

Warm-Up Question

1. How were you disciplined as a child? (time out, spanking etc.)
Share a time you did something wrong, got caught and were punished. Do you feel the punishment was appropriate? Too harsh? Too lenient?
2. If you have witnessed a full eclipse of the sun, describe what you thought and emotions you felt as the atmosphere changed from full sun to complete darkness and back to full sun.

Or Activity

Before the group arrives, hide an object somewhere in the room (a Bible, water bottle, etc.) When the group arrives and you are ready, ask for a volunteer to go on a search for the object.

Ask: How confident are you can find the object? (let them answer)

Then, blindfold the volunteer.

Ask: Now, how high are your hopes that you will find it in the dark? (let them answer)

Say: Because I am a merciful host, I will provide clear directions! Give clear verbal clues so they can easily find the object. (hot, cold, turn left etc.)

This little game helps segue into Lamentations 3. Even through the darkest times in our lives, God directs our path as we listen to His voice. Great is His faithfulness.

Can you relate?

Jerusalem sits in devastating ruins as her people, the chosen nation of Israel, faced the painful wrath the prophet Jeremiah promised would come if they did not turn away from wickedness and return to God. In the midst of this dark and dire situation shines a beacon of hope, as Jeremiah describes a restorative remedy by a merciful, faithful God who pours out His loving-kindness to those who seek Him.

1. In Lamentations 3, Jeremiah switches from corporate to individual voice. *"I am the man who has seen affliction..."* he begins, and then continues to describe his woefully bitter personal circumstance, demonstrating that amid the nation's vast suffering, each individual hurts on a deeply personal level.

Discuss and describe a few corporate or national events (here or abroad, current or historical) that touched you on a personal level, and why it carried such an impact.

2. The profound suffering Jeremiah described led to a dramatic proclamation. Read aloud the differing versions of Lamentations 3:18:

“So I say, “My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD.” NIV

“So I say, “My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD.” ESV

“And I said, “My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD.” KJV

“So I say, “My strength has failed, and so has my hope from the LORD.” NASB

Webster’s Dictionary

hope - *to cherish a desire with anticipation; to want something to happen or be true*

Blue Letter Bible

Lam. 3:18 **hope** - *tôhelet. Expectation*

What does it mean to ‘lose hope?’

Describe a time in your life when your strength, endurance, and hope dissipated in the face of suffering. Looking back, what would you have done differently, if anything?

Did this experience strengthen or weaken your faith? Explain.

How did you make it through that season with your faith in God intact?

3. Lamentations 3:21-24 is a light switch moment. After describing horrific circumstances and the darkness in which he dwelt, Jeremiah turns and shows the road back to restored hope.

“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,

his mercies never come to an end;

they are new every morning;

Great is Your faithfulness

The LORD is my portion”, says me soul,

“therefore I will have hope in him.” (3:21-24)

To where specifically did Jeremiah intentionally point his thoughts and how did this lead to hope restored?

How easy is it for you to grasp the truth that God’s mercies never, ever end – that every bitter and sweet circumstance, even His justice upon our lives, carries the full and loving mercies of God?

Can you share a time you remembered God's merciful character, leading you to hope during a dark season?

Why is this spiritual practice of remembrance crucial especially when facing suffering and hardship?

Describe the experience between relying on God's help during suffering and leaning on your own abilities. Have you experienced either? Both?

4. After intentional focus on the merciful, faithful character of God amid suffering, the prophet enjoys restored hope and then turns to help others out of the darkness. All is not lost. From 3:40-41, what precise actions does the prophet exhort?

Describe the necessity and importance of these disciplines in the life of a believer.

Live it Out

- As a group (or as the leader) summarize Lamentations 3 into a few sentences in order to be prepared to share with someone who is in a season of suffering.
- Discuss ways you plan this week to intentionally focus your thoughts on God in each and every circumstance He brings your way.

- Perhaps begin to tell God throughout the day as often as possible: Great is Your Faithfulness.

- Perhaps memorize Lamentations 3:22-24 and pray this truth every morning as you begin your day.

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning.*

Great is Your faithfulness.

The LORD is my portion", says my soul,

"therefore I will have hope in him." (3:21-24)

- The beautiful hymn Great is Thy Faithfulness was not penned after a profound experience, rather a lifestyle of trusting God amid the bitter and the sweet. If you like, Google the link below to read the story behind the words of this song.
- End your time today worshiping together to this beautiful hymn.

<https://www.thegospelforum.com/blog/behind-the-hymn-great-is-thy-faithfulness>

google: **Carrie Underwood - Great Is Thy Faithfulness (Official Audio Video)**

Encourage your group to commit time praying for and encouraging each other, meeting one another's needs and fellowshiping together. Encourage them to continue to meet and to return together at the next scheduled gathering.