



HARD ENDINGS
GROWTH GROUP STUDIES

INTRODUCTION



We all experience endings in our lives. Some endings are happy endings while other endings are sad. But no matter what happens we must all deal with endings in our lives.

Sometimes we pray for healing but God takes them home.

Sometimes we wish for reunion but the rift continues.

Sometimes we hope to stay longer in a job but the contract ends and the retrenchment happens.

Sometimes we pray for the provision but nothing comes through.

Sometimes we pray and wish for a successful business deal but it all ends in a loss.

We want to write our own stories, we wish for certain endings. We love beautiful and amazing endings but there times that things do not end with a beautiful story. There are a lot of times when things do not end with a “happily ever after” type of ending. We do not always get the endings we want. Most of our stories do remain unresolved. Maybe God has his own ending.

When we do not get the ending we want our hope must be in something bigger than our own happy ending, otherwise our faith isn’t really in God. Our hope must be in God. In fact our hope needs to be God Himself.

SERIES SCHEDULE

DATE	BOTTOM LINE	SCRIPTURE	FACILITATOR
Nov 4-9	<i>When we come to the end of ourselves God is our beginning</i>	Ruth 1, 4:13-16	
Nov 11-16	<i>Where God is, is better than where it's comfortable</i>	Genesis 12:1-9	
Nov 18-23	<i>Our greatest hope is not in what we have but in who we have</i>	Habakkuk 3:17-19, 2 Cor 6:10	
Nov 25- Dec 2	<i>God doesn't stop the tears from coming but he wipes the tears when they come</i>	Revelation 21:4-5	

Nov 4-9

Key Point: *When we come to the end of ourselves*

God is our beginning

INTRODUCTION

In this passage we read that Naomi lost her husband, she lost her two sons and she also lost one of her daughters in law. Ruth lost her husband, she lost her father in law, she lost her sister in marriage and eventually she lost the place she was familiar with. The losses Naomi and Ruth experienced had no return. Naomi was not going to have her husband back or her two sons back. Ruth was not going to have her husband back or the place she grew up back. These opportunities and blessings were done and never experienced again.

There are moments in our lives when we come to the end of something we enjoyed, or something that was a part of us and now it's gone and it will never come back. We reach a point when we come to the end of ourselves. We come to the end of ourselves because we do not know if the joy we had will ever come back, we know that we will not laugh with them again.

Our hope lies that in the reality that God is both the beginning and the end. When we get to the beginning God is present and when we get to the end God is present. So when we come to the end of ourselves where there's despair, loneliness and hopelessness we find God who is the beginning and he will be our beginning. Finding a new beginning does not mean finding something new to do or to have, but it is finding God when we feel like there's no hope or future. When we find God, we find hope, when we find God, we find a future and when we find God, we find comfort.

Read: Ruth 1, 4:13-16

Discuss:

1. What endings do you notice that Naomi, Ruth and Orpah met in this passage? What feelings were Naomi, Ruth and Orpah experiencing in this passage?
2. How did Naomi, Ruth and Orpah respond to the endings they met?
3. In 1:13 Naomi states that she believes 'the Lord's hand has turned against her'. Why do you think Naomi believed this?
4. Have you ever felt like the Lord's hand has turned against you?

Share: Invite anyone in your group to share about a time they experienced a hard ending when they lost something or someone, but found God in a new way.

Pray. Thank God for His faithfulness to us, even in times we may not feel His presence.

Nov 11 – 16

Key Point: *Where God is, is better than where it's comfortable*

INTRODUCTION

In this passage Abraham is called by God to go to a land he has never been, follow directions he does not know and to leave a place he has known all his life. He had the choice to just stay where it felt comfortable, and he made the choice to follow God to where it's uncomfortable and unfamiliar.

Abraham chooses to end his stay with his family and relatives because he reasoned that it was better to be where God is than be at a place where he felt comfortable. Had it been he stayed where he felt comfortable we would not have been calling him a father of many nations or a friend of God.

Some endings in our lives are God's calling for us to lay down our comfort so that we can follow God and be with God where he is.

Read: Genesis 12:1-9

Questions

1. God was calling Abram out of a place he grew up, what other endings do you think he experienced?
2. What promises did God give to Abram and how did Abram's response?
3. What doubts or questions do you imagine Abram may have had?
4. What is the one place you would find hard to leave behind if God called you somewhere else (eg. City, job, relationship, social group)?

Share: Share a promise from God that is hard for you to hold on to in the place you're at now.

Pray. Ask God to give us the faith to follow Him out from our places of comfort.

Nov 18 – 22

Key Point: *Our greatest joy is not in what we have
but in who we have*

INTRODUCTION

There are sad endings in our lives that rob us of our joy. These endings rob us of our sense of security and brings uncertainties as to where we will find resources to feed ourselves or support ourselves.

Habakkuk's prayer teaches that ultimately our joy is not grounded in the things that we have but in who we have. We do not have joy because we have everything we want. We have joy because we have the person we need the most and that's Jesus our Lord.

Because Habakkuk had God with him, in the middle of the wilderness and dry season, he was able to say "I will be joyful in God my saviour." We can be full of joy and hope not because of what we have but because God has us and we have him.

Read: Habakkuk 3:17-19 & 2 Cor 6:10

Questions:

1. What are the trials and hardships listed in the passage?
2. What is the difference between rejoicing in the Lord, and finding happiness in your circumstances?
3. Is it possible to be sad and angered by evil going on around us, and yet praise and rejoice in the Lord?
How?
4. Have you experience being contentment in a season of difficulty?

Share: Invite anyone in your group to share about a time when they experienced a sad ending that brought loss of security and uncertainty as to where they would find resources and how they experience God's presence in that time.

Pray. Ask God to help us learn to be joyful in Him regardless of our situations.

Nov 25 – 29

Key Point: *God doesn't stop the tears from coming but he wipes the tears when they come*

INTRODUCTION:

In Revelation, the author; John gives us the ultimate hope we have a God who creates a new heaven and earth and in it he comforts all believers who experienced hard endings.

There are times when we ask if there's ever a point to the tears we have. We wonder if there's a purpose. We wonder if at all there's a time the pain will ever end or if the pain had a meaning. But though all of our tears may seem pointless now, they are not in vain. God will pay attention to every tear and he will wipe all of our tears. God will comfort all of us. The tears will not be stopped but the tears will be wiped. They will be wiped by him who cares and who comforts.

Read: Revelation 21:1-5

Discuss:

1. What endings do you notice are mentioned in these passages?
2. What imagery is used by John in the passage? What promises are conveyed through this imagery?
3. What do you think it will mean for God's dwelling place to be with us?
4. Do you find this passage comforting? Why/why not?

Share: Invite anyone in your group to share about an ending they've experienced a painful ending that made them wonder if it had a point. Then reiterate this passage to them as encouragement of God's promises.

Pray. Thank God for His good promises.