Is Not a Lack of Faith

Read John 11:32–36 and Romans 12:15.

When Lazarus died, Jesus wept. Even knowing what would happen next, Jesus entered into the grief of those around Him. His response reminds us that sorrow is not a sign of weak faith.

Reflect & Discuss

- What stands out to you about how Jesus responds to those who are grieving?
- Why do we sometimes feel pressure to be strong or move quickly past grief?
- What might it look like to "mourn with those who mourn" in our community right now?

Personal Reflection: Is there an emotion or question you've been trying to push aside? Take a moment to acknowledge it honestly before God.

2. Faith Doesn't Mean Pretending Everything Is Okay

Read Psalm 13:1–6 and Psalm 46:1–3.

Throughout the Psalms, we find people crying out to God in fear, anger, and confusion. These honest prayers are called *lament*. Lament isn't the absence of faith; it's bringing our pain to God rather than turning away from Him.

Psalm 46 doesn't promise a life without trouble. It reminds us that God is our refuge and strength in the middle of it.

Reflect & Discuss

- What do you notice about the honesty of David's prayer in Psalm 13?
- Have you ever struggled to bring anger, disappointment, or confusion to God?
- What's the difference between trusting God and pretending everything is okay?

Personal Reflection | Write Your Own Prayer

Complete these sentences:

- God, I don't understand...
- Right now, I feel...
- God, what I need from You today is...

You don't need to resolve your questions. Simply bring them to God.

3. Where Is God in Our Suffering?

Read Isaiah 53:3–5 and Romans 5:8.

One of the hardest questions after tragedy is why a good and powerful God would allow suffering.

We may not have an answer to *why*, but the cross reminds us of two things: **God loves us, and God understands suffering.**

Jesus entered our broken world and experienced grief, betrayal, injustice, and death. He is not distant from our pain.

Reflect & Discuss

- How does knowing Jesus was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" shape your understanding of God?
- When life doesn't make sense, what makes it difficult to believe God is still good?
- How does the cross help us understand God's love, even when we don't understand our circumstances?

Personal Reflection: When you cannot understand what God is doing, what do you know to be true about who God is? Write down one truth you want to hold on to.

4. Nothing Can Separate Us From God's Love

Read Romans 8:31–39.

Romans 8 reminds us that nothing can separate us from God's love. This isn't a promise that tragedy won't happen or that we won't experience loss. It's a promise that even in the worst circumstances, God's love remains.

Our circumstances can change in an instant, but God's character does not.

Reflect & Discuss

- What words or phrases stand out to you in Romans 8:31–39?
- How is the promise of God's unchanging love different from a promise that nothing bad will happen?
- What helps you hold on to God's promises when life feels uncertain?

Personal Reflection: Choose one phrase from Romans 8:38–39. Write it somewhere you'll see it this week as a reminder of what remains true.

5. Moving Toward the Hurting

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 and Galatians 6:2.

We cannot undo what happened or fix the grief our community is experiencing. But Scripture doesn't call us to fix one another's pain. It calls us to carry one another's burdens.

God often brings comfort through the presence and compassion of His people. And caring for one another matters just as much months from now as it does today.

Reflect & Discuss

- When has someone's presence or practical care made a difference during a difficult season?
- What's the difference between trying to fix someone's pain and walking alongside them?
- How can we continue loving and supporting our community long after the immediate attention fades?

Personal Reflection | One Faithful Step

Consider one way you can respond this week. Reach out to someone who is hurting. Pray intentionally for those affected. Offer practical support. Or make a commitment to check in with someone in the weeks and months ahead.

If you're struggling yourself, your next faithful step might be asking for help or allowing someone to care for you.

What is one step you can take this week?

Closing Reflection

As you finish, consider:

- What have you been reminded of about God's character?

- What question or burden do you need to continue bringing to Him?
- What is one truth from Scripture you want to carry into the days ahead?

When everything falls apart, God doesn't. We may not understand why terrible things happen, but we can hold on to the truth that God is present in our pain, His love has not changed, and we do not have to walk through suffering alone.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to You with heavy hearts and unanswered questions. Thank You that we don't have to pretend to be okay. Remind us that You are near to the brokenhearted and that Your love never fails.

We pray for the children, families, teachers, staff, and everyone affected by the tragedy at Silver Rail. Bring comfort, healing, and strength in the days ahead.

Help us to be a community that listens, cares, and continues showing up for one another. And when we don't know what to do next, help us take the next faithful step.

In Jesus' name, amen.