



How to Use This Study

When it Hurts is a 4-week small group study. Each week is divided into sections for group interaction, along with illustrations and biblical passages. After your first group session, you'll have the option to complete additional “personal study” sheets before the next group session.

LEARN

Each group session includes illustrations and concepts that help will help your students learn how to open up and discuss some of the hurts they have in their lives. Each lesson is designed to spark conversation and introduce the topic of the session.

RESPOND

The lessons include discussion questions to give students the opportunity to verbalize their thoughts and ideas.

PRACTICE

This study contains “Optional Assignment” sheets that enable students to interact with each lesson and find help and hope.

APPLY

Giving students tools for dealing with depression, suicide, and discouragement will help guide them on the road toward spiritual health and, in turn, lead to healthier churches and youth ministries.

TIPS FOR LEADING A GROUP

PREPARE

Prepare for each session by:

- Reviewing the weekly material and group questions ahead of time.
- Praying for each student in the group and for wisdom.
- Practicing a couple of the personal assignments.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A successful small group has the following characteristics:

- **Everyone is encouraged to participate in the conversation.** Tip: Ask hesitant or quieter group members to read a passage.
- **No one dominates the discussion (not even the leader).** Be sure that what you say takes less than half of the time so that students can participate.
- **Members are comfortable with silence.** Silence is not a bad thing. Sometimes, people need time to think and then respond.
- **God is given space to do the work.** Trust the Word of God to communicate truth that penetrates the heart. Each moment in the Word of God is a moment that has power to alter faith and future.

INCLUDE EVERYONE

Often, there are students who feel left out or overlooked during group time.

As the group leader make every effort to:

- **INVITE** – Follow up with students who have missed group.
- **INCLUDE** – If someone is new, make sure they are introduced and included in the discussion.

Connect After Group

Leading a small group is hard work, but it’s worth the effort. After the group time is over and throughout the week, make an effort to connect with one another. You can encourage a group member with a simple text, email, or personal visit.

INTRODUCTION

Life is hard, and sin hurts. Sin, despite all its allurements and excitement, carries with it the heavy weights of sorrow, grief, misery, barrenness, and pain. And there is no place where pain and heartache is more visible than in a group of teenagers.

In the Old Testament is an ancient story with a modern-day message about what to do when life hurts.

In the opening verses of the book of Lamentations, we see intense pain, tears of bitterness, and discouragement. We see real-life issues about people who are hurting. And in a strange way, the writer of Lamentations captures this important thought: “Great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:23). This is the thing that we all need to hear when it hurts: “God is faithful.”

The journey won’t be easy, but dealing with deep-seated sin has never been easy. And if you are willing to deal with the pain, and find answers in the right places; you just might find that hope has been waiting for you all along.

Whether you struggle with depression, have had thoughts of suicide, or are simply tired of your own sin, be encouraged! You are about to find help where you need it the most—during the daily battles when it hurts.

“When it Hurts” Overview:

Sin Hurts

Lord, help me deal with the real issues.

What are the real issues, and where is your hurt coming from?

Pain Persists

Lord, help the pain go away.

Day after day, the pain won’t go away. What do I do with the pain?

God Hears

Lord, hear my cry for help.

There is a God who hears, and He is faithful to listen to your cries for help.

Hope Heals

Lord, heal my hurt.

Hope is the greatest healer of a heavy heart. Today, every student can find hope in God.

Why do we need to find help when it hurts?

- **Restore.** In the middle of pain, God feels distant. (Job 42:5)
- **Comfort.** Students must gain comfort from God so that they can, in turn, learn how to comfort others who are hurting. (2 Corinthians 1:3–5)
- **Growth.** Overcoming hurt grows us in the deepest way. (James 1:2–4)
- **Faith and Trust.** When we don't know why and we can't figure out how, sometimes we just need the faith to trust God in all things. (Romans 8:28–29)
- **Help.** Sometimes we just need to know that God can provide help and peace to our hearts and minds when we need it the most. (Philippians 4:7)

Lesson 1

Sin Hurts

Lord, help me deal with the real issues.

Introduction:

In the Old Testament is an ancient story with a modern-day message about what to do when it hurts: the book of Lamentations (a word that means “cry of lament” or “to mourn”). There is no one who is more equipped to help hurting people than Jeremiah, the Old Testament writer and prophet who had the nickname “The Weeping Prophet.”

Group Prayer:

Let’s begin in prayer and ask God to help us to deal with the real issues.

Intro Story:

Sarah struggled as a teenager. She never thought she measured up to other girls. When she looked in the mirror, she felt that something was missing, but could not put her finger on it; deep inside, she hurt. She did her best to hide her pain from others. She looked forward to Sunday services and to youth group, but when she read the Bible, she felt empty. A couple of times, she even contemplated suicide.

Sarah would occasionally go out with any guy who expressed an interest in her. Although she knew this wasn’t a good idea, it helped deaden the pain; she justified her bad choices. After graduating from high school, Sarah stopped going to church altogether.



Group Discussion:

- What would you say to Sarah today if she were in your small group?
- Is there a fault in this story? Who is to blame?
 - Are Sarah’s parents to blame?
 - Is Sarah’s youth group to blame?
 - Is Sarah to blame?
 - Is God to blame?
- Does anyone in here relate to Sarah’s story? How so?

In the church, we have a big problem. We have youth groups filled with students who are dealing with the pain and hurt of broken families and hidden sin. Satan is winning the battle for the heart. Loneliness is at an all-

time high, even when the ability to reach out to others is at our fingertips.

In the church, we need a big assumption: The Bible has an answer to the hurts and pains that we feel, and it can help each one of us today because of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

So whether you struggle with depression, have had thoughts of suicide, or are simply tired of your own sin, be encouraged! You are about to find help where you need it the most: during the daily battles. When it hurts.

Who wrote the book of Lamentations?

Jeremiah was only about 17 years old when God called him to preach. Jeremiah is known as “the weeping prophet” because he witnessed the fall of Jerusalem. The people’s stubborn hearts brought on God’s holy judgment, because they had rejected the truth and refused to repent.

Over the years, Jeremiah’s constant loneliness and isolation finally got the best of him, and he became discouraged. The consistent command of God to preach an unpopular message caused him great mental anguish. The outpouring of all those emotions erupted as the people of Jerusalem were carried off by the Babylonians. He records those emotions in the book called **Lamentations**.

Why is Lamentations so important today?

Lamentations paints a picture of a man of God (Jeremiah) puzzling over the evil and suffering that exists in the world. He lamented a tragedy entirely of the people’s own making (they experienced the judgment of a holy God, and the results were devastating).

At the heart of this book, at the center of this lament over the effects of sin in the world, there are a few verses devoted to hope in the Lord (Lamentations 3:22–25). This statement of faith, which stands strong in the midst of the surrounding darkness, shines as a beacon to all those who are suffering under the consequences of their own sin and disobedience.

What is the goal for each person in this study?

Lamentations reminds us of the importance of not only mourning over our sin, but of asking the Lord for His forgiveness when we fail Him. Much of Jeremiah’s poetry in the book concerns itself with the fallen bricks and cracking mortar of the falling city.

- Do you see any of that destroyed city in your own life?
- Are you mourning over the sin that has brought you to this point?
- Do you feel overrun by an outside power?
- Are you in need of some hope from the Lord?

 **Group Activity:** (7–12 min.) Go to Assignment #1, at the end of the lesson, and take the group survey.

- Please do not write your name on the survey.
- Please be honest with your answers.
- Please respect the answers of others.

Results

- Can the group agree to keep conversations confidential?
- What are people in your group struggling with?
- What issues do we need to pray about?

 **Group Activity:** (5–10 min.) In the Book of Lamentations, you will be amazed at the words Jeremiah uses to describe the loneliness and pain that he saw in people’s lives. Go to Assignment #2, use sheet for answers.

- **Split your group into 3 smaller groups.**
- **Give each group a section of Lamentations 1.**
 - Verses 1–7
 - Verses 8–15
 - Verses 16–22
- **Have each group highlight all the references of anything negative.**
 - **Examples:**
 - 1:1 – “How deserted lies the city ...”
 - 1:9 – “... there was none to comfort her ...”
 - 1:19 – “I called to my allies, but they betrayed me ...”
- **Allow time for each group to share their findings.**

 **Group Discussion:**

- What words and images describe the misery that Jeremiah was experiencing?

- Lamentations 1:8 is a key verse that explains the truth about the situation. According to this verse, what was the cause for all this suffering and hurt?
- What were the people doing that made God so angry with them?
- Lamentations 1:16 is the second key verse that tells the truth about the situation. According to this verse, what was the cause for all this suffering and these hurt?
- What do you think God was trying to teach the people of Jerusalem?

Taking the Discussion Further:

- Look at some of the issues mentioned in the survey from Assignment #1.
 - Which one of those issues that the group mentioned are brought about by sin in the heart?
 - What are some issues that people in the group are dealing with that are a part of situations that they cannot control?
- Can you share a time when you knew that you were experiencing the consequences for a sin you committed, or a bad choice you made?

 **Lesson Big Idea:** Sometimes, our hurt comes from our own sin and separation from God. Other times, our hurt comes from situations we cannot control. In addition, the feelings associated with the pain we feel can sometimes deceive us and keep us from seeing the truth of the situation.

Responding in Prayer

As the group time ends, take these things to the Lord in prayer.

- Ask God for help over areas of hurt that are brought on directly because of sin in our life.
- Ask God for help over areas of hurt that are outside of our control.

Taking It Home: Practical Stuff to Do During the Week

- Optional Assignment #3 – Discipline of God vs. Judgment (Punishment) of God

Websites that offer help outside of class time:

- <https://www.hopefaithprayer.com/scriptures/scriptures-against-suicide/>
- <http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/life-issues/challenges/mental-and-emotional-issues/help-for-the-suicidal>
- <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/life-and-relationships/emotions/to-the-depressed-christian.html>

When it Hurts | Lamentations Assignment #1 – Personal Survey

Instructions:

- Please do not write your name on the survey.
- Please be honest.
- Please respect the answers of others.
- Warning: Some people may have been hurt beyond your imagination. So if this survey is easy for you, please remember, it may be painful for others.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how are you doing with these things?
(1 = never have an issue / 10 = always have an issue)

_____ Depression
_____ Suicide
_____ Hidden Sin
_____ Family Issues
_____ Loneliness
_____ Feeling Happy
_____ Weight Issues

2. If you could talk about one issue in this study that hurts, what would it be?

3. If you could get rid of one issue in your life, what would it be?

4. Do you feel like this small group is a safe place to talk about issues?
Why or why not?

5. Do you need immediate help with something, feel that you are in danger in your home, or need help with issues at school or on social media? _____

(Note: You can leave this blank, and then stay after group to discuss with your leader if you want.)

When it Hurts | Lamentations

Assignment #2 – Group Observations of Lamentations 1

Instructions:

- As a group, write out all of the negative things that are happening in the chapter.
- List betrayals, tears, and suffering, and note the verses where you see those things.
- **Examples:**
 - 1:1 – How deserted lies the city
 - 1:9 – there was none to comfort her
 - 1:19 – I called to my allies, but they betrayed me

Chapter 1:

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When it Hurts | Lamentations

Assignment #3 – Discipline Vs. Judgment or Punishment

Instructions:

- In the first group lesson, we talked about dealing with hurt that is caused by two things:
 - Our own sin
 - Situations beyond our control
- In this optional activity, we'll talk briefly about the difference between the judgment of God and the discipline of God.

Discipline vs. Punishment (Judgment)

- The Goal of Punishment: To inflict penalty for an offense.
- The Goal of Discipline: To train for correction and maturity.

The Ultimate Goal:

- Punishment: Receiving justice and consequence due for an offence.
- Discipline: To lovingly correct a person so that they will avoid sin in the future.

Read Hebrews 12:7–13.

1. According to the verses, God disciplines His sons. How is that discipline in the passage different than judgment?
2. The illustration used in this passage is one of a parent-child relationship. Why do parents discipline their children?
3. What is the goal of punishment?
4. In Hebrews 12:11, it talks about something that discipline produces. What is it and why is it so valuable?