Loop Teaching: Shaping Trials
Teaching Focus: Let difficult experiences develop gratitude, grit, and godly character.
Scripture: *"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* • Colossians 3:17 NIV

1. Opening & Prayer

"Today's Loop lesson is about facing difficult things. Listen for two words: gratitude and grit. Watch for how following Jesus can shape our response when something is hard."

Let's pray.

"Dear God, thank You for being with us. Help us listen today and learn how to respond when things are difficult. Help us notice Your care, ask for help, and take the next good step. In Jesus' name, amen."

2. Video lesson on Jellyfin

3. Discussion

"Gratitude means noticing what we can thank God for. Grit means sticking with something worthwhile, even when it takes effort. We can be honest about feeling discouraged while asking Jesus to help us keep going."

Open an NIV Bible to Colossians 3:17 and read the entire verse aloud. Read it again in short phrases for children to repeat. Ask them to listen for words, actions, Jesus, and giving thanks.

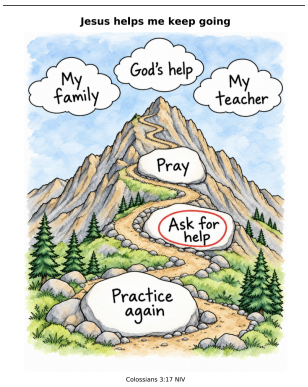
- "The Inman family's road trip included wind in their faces. How does that connect to grit, or passion and perseverance? What could perseverance look like when learning something takes several tries?"
  (Examples: practice again, use a different approach, take a short break, or ask someone to help.)
- "What is one thing you could thank God for while something is still difficult?"
  (Examples: someone who helps, another chance to learn, or God's presence. Gratitude does not mean pretending the difficulty feels good.)
- "A friend says, 'I have to handle this hard thing all by myself.' What would you tell them?"
  (Jesus cares about them. They can pray and ask a trusted adult for support.)
- "How could God use a difficult experience to strengthen your character instead of letting it make you give up?"
  (Examples: learning patience, accepting help, practicing again, or encouraging someone else who struggles.)

Leader note: Children may pass or use a made-up example. Do not press for private stories. If someone describes being hurt or feeling unsafe, help them tell a trusted adult and follow Grace Kidz safety procedures. Grit does not mean staying in an unsafe situation.

"Choose one good next step for this week. You might ask a teacher for help, practice a skill, or pray before trying again. Remember our ***[Teaching Focus] Let difficult experiences develop gratitude, grit, and godly character.***"

Invite children to share a brief prayer request or something they are thankful for, if they wish. Pray for their needs before moving to the activity.

4. Gratitude and Grit Mountain



What You Need:

- ☐ Gratitude and Grit Mountain Template, printed on printer-compatible watercolor paper or sturdy white cardstock, one per child
- ☐ Pencils, one per child
- ☐ Watercolor paints, one set per pair
- ☐ Paintbrushes, one per child
- ☐ Small water cups, one per pair
- ☐ Paper towels, a few per table
- ☐ Gratitude and Grit Mountain Completed Example, one printed copy for leaders

What You Do:

Before the Activity:

- Print the black-and-white Gratitude and Grit Mountain Template at 100% on US Letter printer-compatible watercolor paper or sturdy white cardstock, one copy per child. The title and Scripture reference are already printed. Set out pencils, watercolor sets, brushes, small water cups, and paper towels.
- Print one completed watercolor example to show the children. Its stones say “Pray,” “Ask for help,” and “Practice again.” Its clouds say “My family,” “God’s help,” and “My teacher.” The circled step shows one action to practice during the week. Encourage children to choose their own answers.

During the Activity:

- Show the completed example. Give each child a printed template and a pencil. Point out the three blank stones along the trail and the three blank clouds.
- Explain that the mountain represents a challenge. The stones represent grit: helpful steps they can take when something is difficult. The clouds represent gratitude: things they can thank God for along the way. The title and Scripture reference are already printed.
- Invite children to think of an everyday challenge, such as learning long division, practicing a new soccer skill, or finishing a long homework assignment. On their three stones, have them use a pencil to write or draw three helpful steps. For a difficult homework assignment, examples could be “Pray for patience,” “Ask my teacher for help,” and “Try one problem at a time.” Other helpful steps could include taking a short break or trying a different approach.
- In the clouds, have children use pencil to write or draw three things they can thank God for. Examples include “My family,” “A teacher who helps me,” “Another chance to try,” or “God’s help.” Have them circle one stepping stone they want to practice this week. Then watercolor the mountain, trail, trees, and sky with light washes. Leave the stones and clouds white so the answers remain readable. Dab extra water from brushes on a paper towel.

After the Activity:

- Invite children to show a partner their circled step. Set the artwork flat to dry while moving to the next activity. Have children rinse their brushes and help clear supplies. Send dry artwork home as a reminder to talk with a parent or caregiver about that step.

What You Say:

Before the Activity:

"A big mountain is climbed one step at a time. Today you'll fill the stones with helpful steps you can take when something feels hard, and the clouds with things you can thank God for."

During the Activity:

"What could you put on your next stepping stone? You might pray, ask for help, practice, or try a different approach. What can you thank God for along the way? After your answers are finished, paint the landscape with watercolors. Leave the stones and clouds white so we can read your words."

After the Activity:

"Show your partner the step you circled. Choose one step to practice this week with Jesus' help. Remember our ***[Teaching Focus] Let difficult experiences develop gratitude, grit, and godly character.***"

EveryChild Pro-Tips

- Let children draw symbols or dictate their answers. A leader can write for anyone who needs support. Children may choose an imaginary challenge instead of a personal one.

5. Crack the Code (Optional, if time allows)

What You Need:

- ☐ Crack the Code printable, one two-page set per team of 3–4 children
- ☐ Pencils, one per team
- ☐ Timer or phone used by a leader

What You Do:

Before the Activity:

- Print the two-page Crack the Code PDF at 100% on US Letter paper, one set per team. Keep the Final Message page with the leader until Round 2. Each page includes its own symbol key. Allow about 8–10 minutes for the game and discussion.
- Make mixed-age teams of 3–4 children and have them sit together. Assign roles: key finder, letter checker, recorder, and message reader. Combine roles for smaller teams and switch roles between rounds. Use quiet team voices, and have everyone contribute.
- Explain that each letter has a shape-and-number code. Both parts must match: a circle with 1 means a different letter from a circle with 2. Demonstrate the first practice symbol: a square with 3 matches K in the key, so K goes on the first blank.

During the Activity:

- **Round 1:** Give each team the Practice Message page and a pencil. Say “Begin” and allow about two minutes. Teams match each shape-and-number pair to its letter and put that letter on the blank below. The spaces separate words. When teams are ready, say “Pencils down” and reveal the answer: KEEP GOING.
- **Round 2:** Switch team roles and give each team the Final Message page. Say “Begin” and allow about four minutes. Encourage teams to divide the decoding work, check repeated symbols, and help one another. Give a little extra time when useful.
- If a team gets stuck, offer one hint at a time. First say, “Match both the shape and the number, and look for pairs that repeat.” For the practice message, the first word is KEEP. For the final message, the first word is JESUS; if another hint is needed, the last two words are KEEP GOING. Asking for a hint is a helpful strategy.
- A finished team raises a hand quietly for the leader to check its message. Have them check every letter and name one helpful thing a teammate did while other teams continue. Keep answers within the team until the group reveal.
- Finish with “Pencils down.” Invite a team to read the final message: JESUS HELPS ME KEEP GOING. If some teams are unfinished, complete the remaining letters together. Celebrate teamwork, asking for help, and trying again. There is no elimination.

After the Activity:

- Ask: “What did your team do when you got stuck? Who helped you, and what are you thankful for? How could you use one of those helpful steps during a difficult task at school or home?” Invite a few responses.
- Have teams return their pencils and collect the code sheets. Transition to pickup or the next part of the service, and check whether the watercolor artwork is dry enough to take home.

What You Say:

Before the Activity:

"Your team has a secret message to uncover. Use the symbol key, check both the shape and the number, and help each other find the letters. Everyone has something to contribute. If you get stuck, pause, ask for help, and try another step."

During the Activity:

"Which part is giving your team trouble? Check one symbol together. Could someone find the letter while another person checks it? Notice something helpful a teammate does and thank them. Keep taking one step at a time."

After the Activity:

"Your message says, 'Jesus helps me keep going.' When an everyday task feels hard, you can pray, ask for help, and try a different approach. You can also thank God for the people who help you. Remember our ***[Teaching Focus] Let difficult experiences develop gratitude, grit, and godly character.***"

EveryChild Pro-Tips

- Let children point to letters or dictate answers rather than write. Read the decoded messages aloud together. Make sure an older child does not do all the decoding; use the roles to share participation. With two children, work as one pair. For a larger group, add teams and print one set per team.