

## Lamentations

*by Alaina Kleinbeck*

### About This Study

One of the most challenging portions of scripture comes from Lamentations. We often avoid Lamentations and its brutal depictions of grief, loss, sin, and despair. Yet, many of us can find consolation in the grieving words of Lamentations. For others, walking down the darkest paths can help us understand the light.

In this study, youth leaders will be encouraged to listen to the voice of the prophet in Lamentations and Hosea. In the prophets' voices, they might find an empathetic shoulder, a daunting challenge, or great comfort. Perhaps they will discover all three. Jesus's work on the cross offers us a new perspective on the challenges of our ministries.

### Ways to Use This Study

This study is intended for youth workers to use on an individual basis or at the beginning of a gathering of youth workers.

### Opening Thoughts

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations in the 6th century during the destruction of Jerusalem. Read Lamentations 5:1-18.

What has happened to the people of Israel and Judah? How did they get to this place of devastation and grief?

In what ways do you identify with the situation they are in? What role does sin play in your life?

How might the teenagers in your ministry identify with their situation? What role does sin play in their lives?

In what ways do you find their experience strange and foreign?

### Main Study

Read Lamentations 5:19-20.

What is the primary response to the tragedy in Lamentations?

When you find yourself in times of hardship and despair, what is your response? How do the youth in your ministry respond? How is it similar or different from the author of Lamentations?

Hosea 14 offers a prophetic response to the people's cry. Read Hosea 14:1-8.

What does the prophet call the people to confess? What might the prophet be calling you to confess?

What is God's response to the confession in Hosea?

What is God's response to our confession today?

Our God is a loving and forgiving God. While the Israelites yearned for relief, we know that God answers our cries in the work and salvation of Jesus. Read Romans 8:1-5.

How does Christ's work on the cross change our response to the challenging things in life and ministry?

What does it mean to turn from the flesh and set one's mind on things of the Spirit and of Christ? How does one do this in ministry?

How can we live into the message of Christ with the young people who are struggling through difficult times? How can we do this by honoring the real pain that they feel and by recognizing that Christ has changed everything?

### **Prayer and Meditation**

Choose a verse or passage from this study that jumped out at you. Spend some time re-reading that passage slowly. Meditate on the words and phrases of the passage by repeating them to yourself. Consider why that passage drew your attention and what God might be speaking to you through the Word. Pray over those things and for the young people in your ministry.