// Reflection or Discussion Guide: **Psalm 137 —** from hurt to healing: taking revenge to God

Heart Emotion: Hurt **Big Idea**: What do you do with your hurt? The Cursing Psalms name our hurts and give them the attention they need – helping us be honest before God and others, a first step toward healing.

I. The Shock and Necessity of the Cursing Psalms
Imprecatory (cursing) psalms confront us with the *real emotional world* of Scripture – and that we live in. As Walter Brueggemann notes, the church often avoids these psalms because they force us to face life as it really is, not as we wish it were. The Bible does not deny darkness; it brings it into God's presence.

II. Hurt is one of our basic emotions: a God-Given Signal
"***Hurt is the emotional and spiritual cry within us that lets us know we have pain… hurt is the recognition that I have been wounded.***" (Chip Dodd). Think about the language we use for emotional or relational hurts – it's often pleating, and severe ("I got punched in the gut.")
The *need* revealed by hurt is **attention**—to be seen, heard, and taken seriously – and healed.

III. Psalm 137: Naming the Wound
Israel's pain is rooted in exile, humiliation, loss of home, and forced mockery by captors.
The demand to "sing the songs of Zion" intensifies the trauma—it attacks identity and memory.
The psalm refuses to soften or spiritualize suffering – demand attention, memory, and justice.

IV. What Happens When Hurt Is Denied
Unacknowledged hurt does not disappear; it mutates.
Denial leads either to numbing behaviors or to resentment – And resentment becomes the slow-burning fuel for revenge, inc fantasy – or in reality. Revenge promises relief but only deepens our captivity to our hurts. Pain that is not brought to God will eventually be passed on/passed around to others.

V. Bringing Revenge to God
Psalm 137 ends with shocking words—not actions, but *speech directed to God*. Justice is handed over to the one who will Judge the whole earth (Gen. 18.25).
These prayers place both the enemy *and the wounded self* before a God who sees and judges rightly.
In a unique turn, this psalm stops short of resolution—there's no last lines of praise or trust.
Sometimes honest statement is the only act of faith your can muster.
It is in Jesus Christ that we see one who willingly embraced all the hurts of our sin, evil, and death … that we might be healed. (Isaiah 53:45)

Reflection Questions (for Personal or Group Study)

1. Where do you notice resistance in yourself to prayers like Psalm 137—and what does that resistance reveal about how you've been taught to relate to God?
2. What hurts in your life have you been tempted to minimize, spiritualize, or rush past instead of naming honestly? And how has denial or resentment often shaped your responses?
3. What would it look like to bring your unfiltered thoughts of anger or revenge into God's presence rather than managing or suppressing them?
4. How does seeing God as Judge (rather than yourself as judge) change the way you imagine justice, healing, and freedom from your hurt?