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BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS SIN FEAR
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PAIN GRIEF WORRY ANGER SORROW

RESTORE

GOD'S HOPE IN A HURTING WORLD

Study Guide

HOPE FAITH PEACE LOVE HELP
TRUST CONFIDENCE JOY COMFORT
CONTENTMENT RELIEF CARE QUIET

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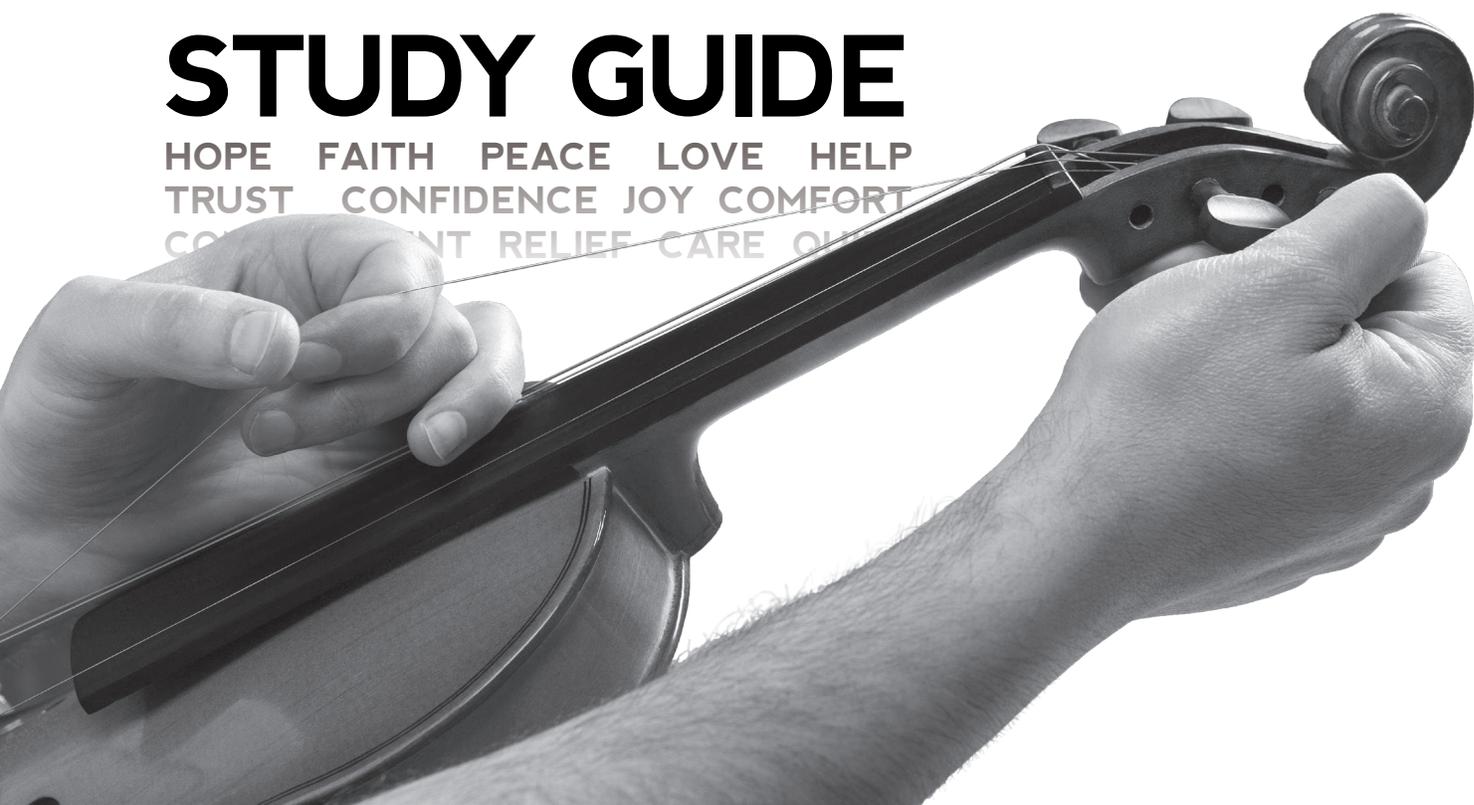
RESTORE

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PASTOR TIM LOVEGROVE

STUDY GUIDE

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**Restore: God’s Hope in a Hurting World, Study Guide
by Pastor Tim Lovegrove**

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Week 1

An honest look at a hurting world

The Bible claims to be the Word of God to man. If this is true, then we expect the Bible to provide very realistic descriptions of the hurting world in which we all live. Surely an all-knowing God would understand the true condition of His creation and speak openly about it. In this first week we'll listen to the Bible's honest descriptions of the brokenness and discover that God truly is listening and caring. But we will also find our first hints that God can do more than listen and care:

He can **RESTORE**.

When you see the “Extra!” symbol, it means there's related bonus content in the Extra Material section at the end of the workbook, starting at page 149.

Extra!

Week 1, Day 1

Cries from a hurting world

The Bible is full of realistic, raw, honest cries from a hurting world. Many are prayers to God; others are cries to oneself or others. The list below provides just a sample of these cries:

Extra!

You, LORD, have abandoned your people. (ISAIAH 2:6)

Open your eyes, O LORD, and see. (ISAIAH 37:17)

Let [God] be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it. (ISAIAH 5:19, ESV)

Turn away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me. (ISAIAH 22:4)

Do something, LORD. (JEREMIAH 14:7)

[LORD], why are you like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who stays only a night? (JEREMIAH 14:8)

[LORD], why should you be like a man confused, like a mighty warrior who cannot save? (JEREMIAH 14:9, ESV)

[LORD], do not leave us. (JEREMIAH 14:9, ESV)

Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD. (ISAIAH 26:17, ESV)

[LORD], have you utterly rejected [us]? Does your soul loathe [us]? (JEREMIAH 14:19, ESV)

We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror. (JEREMIAH 14:19, ESV)

Cursed be the day on which I was born! (JEREMIAH 20:14, ESV)

Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame? (JEREMIAH 20:18, ESV)

The LORD has added sorrow to my pain. I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest. (JEREMIAH 45:3, ESV)

Surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long. (LAMENTATIONS 3:3, ESV)

He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship.
(LAMENTATIONS 3:5)

My body is racked with pain. (ISAIAH 21:3)

I am staggered by what I hear, I am bewildered by what I see. (ISAIAH 21:3)

What misery is mine! (MICAH 7:1)

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? (HABAKKUK 1:2, ESV)

Take away our disgrace! (ISAIAH 4:1)

[LORD], why do you tolerate wrongdoing? (HABAKKUK 1:3)

And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape. (MALACHI 3:15, ESV)

Do any of these cries sound like something you have ever felt or said?

Which of these reflect something you can't imagine yourself thinking or saying?

Have you known other people who expressed cries like these?

Week 1, Day 2

Introducing Israel's prophets

RESTORE is a study taken from portions of one particular section of the Bible that contains the messages of Israel's prophets. Why? Because, as we'll see in today's lesson, the prophets' messages are some of the most raw and brutally honest sections of the Bible. Each of the cries you considered on Day 1 came from the messages of those prophets.

Who were these prophets?

God had chosen the nation of Israel to be His special chosen people. He spoke to them through prophets, so that the people of His nation might come to know Him. "The essential idea in the word [prophet] is that of authorized spokesman."¹ Sometimes the prophets brought messages of warning and rebuke; sometimes they brought messages of hope and encouragement. Most prophets combined both types of messages together.

This study will focus on the messages of the prophets who lived in the period from 800 to 400 years before Jesus (there were other prophets before and after this). You'll recognize some of their names, while others may be unfamiliar: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Why does the pain of a hurting world come up so frequently in their messages?

During the centuries when these prophets spoke for God, the people of the nation of Israel lived through political uprisings, brutal wars, plagues, famines, and even national exile. Their world was often a terrible and miserable place:

Disaster on disaster is proclaimed, for the whole land is devastated.
(JEREMIAH 4:20, NASB)

They were helpless to stop the cycle of corrupt governments, abusive dictators, and crooked religious leaders. They were often downtrodden, mistreated, and miserable. They sometimes lived in such fear that they did not even dare to trust their own family members. They were hurting people, and the prophets took very seriously their commission from God to restore His people to Himself. They said what needed to be said with clarity and power, with vivid illustrations and heart-wrenching descriptions. They "said it like it is," but with hearts of compassion and eyes full of tears because they were speaking to their own people whom they loved:

"My eyes flow with rivers of tears." (LAMENTATIONS 3:48, ESV)

¹ Culver, R. D. (1999). 1277 nābī'. In *Theological wordbook of the Old Testament* (Electronic ed.) (R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke, Eds.). Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press.

Not only were the people hurting, but the prophets themselves experienced the same suffering. Some were beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and dragged to foreign countries. Others were slandered, forbidden to marry, widowed, shamed, or cheated on. Some writhed in pain, endured the murder of their companions, and wanted to die (Jeremiah 20:2; 37:14; 38:1-6; 43:1-7; Amos 7:10; Jeremiah 16:2; Ezekiel 24:15-18; Isaiah 20:2-6; Hosea 2:5; Jeremiah 4:19; 26:20-23; Jonah 4:8).

You might be thinking, “This is really depressing! Why would I want to listen to them?” We’ll discover that the challenges faced by the prophets provide the backdrop for some of the most powerful portrayals of hope in the Bible. When these prophets promised a day when sorrow and sighing would flee away, it was just as meaningful for them as for their audience. After tomorrow’s lesson, we won’t be focused upon the difficulties of their lives. Instead, we’ll focus the rest of the study on the vivid message of restoration that God sent through them.

They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

ISAIAH 51:11, NASB

Week 1, Day 3

What went wrong?

“The world has become a frightful place under the rule of sin. The magnificent creation that once elicited the seven-fold ‘it is good’ has become a house of horrors.”¹

The earth staggers like a drunken man; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again. (ISAIAH 24:20, ESV)

Those are not very uplifting or encouraging quotes—but don’t they describe the real world we see around us? God’s creation, which He declared to be good, has now been vandalized by sinful mankind. “The hard or negative [life events] will fit into one of two categories: sin or suffering. Sin encompasses those actions, beliefs, and emotions that are contrary to God’s Word or character. Suffering includes the tragic and deteriorative effects of living in a fallen world, as well as the consequences of other’s sin against you.”² As you read below from some of the prophets’ descriptions of this vandalism, watch for parallels to the struggles you have experienced in your life, or have observed in the lives of others. **List in the margin some of the key parallels that you observe:**

Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” (ZECHARIAH 7:9-10, ESV)

“What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?” declares the Lord GOD of hosts. (ISAIAH 3:15, ESV)

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. (ISAIAH 10:1-2)

They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink water in dismay. In this way her land will be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it. (EZEKIEL 12:19, ESV)

Therefore deliver up their children to famine; give them over to the power of the sword; let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be struck down by the sword in battle. (JEREMIAH 18:21, ESV)

¹ Holcomb, J., & Holcomb, L. (2011). *Rid of my disgrace: Hope and healing for victims of sexual assault* (pp. 175-176). Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway.

² Hambrick, B. (2012). *God’s attributes: Rest for life’s struggles* (p. 8, 12). Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing.

The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. . . . Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, "Thus says the Lord GOD," when the LORD has not spoken. (EZEKIEL 22:25-28, ESV)

No longer will the people of Israel have malicious neighbors who are painful briars and sharp thorns. (EZEKIEL 28:24)

You became . . . the object of people's malicious talk and slander. (EZEKIEL 36:3)

For the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. (MICAH 7:6, ESV)

Your relatives, members of your own family—even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you. (JEREMIAH 12:6)

As for you, son of man, groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief. (EZEKIEL 21:6, ESV)

You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. (HAGGAI 1:6, ESV)

The people's joy is withered away. (JOEL 1:12)

While none of those descriptions are enjoyable to read, there is a glimpse of hope in the realization that the Bible speaks so honestly about real life. This gives us confidence that the Bible will not offer naïve sentimentality, but realistic hope.

Week 1, Day 4

The God who listens and cares

The word “god” might cause some to imagine a being who is distant and disinterested in our little (or even big) troubles. But this is not the God who reveals Himself in the Bible. “The biblical writers chose terms to make us think of God as not only absolutely sovereign, but also as a personal, emotional, responding, interacting God.”¹

What do we learn about God from the following verses?

In all [Israel’s] distress he [the LORD] too was distressed. (ISAIAH 63:9)

This is what the LORD says: . . . “My heart yearns for [Israel].” (JEREMIAH 31:20)

“How can I give you up? . . . My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused.” (HOSEA 11:8)

We also learn from the prophets that God does not take advantage of the hurting. Here is what the prophets foretold about God’s servant Jesus (Isaiah 42:3):

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

Too often, human authorities in government, religion, education, or the family prey on the weak and vulnerable. The reed that is already bruised they break; the wick that is already smoldering they completely snuff out. But God is not like this. Though He has ultimate authority, He actually *draws near* to the hurting. Even people who don’t prey on us sometimes shy away from us when we are hurting, leaving us isolated and alone. But God neither takes advantage of nor shies away from the hurting. **In the following passages, mark the words that describe the kind of people to whom God draws near:**

Extra!

For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.” (ISAIAH 57:15)

“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.” (ISAIAH 66:2)

¹ Carson, D. (2006). *How long, O Lord?: Reflections on suffering and evil* (2nd ed., p. 70). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (PSALM 34:18)

So far today, we've learned that God cares deeply about our suffering and draws near to us in our suffering. Let's go one step further: God listens to us in our suffering. God is listening. There may be many times when we feel like He is not listening (remember the prayers we saw on Day 1), and times when our prayers aren't very fancy or beautiful (Day 1 again!). Yet the prophets assure us that God listens to those who cry to Him:

The LORD longs to be gracious to you. . . . How gracious he will be when you cry for help! (ISAIAH 30:18-19)

The prophets tell us of the time when a king of Israel named Hezekiah received a threatening letter from the king of an empire stronger than his. The letter promised to destroy Hezekiah's kingdom completely. Here is what Hezekiah did:

Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. (ISAIAH 37:14, NASB)

What Hezekiah did quite literally we should do figuratively (we might even do it literally sometimes!): we can bring all of our problems and lay them out before the Lord. There is no need to hide from the God who knows all things and promises His care for us. He will be gracious with us even when our prayers aren't fancy and beautiful; even when our prayers are raw, emotional, illogical, distracted, or even angry. We can bring our sufferings and heart-aches and confusions to Him.

What if you were to “spread it all out” before the LORD today? Try to write out a prayer to Him:

Week 1, Day 5

The God who restores

As we learned yesterday, God listens and cares. Having someone to listen and care is wonderful, and these simple actions are some of the most helpful things we can do when others are hurting. Even if we are powerless to do anything else to help them, we often help more than we realize by simply listening and caring.

Hopefully it is encouraging for you to know that God Himself listens and cares, especially if your view of God has been quite different. But because He is God, He can do much more than just listen and care. He can also *restore*. This is exactly what we desperately wish we could do for others when they are hurting: make everything better! God really does have such power. Now this certainly raises a big question: if He has such power, why isn't He using it to fix all of our problems today? That's a question we'll be exploring throughout this course. But it is important for us to begin by hearing God's promises that He is a God who restores, and we can hear those promises through the prophets. We're studying the prophets partly because they were suffering people who spoke to suffering people. But we're also studying the prophets because they brilliantly portray God's *restoration* promises. We could find about thirty different passages in the prophets' writings referring specifically to Israel's "restoration." Other passages use similar terms such as "rebuilding" or "renewing."

Why was restoration such a major theme for the prophets?

Because, as we've already seen, the nation of Israel was in such desperate need of restoration! The prophets' messages were full of promises from God because Israel desperately needed hope and a future. God promised the literal restoration of the nation of Israel to their land and kingdom, the spiritual restoration of Israel and all other nations, and the ultimate renewal of all things in a new heaven and new earth. Those promises find their fulfillment in and through Jesus.

For the law was given through Moses;
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
(JOHN 1:17, ESV)

God's actions toward us to care, listen, and restore could all be summed up with the word

grace

The grace of God is like a beautiful thread weaving its way through the prophets' promises.

Grace can be found throughout the passages below, which exemplify the prophets' promises of restoration. **Mark the key terms in each of these verses:**

Restore us to yourself, O LORD,
that we may be restored!
Renew our days as of old.
(LAMENTATIONS 5:21, ESV)

"But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,"
declares the LORD, "because you are called an outcast,
Zion for whom no one cares."
(JEREMIAH 30:17)

But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the
stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has
no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.
(JEREMIAH 17:7-8)

LORD, you are the hope of Israel . . . the spring of living water.
Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise.
(JEREMIAH 17:13-14)

Look back up at Jeremiah 17:7-8. If we are like the tree in Jeremiah's illustration, how is God's grace like the water?

"Grace floods in from the outside when hope to change oneself is lost."¹

1 Holcomb & Holcomb, 16

Week 1, Day 6

Taking it to heart

This sixth and final lesson of each week will help us take to heart the things we have learned and prepare to talk about them with others.

Write out the text of one key verse that was especially meaningful for you:

Despite the many difficult verses we considered this week, did you find any sparks of hope?

Do you have any questions or topics you'd like to bring up for discussion at the next session?

One important way to personalize the content of this study is to take the key verses and turn them into prayers. For example, Isaiah 30:18-19 says:

The LORD longs to be gracious to you. . . . How gracious he will be when you cry for help!

You might turn that into a prayer like this: "Dear Lord, I am going to be crying to You for help a lot of times during this course. I believe Your promise that You long to be gracious to me. My cries might not always make sense or sound the right way, but please be gracious to me when I cry for help!" Though we often pray such prayers silently, it is sometimes helpful to thoughtfully write them out. There is a section of this Study Guide set apart for this specific purpose, beginning on page 175. **Can you take any of the key verses from this first week and turn them into prayers to add to that prayer section?**

Week 2

The God of hope and restoration

Last week we learned that the Bible speaks very honestly about this hurting world. Gratefully, we also heard our first hints of the God whom the Bible explains: a God who cares, listens, and can even restore. This week we'll focus on one message from one prophet (Chapter 31 of Jeremiah's prophecies) as we begin to meet that God of hope and catch some glimpses of the glorious restoration He promises!

Week 2, Day 1

God is love

If you had a damaged antique that was a precious family heirloom, you would research very carefully before you entrusted it into the hands of someone else for restoration. Our lives are so much more valuable than a family heirloom, so why should we entrust the restoration of our precious lives to God? The answer to that question begins with God's love.

The phrase "God is love" might seem a bit trite. When we are hurting, we understandably question whether God actually loves us. But God Himself assures us of His love. The prophets use three Hebrew words to portray various aspects of God's love. The general term is *'ahab*. Then *racham* emphasizes compassionate love, while *chesed* emphasizes loyal and kind love.

Chesed was an especially precious word to the Jewish people. Entire songs in the Hebrew hymnal (the Psalms) celebrate God's *chesed* for His people. All of us want to be the recipients of love that is deeply kind and intensely loyal!

Extra!

Let's listen as the prophets use these key words to explain God's love to His people:

I have loved you [**'ahab**] with an everlasting love [**'ahab**]; therefore I have continued my faithfulness [**chesed**] to you. (JEREMIAH 31:3, ESV)

Extra!

"For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love [**chesed**] shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion [**racham**] on you. (ISAIAH 54:10)

I will recount the steadfast love [**chesed**] of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion [**racham**], according to the abundance of his steadfast love [**chesed**]. (ISAIAH 63:7, ESV)

Note that phrase "the abundance of his steadfast love"! It's a phrase the prophets use repeatedly to help us understand that God's love is overflowing, great, and more than enough for us. Here is another very important use of the phrase:

But, though he cause grief, he will have compassion [**racham**] according to the abundance of his steadfast love [**chesed**]. (LAMENTATIONS 3:32, ESV)

Even if God causes grief in our lives, that does not mean His love and the abundance of His steadfast love for us has come to an end!

The steadfast love [**chesed**] of the LORD never ceases; his mercies [**racham**] never come to an end. (LAMENTATIONS 3:22, ESV)

God's love is what assures us of His forgiveness:

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love [**chesed**]. He will again have compassion [**racham**] on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. (MICAH 7:18-19, ESV)

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion [**racham**] on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (ISAIAH 55:7, ESV)

The word “abundantly” shows up again! God's *abundant* love is what assures us that He will *abundantly* pardon.

God's love also assures us that He has not forgotten us:

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! for the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion [**racham**] on his afflicted. . . . [The LORD says,] “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion [**racham**] on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.” (ISAIAH 49:13, 15, ESV)

His love is abundant and forgiving and faithful because it is *free*. He says:

I will heal their apostasy; I will love [**ahab**] them freely, for my anger has turned from them. (HOSEA 14:4)

It might seem strange to celebrate the “freeness” of God's love—but have you ever been loved by someone who only loved you because of what they could get out of you? That is not true love, and God is not like that. Though we have very little to offer God, and nothing to impress Him or make Him want to love us, He loves us *freely*. That's humbling, but it is the best kind of love. Because He loves us freely, we can be certain His love is truly everlasting. Loyalty is one of love's greatest gifts, and God guarantees His loyal love for His people.

Can you see any evidences of God's love in your life right now? If not, are you willing to ask God to help you see them?

I deeply need God. God deeply loves me. What an amazing combination!

Week 2, Day 3

God promises the perfect Shepherd

On Day 1 of this week, we learned that God promises to love His people “with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3). Yesterday we learned that He assures His people He is their Father (31:9). The final phrase we’ll consider from Jeremiah 31 comes in verse 10:

[The LORD] will watch over his flock like a shepherd.

Here is what the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah said:

“You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God,”
declares the Sovereign LORD.

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

(EZEKIEL 34:31; ISAIAH 40:11)

I love those terms “my sheep” and “my pasture.” God is not just acting as a shepherd to care for a flock that belongs to someone else: He claims us as His own and shepherds us Himself. While Isaiah 40:11 paints a beautiful picture of a gentle shepherd, we realize that a shepherd must also be strong. This is exactly what Isaiah described just two verses earlier: “the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm” (Isaiah 40:9). What a combination: the tenderness that holds a lamb close to His heart, and the power of a sovereign ruler!

Yet the men who shepherded Israel on God’s behalf (kings, priests, government officials, and prophets) were sometimes very poor shepherds. God often rebuked these terrible shepherds, and promised to send a perfect shepherd who would not fail as they had failed. We can actually discover the character of that perfect Shepherd by studying God’s rebukes of the poor shepherds, and then considering the opposite. **Use the chart below to create a list of the characteristics of God’s perfect Shepherd.**

Characteristics of the poor shepherds	The opposite: characteristics of the perfect Shepherd
Lack understanding	
Turn their own way, desert the sheep	
Seek their own gain, only take care of themselves	
Scatter the flock	
Lead them astray	
Don't care for the flock	
Their sheep are afraid or terrified	

Their sheep are missing, lost, wandering	
Their sheep are plundered	
Their sheep are oppressed	
Don't strengthen the weak	
Don't heal the sick	
Don't bind up the injured	
Don't bring back the strays	
Don't search for the lost	
Rule them harshly and brutally	
Don't feed them	

(Isaiah 56:11; Jeremiah 23:1-4; 50:6; Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 10:2; 11:16-17)

We could summarize all that God promises in one phrase: “I will give you shepherds after my own heart” (Jeremiah 3:15, *ESV*). God promised shepherds who would demonstrate His loving, loyal, caring, kind, compassionate, fatherly heart! Ultimately, this promise would be fulfilled in one perfect Shepherd:

I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them. This is the name by which he will be called:

The LORD our Righteous Savior.

(EZEKIEL 34:23; JEREMIAH 23:1-6)

Extra!

This promise was about a descendant of David (a king from David’s family) who would be the perfect Shepherd. The Old Testament ended with God’s people still waiting for the fulfillment of this promise. But centuries later the Shepherd King Jesus did come, and today He is available for you. **What role do you need a perfect shepherd to play in your life right now?**

The LORD is my shepherd . . . He restores my soul.

PSALM 23:1, 3, NASB

Week 3

The Mighty God

In Week 1, we sought to look honestly at the ugly realities of this broken world. We learned that Israel's prophets were hurting people living among hurting people. This brokenness has continued down through the centuries, and today our world needs restoration more than ever. The brokenness has touched our own lives in many ways, and *we* need restoration.

In Week 2, we considered the type of person to whom we would want to entrust our restoration. We discovered that God is a loving father with the heart of a shepherd, and we considered many of His promises of restoration.

But who could God send to fulfill these promises? Who can deal with terrible evil and handle the brokenness of billions of lives? Who is sufficient to accomplish this restoration? Even Israel's greatest leaders like Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and David were woefully insufficient. The prophets kept rebuking ineffective leaders and promising someone far greater. Isaiah promised that the Restorer sent by God would have these amazing qualifications:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor

Mighty God

Everlasting Father
Prince of Peace

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

(ISAIAH 9:6-7)

The promise sounded almost like a mystery. How could a child also reign on David's throne? How could a son also be "Mighty God" and "Everlasting Father"? But the mystery found its solution in Jesus, who came as the fulfillment of all that the prophets promised.

What we need is restoration. *Who* we need is Jesus.

In the rest of this course, we'll study the character of Jesus from Isaiah 9:6-7, though we won't exactly follow the order that Isaiah used (you might want to take a look back at the Table of Contents). We'll begin this week by considering how Jesus is the Mighty God.

Hurting people living in a broken world need a Mighty God.

Week 8, Day 5

The hope of renewal

We've been using the "back country" to illustrate the difficulty of living in this broken world and our need for an expert guide. Yesterday we considered the importance of listening to our Guide. We must also be alert for unhelpful guides who direct us to follow dangerous paths. In other words, we live in a world full of poor counsel. The prophets used examples from their own time:

The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give senseless advice. The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists. Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. (ISAIAH 19:11, 3; 47:13)

For us, poor counsel might come from an angry spouse who tells us we are worthless, or a friend who urges us to abandon our marriage simply because it's challenging. We could give many other examples of how family, media, coworkers, and other sources feed us unhealthy counsel. But we also realize that we often receive poor counsel when we listen to ourselves! "Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes" (Isaiah 5:21). My favorite expression regarding this from the prophets is a verse we looked at earlier, Isaiah 47:10:

Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, "I am, and there is none besides me."

Only Yahweh is the great "I am" who is self-sufficient and perfectly wise! When I start to trust in my own counsel, God warns me: "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26, NASB).

Once we begin to recognize some of the poor counsel we have received from the media, family members, coworkers, and even our own thinking, we may well be able to agree with what Isaiah said (it's actually the first sentence in Isaiah 47:13, which we looked at above):

All the counsel you have received has only worn you out!

Most of us know just what Isaiah is talking about! Our jumbled thinking stresses us out, keeps us up at night, and confuses us. We have certain thoughts that run through our minds over and over again, but we can't seem to get rid of them. Our thinking is often a jumble of

I HATE MY LIFE
HE HAS FORGIVEN ME
I CAN DO IT MYSELF
MY LIFE IS TOO MESSED UP
I AM FORGIVEN
THERE IS NOTHING TO LIVE FOR
HE CAN BRING BEAUTY OUT OF ASHES
I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST
I'M A PRETTY GOOD PERSON
IF ONLY EVERYONE ELSE WOULD LISTEN TO ME!
WITHOUT JESUS I CAN'T DO ANYTHING
NO ONE CARES ABOUT ME
GOD MUST BE MAD AT ME
I CAN NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY LONGER

THIS GRIEF IS KILLING ME
 YAHWEH IS ALL THAT I NEED
GOD HAS PURPOSES FOR ME
 EVERYONE IS DISAPPOINTED WITH ME
MAYBE I AM WORTHLESS
GOD COMPLETELY ACCEPTS ME BECAUSE OF JESUS
THERE IS HOPE AND A FUTURE
 I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH
 GOD CAN RENEW MY STRENGTH
 IF I COULD JUST SPEAK MY MIND, I'D TELL THEM. . .
 GOD CAN BRING GOOD EVEN OUT OF EVIL
WHY WON'T GOD LISTEN TO ME?
 I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE SAID THAT!
 IF ONLY I HAD MORE MONEY
 NO ONE WOULD MISS ME
 I AM PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT

truth and falsehood, wisdom and foolishness, that might look something like the “thought map” in the middle of these pages. If your thinking is tangled like that, hear this good news about the Wonderful Counselor: He can “renew” your thinking, making it new again. *You don't have to be trapped in wrong thinking.* The process might be gradual, since some false thinking can be very deeply ingrained. But He is powerful enough to renew your mind; as you soak yourself in God's truth, the Wonderful Counselor will do it! Here is one of the most hope-giving phrases in Scripture:

Do not be conformed to this world,
 but be transformed by the renewing
 of your mind. (ROMANS 12:2, NASB)

The renewing of your mind can bring transformation! I once had a teacher who regularly reminded us that “how you think determines how you live.” Your thinking may be out of control, but God is bigger! He can renew your mind, and *that* will transform your life.

Could you use the space below and **make your own “thought map” like the one to the left? Write down some of the thoughts—positive or negative—that run through your mind over and over again.** As you see the tangled thoughts, would you pray to the Wonderful Counselor and seek His Word to transform you by renewing your mind?

Week 10

Creating your spiritual care plan

As we reach the end of this study, we face the question: “What happens next?” Will this Study Guide get placed on a shelf somewhere and forgotten? Or will the truths we discovered continue to have an impact?

Let’s consider an illustration that might help: physical health. Most people want to be healthy, and many people are looking for that one diet or health secret that will make all the difference. Even if we aren’t expecting to find the one perfect secret, the marketers know that all of us are vulnerable to the promises they put in the ads and on the packaging! None of us would mind finding a simple product or idea that would make us healthy. We’re probably aware, however, that maintaining physical health requires giving balanced attention to many health-related factors: strength, flexibility, cardio, nutrition, sleep, stress management, schedule, cleanliness, and more.

When it comes to spiritual health, something similar is true. None of us would mind finding a spiritual secret or two that would easily solve our problems. You might have even started into this Bible study with some hope that it might be the answer! But God has provided a comprehensive set of tools for our spiritual health, and we should not neglect any of them. If God has provided a full set of tools, we want to have them all available. To use another illustration, if God has provided a full set of battle armor, we want to be wearing all of it! God intends for your life to be surrounded with sources of spiritual encouragement, protection, and nourishment. But if we don’t *plan* to incorporate all those things into our lives, we will neglect them. That is the purpose of this final week’s study: to help you prepare your own personal Spiritual Care Plan.¹

Extra!

You’ll notice that the material this week isn’t broken down into a series of days, like the rest of the study, but is organized around a series of steps to create your plan.

¹ I think I first began using the phrase “spiritual care plan” after reading this book: Brain, P. (2004). *Going the distance: How to stay fit for a lifetime of ministry*. Kingsford, N.S.W.: Matthias Media. I don’t think he uses the exact phrase “spiritual care plan,” but I think the idea should be credited to him because he talks about a “maintenance plan” and “self-care.”

Week 10

Step 1 - Addressing your areas of spiritual need

We'll work through these four steps to work on a spiritual care plan:

Step 1 - Addressing your areas of spiritual need

Step 2 - Planning to personally seek God

Step 3 - Planning to gather with God's family

Step 4 - Planning to bring hope to others

Let's get started with Step 1. This course has been intentionally broad, briefly mentioning a wide variety of "hurts" without focusing extensively on any of them. Along the way, we've probably touched on some things that brought to mind areas of significant struggle or pain in your own life. For example, do any of the following words especially connect with you?

ABUSE
PARANOIA DISCOURAGEMENT
PAIN CODEPENDENCY GAMBLING
GRIEF ABORTION JOBLESSNESS
ANXIETY SELF-LOATHING
LEGAL TROUBLE EATING DISORDERS INFIDELITY
PORNOGRAPHY DISEASE DIVORCE
DEBT MENTAL ILLNESS POVERTY
HATRED DEFILEMENT FEAR ADDICTION
BITTERNESS IMMORALITY DEMONS DOUBT
LONELINESS VIOLENCE DISGRACE
ANGER FORGIVENESS STRESS
INSOMNIA DEPRESSION
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS SHAME
PANIC ATTACKS
ARGUMENTS

Please understand, the purpose of this list is not to label anyone. Not everything in there is sinful, and several of those terms are culturally-popular labels that are used as "catch-alls" to describe a broad range of life challenges. We are all hurting and broken in different ways as we wait for the glorious final restoration that God has promised. In the meantime, we don't need to pretend like everything is okay.

What is the church if not a place where everyone can be honest about brokenness?
What are grace and healing worth if no one needs them?¹

¹ Simpson, A. (2013). *Troubled minds: Mental illness and the church's mission* (p. 180). Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press.



1.1 “There is no attempt in Scripture to whitewash the anguish of God’s people when they undergo suffering. They argue with God, they complain to God, they weep before God. Theirs is not a faith that leads to dry-eyed stoicism, but a faith so robust it wrestles with God.” (Carson, D. (2006). *How long, O Lord?: Reflections on suffering and evil* (2nd ed., p. 67). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.)

1.4 The prophets foretold that Jesus Himself would experience this kind of isolation as people shied away from Him in His suffering: “He was like one from whom men hide their faces.” (Isaiah 53:3)

2.1a This word *chesed* is the key to understanding one of the most famous Old Testament “love stories.” Ruth was a Gentile married to a Jew. Her husband died, as did her brother-in-law and her father-in-law. As a result, her Jewish mother-in-law Naomi was in trouble. That wasn’t necessarily Ruth’s concern—but in loyal love she made it her concern. She was loyal to Naomi and remained with her, even when Naomi moved away from Ruth’s homeland and returned to the land of the Jews. Naomi praised Ruth for her loyal love when she said, “May the Lord show kindness [*chesed*] to you as you have shown it to me.” (Ruth 1:8)

Then Ruth met a man named Boaz. The story that unfolds might be a love story, but what the Bible continues to emphasize is Ruth’s loyal love for Naomi. There are two great acts of loyal love in the book: first, Ruth stays with Naomi even though she does not have to. Second, Ruth marries Boaz. Why did she marry Boaz? The Bible tells us that she married him because he was the kinsman redeemer who was willing to help her mother-in-law. Boaz is amazed that she would marry him—he knows she could have married a much younger man—and so he says in Ruth 3:10, “Your last kindness [*chesed*] is even greater than the first.” Her first act of loyal love to Naomi was to stay with her in her widowhood; her second act of loyal love was even greater—to marry Boaz so that he could rescue Naomi and restore to her what was hers.

Maybe there was a wonderful romance between Ruth and Boaz; we don’t know. But the three times the Bible mentions love in the book of Ruth, it is speaking about Ruth’s loyal love for Naomi. It is certainly a story about lasting loyal love.

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“RESTORE: GOD’S HOPE IN A HURTING WORLD” is a Bible study tool designed to bring strength and comfort to people facing a wide variety of challenges and hurts in this broken world in which we live. It’s based on the messages of the Jewish prophets, who were hurting people bringing God’s hope to hurting people. Whether you are new to Christianity or have extensive Bible knowledge, this study will anchor you in God’s hope and strengthen you to bring hope to others.

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Pastor Tim Lovegrove has been the lead pastor at Grace Bible Church in Menifee, California since 2003. Though he has always been more of a speaker than a writer, he does love to write when he has the opportunity to create tools for personal ministry. He and his wife Kristalyn have been graced with three California babies: Abigail, Katie, and Esther.

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