

SMALL GROUPS

Begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to create a safe space for honest sharing and healing. Remind the group that everything shared stays confidential.

Key Scripture

Matthew 27:26-31 - Jesus' abuse and suffering

Isaiah 53:4-5 - By His wounds we are healed

Ephesians 4:32 - Forgiving as we've been forgiven

Luke 23:34 - Jesus' prayer for His abusers

Main Takeaways

1. Jesus understands abuse - He experienced physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological abuse
2. All abuse is sinful - Not all abuse is criminal, but all abuse is wrong in God's eyes
3. Healing is possible - With God's presence, godly counsel, and safe community, healing can happen
4. You can't heal and hate at the same time - Forgiveness is essential for true healing
5. Scars become testimonies - After resurrection, Jesus still had scars that proved God's healing power

Discussion Questions

Understanding Abuse

1. Why do you think the church has historically struggled to talk openly about abuse?
2. The sermon mentioned four types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual. Were you aware of all these categories? Which one surprised you most?
3. How does knowing that Jesus experienced abuse change your perspective on His ability to understand human suffering?

Personal Reflection

Note: No one should feel pressured to share details. Respect boundaries.

4. Pastor Mack said, "Hurting people hurt people." How have you seen this cycle play out in families or communities?
5. What does it mean to you that "healing is possible"? What barriers make healing difficult?
6. The sermon stated: "You can't heal and hate at the same time." How do you respond to this statement? Is it challenging? Convicting? Hopeful?

Forgiveness & Boundaries

7. Jesus prayed "Father, forgive them" while being crucified. What makes this kind of forgiveness humanly impossible without God's help?
8. Discuss this statement: "Forgiveness is not letting your offender off the hook. It's releasing your offender to God and trusting God to do what's right." How does this definition differ from how culture defines forgiveness?
9. The sermon mentioned that forgiveness doesn't mean removing boundaries. Why are healthy boundaries important even after forgiveness?
10. Read the story of Corrie Ten Boom from the sermon. She prayed, "Jesus, I cannot forgive him. You forgive him through me." When have you needed to pray something similar?

Moving Forward

11. Pastor Mack said, "Your prayer for others may not change them, but it always changes you." Have you experienced this truth? How?
12. After His resurrection, Jesus still had scars. How can our scars become testimonies of God's healing power?
13. What does "taking a step toward healing" look like practically? What might be a first step for someone who's been carrying pain alone?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE action step to take this week:

For Those Who Have Been Hurt:

- Share your story with one trusted person (pastor, counselor, friend)
- Begin journaling about your pain and bring it to God in prayer
- Research Christian counselors in your area
- Pray specifically: "God, help me take one step toward healing"
- Identify one healthy boundary you need to establish

For Those Who Have Hurt Others:

- Confess your sin to God and repent
- Seek accountability from a trusted Christian brother/sister
- Contact a counselor who specializes in anger management or abuse
- Make a commitment to stop the abusive behavior immediately
- If safe, seek reconciliation with those you've hurt

For Everyone:

- Pray daily for healing for those affected by abuse
- Educate yourself on recognizing signs of abuse
- Commit to being a "safe person" who listens without judgment
- Support organizations that help abuse victims
- Practice the prayer: "Jesus, help me forgive _____ through Your power"

Verse

Isaiah 53:5

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Prayer Focus

Pray for:

- Those in your group carrying hidden wounds
- Courage to take steps toward healing
- Those currently in abusive situations - for safety and wisdom
- Those who have abused others - for genuine repentance and transformation
- The church to be a safe place for hurting people
- Supernatural ability to forgive the unforgivable

Resources

If you or someone you know needs immediate help:

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- RAINN (Sexual Assault Hotline): 1-800-656-4673
- Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453

Recommended Reading:

- The Wounded Heart by Dan Allender
- Rid of My Disgrace by Justin & Lindsey Holcomb
- The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom

Leader Notes

Creating a Safe Environment:

- Remind group members that confidentiality is essential
- Don't pressure anyone to share specifics

- Have tissues available
 - Be prepared with counseling referrals
 - Watch for anyone who seems triggered or in distress
 - Follow up individually with anyone who shares something concerning
 - Remember: You're not a professional counselor - know when to refer
- Important Reminders:

- If someone discloses ongoing abuse, especially of a child, you may have legal reporting obligations
- Never minimize someone's pain or rush them to forgiveness
- Avoid platitudes like "Just pray about it" or "God won't give you more than you can handle"
- Listen more than you speak
- Point people to Jesus and professional help when needed

Closing Prayer

Close by praying Isaiah 53:4-5 over your group, asking God to begin or continue the healing process in each person's life. Pray specifically for courage to take the next step, whatever that may be.

Remember: Healing is a process, not an event. Be patient with yourself and others. God is faithful.