

# Life Group Lesson

Life Hurts, Christmas Heals • Week of December 11

## Introduction

This is a wonderful time of year, and yet, for many individuals, the season can trigger pain, anxiety and depression. There is the nonstop schedule, endless to-do lists, activities that turn into yelling matches, efforts to appease and satisfy a wish list that go unrecognized by entitled children. There is the unexpected accident or sickness, the blended family dynamics and challenges, not to mention difficult people beyond the walls of your home. Before you know it, life becomes out of control and unmanageable. Sadly, 'tis the season when many turn to wrong coping mechanisms and unhealthy habits as a way to ignore or numb the pain. Life hurts.

While some challenges are out of our control, there are other difficulties we bring on ourselves. How do you cope when life hurts; when pain shows up and your world is turned upside-down? Do you wallow in self-pity: 'Why is this happening to me?' Do you immediately look around for someone to blame or blame God? Throughout the Bible our heroes of faith faced great obstacles and challenges. Yet, instead of focusing on the problem, they chose to see God in the problem. Think about Noah who built an ark before jeering skeptics, Joseph when his brothers sold him into slavery, Moses when he dealt with nearly a million people complaining in the wilderness. Think about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they were thrown into a blazing furnace because they would not bow to a statue of gold.

## Background

No matter how smart and technically advanced we think we have become in this modern culture, the human condition is the same. Will we bow to the pressures and problems, or will we bow to the LORD God who is bigger than our problems? Will we be greedy and guarded during times of hardship, or will we be generous and outward focused regardless of setbacks? In the Old Testament, during Amos' day, the affluent people of Israel had become so indulgent, their drive for pleasure over God had caused them to forget who they were and whose they were, God's people. Amos, a shepherd from the town of Tekoa in Judah (Amos 1:1), was sent by the Lord to declare to them that heaven was taking notice and God saw everything they were doing:

*"The people of Israel have sinned again and again, and I will not let them go unpunished! They sell honorable people for silver and poor people for a pair of sandals. They trample helpless people in the dust and shove the oppressed out of the way. Both father and son sleep with the same woman, corrupting my holy name. At their religious festivals, they lounge in clothing their debtors put up as security. In the house of their god, they drink wine bought with unjust fines... from among all the families on the earth, I have been intimate with you alone. That is why I must punish you for all your sins" (Amos 2:6-8, 3:2).*

## Reading the Text Read Amos 4:1-13

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. What are you going to do about it?
3. How can we help you?

## Reflection

If the people had acknowledged their sin, and instead obeyed the Lord, their lives would have been transformed. But they did not. They continued down the path of rebellion and idolatry, thus, bringing on God's imminent judgment. Eventually (sadly) the wreckage of the people of Israel was due to their own disobedience and rebellion against God. Are you headed down a willful path of disobedience and destruction? Is there something – perhaps bitterness, anger, desire to escape through substance abuse, an unhealthy habit, a toxic relationship – that is causing your attitude toward God to be jaded?

The Lord says, "Turn and repent. I love you and am with you. I am Emmanuel. Invite me into your life and I will show you a better path. Walk with me in *my* direction, a path that leads to life, light, healing, forgiveness, and restoration." No one enjoys pain, yet it is part of life. Pain tells us

something is not right. If you continue to ignore or numb pain, you will only prolong it. Instead of asking 'Why me?' maybe the better question to ask is, "Lord, what are you trying to teach me through this difficult season?" God is with you. He is Emmanuel.

*"For the LORD is the One who shaped the mountains, stirs up the winds, and reveals His thoughts to mankind. He turns the light of dawn into darkness and treads on the heights of the earth. The LORD God of Heaven's Armies is His Name!" (Amos 4:13).*

In Closing—

Discuss proactive steps we can take to maintain a positive attitude during this time of year; like eating right (not eating too much), exercise, fresh air (being outdoors), scheduling enjoyable activities amidst the busy schedule, being with people who love you and add value to your life (like your Life Group).

Also, discuss how being generous and serving others is a wonderful way to keep from becoming too self-focused.

Close in a time of prayer. Pray for one another; focus on *God with you* (not the problem).

### **Close in a Time of Prayer asking:**

**How can I pray for my fellow Life Group participants this week?**

### **One Year Bible Readings**

December 11: Amos 4:1-6:14, Revelation 2:18-3:6, Psalm 130:1-8, Proverbs 29:21-22  
December 12: Amos 7:1-9:15, Revelation 3:7-22, Psalm 131:1-3, Proverbs 29:23  
December 13: Obadiah 1:1-21, Revelation 4:1-11, Psalm 132:1-18, Proverbs 29:24-25  
December 14: Jonah 1:1-4:11, Revelation 5:1-14, Psalm 133:1-3, Proverbs 29:26-27  
December 15: Micah 1:1-4:13, Revelation 6:1-17, Psalm 134:1-3, Proverbs 30:1-4  
December 16: Micah 5:1-7:20, Revelation 7:1-17, Psalm 135:1-21, Proverbs 30:5-6  
December 17: Nahum 1:1-3:19, Revelation 8:1-13, Psalm 136:1-26, Proverbs 30:7-9

# **LIFE HURTS, CHRISTMAS HEALS**

**Text:** Amos 4:1-13

## **Plain Truth:**

We \_\_\_\_\_ present wreckage by choosing to see \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Four steps in overcoming our wreckage by choosing to see God in the problem:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ God.
2. Step away from \_\_\_\_\_ coping mechanisms.
3. We must not \_\_\_\_\_ others to shield our \_\_\_\_\_.
4. We must become \_\_\_\_\_ focused and \_\_\_\_\_ others when life becomes \_\_\_\_\_.

**December 11, 2022**