



Lesson 2

Do You Know Me?

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you welcome all who are hurting and desire to help them. Today in our study, send your Spirit through the Word to help us see who it is that needs help. Strengthen us in a love that desires to bring help to all hurting. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

You haven't seen the stranger at worship before. You come to find out that they are an ex-offender. They were released from prison into society just two weeks ago. They had come to faith in Jesus while locked up. They know that worship and hearing God's Word is important. Does knowing that they were in prison change how you treat them? Does the crime make a difference? What if there wasn't prison time, but it's apparent they have some problems because they've made some poor choices? Would that change the way you express your welcome? Would you communicate, "We are okay with you being here"? Or would your words and actions say, "You are part of us"? To begin to answer those questions, we need to see just who the hurting people are.

The leader could ask the group what the differences are between those last two statements, "We are okay with you being here," and "You are part of us." The first one is: "We're okay, but keep your distance from us." The second is "You're family. We're here with you." The differences are important to keep in mind as we use this study.

Search the Scriptures

1. Paul sees someone who is hurting. Let's read Romans 7:7-25. As the verses are read, underline words or phrases that describe a hurting person.

Some possible answers are underlined. There may be more. Have the participants tell what they underlined and why they think it describes a hurting person. How is it a hurting thing? There can be numerous answers to what was underlined.

Romans 7:7-25

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

2. Pick out the words or phrases that help you most identify with the hurting person and show you that our struggles are similar. Put a star by them. Share your selections with a person next to you or near you. We'll hear samples of what people selected and why. Take two minutes for this activity.

Answers will vary. Be sure to ask why they see their selection as something they share with the hurting person.

3. Identify who the hurting person is in these verses.

Paul is the hurting person, the one who wrote this letter to the Romans. Note how many times he uses the pronoun "I" in this section. But in reality, Paul is painting a portrait of every Christian. Put your own name in here. If we're going to be helping the hurting with hope, we need to start with seeing that *we* are in trouble. We're hurting ones because of sin. We need help from our God.

4. Look at verses 24 and 25. Define two types of help for the hurting person that God provides (check the verbs). Take 1.5 minutes to describe these helps

Possible answers: Rescue – Just like a person drowning in the water or hanging off the cliff. Delivers – He delivers me into a safe spot. Jesus is the rescuer who rescues me from sin. You could point out the roles in this rescue and deliverance. Jesus is the Christ (the Anointed One) whom God has selected and equipped to carry out the rescuing work. He's my Lord who is in control of all things and is the one who is the Savior God of grace. He's the same God of free and faithful grace whose name is the LORD in the Old Testament. I have a God who, from eternity, has a plan to rescue me. "Thanks be to God" – God is the Creator who is in charge of all things. I'm all taken care of because he is in charge of all things.

5. In Luke 15:1,2 we read, "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Jesus then tells a parable about a lost sheep and a lost coin and that there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels over the one person who repents of their sins. Read Luke 15:11-31 and underline ways the lost son causes hurts or is hurting. Take two minutes and share three of your underlines with a person(s) at your table and tell them why you saw it as the person hurting. We'll hear samples of what people underlined and why.

Possible answers: The lost son made a mess of his life. He caused hurts to himself and to others. He hurts his father by wanting his inheritance now. He was telling his father that he wished his father was dead right now. The lost son abused his body with prostitution and was starving. He hurt himself morally, physically, spiritually, and mentally. The lost son hurt himself spiritually by being with the pigs, which a good Jew would avoid as unclean. The lost son recognized he had hurt his father. The older son was hurt by what his brother had done with his inheritance and that a party was thrown in his wayward brother's honor.

Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²²“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

6. Identify who the hurting person is in these verses from Luke 15.

Those who are needing help from the Father because they've fallen into sin, and their lives have been made a mess because of sin. We want them to come back to the Father.

7. Summarize Jesus' point of telling the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son.

Possible answers: Rejoice with those who have returned to the Father. Rejoice that the lost has been found. Rejoice that your family member is back and God the Father wants them back. We aren't simply okay that they are back with God. But we rejoice with them and for them and welcome them back because they are family.

Bringing It Home

8. If a hurting person, whose sins have made a mess of their life, begins attending your church, the person might see themselves like the lost sheep, lost coin, lost son, or as the tax collector in the temple (who was far different from the Pharisee). Considering those parables, let's think of at least three reasons why that is true.

Possible answers: How can the hurting person equate themselves as the lost sheep, coin, son, or the tax collector? It will hit them in the heart and may see themselves as one who was lost but now is back. Perhaps a person was converted to Christianity while in prison. They may see themselves as someone whose sin-filled, messy life had them away from their Savior, but now they are with him and know his forgiveness because God had mercy on them, a sinner.

9. Explain how seeing ourselves as someone broken from sin influences how we see someone who is hurting from sin's messes? What will you see?

Possible answers: What a wretched person I am! I was one who had been lost and God found me and brought me to himself. I see the hurting needing what I have. I made a mess of my life with sin, and I needed God to rescue me. I can see myself in that person. I'm now with my Savior, and thankfully those who are hurting are here with him at my church too.

10. In what ways will this be helpful for a congregation?

Possible answers: It's going to help me to see that the one who is hurting doesn't have greater sins than mine. The person who is hurting needs to be at my congregation just as much as I do. I need my spiritual family to be there for me and direct me to Jesus. The hurting needs to be part of my spiritual family at my church and be directed to Jesus. It can help me to see that even if someone's life is messy because of sin, I don't want that to scare me off. I know they need the help I myself need because of sin.

11. Take time for a 3-2-1 — Share *three* things that we talked about today, *two* things that will stick with you, and *one* question that you still have.

Answers will vary. This is a way to check for understanding of what was discussed in the lesson.

Living My Faith

The more we see ourselves as broken, the more we can identify with others who are broken, too. This week, practice daily confessing your sins to God, admitting those sins you know that give evidence that you are hurting from sin's effects. In your prayers, ask the Lord to help you see the sins of another as someone who is also hurting from sin's effects. See them as one you want to help.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, your loving heart for the hurting is unmatched. You see into hearts who are hurting because sin has caused such pain. We see the hurts sin causes in our own lives. We see others are hurting, too. Give us a heart that first sees our own brokenness. Stir up compassion and empathy for others, who are really no different from us, because they need help from sin because sin has broken them. Let us be instruments of help to the hurting. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.