



Study Guide for Groups
Episode 9: Cutting and Burning
Topic: Self-injury

Listen to our interview with Kari, a person who used cutting and burning herself as a way of easing her emotional pain. Then use the following questions to guide your discussion.

- Discuss your group's reactions to Kari's interview. How did you feel hearing Kari speak? What thoughts or questions did you have while listening to her story?
- Is there anyone in your group who knows or has known someone who self-injures? If they're comfortable sharing their experiences ask them to do so. What was it like for them to see this person? What insights do they have for the group?
- Kari said, *"A lot of people who cut and burn feel that they just can't make what's going on in their mind real to them, or they feel that [they're] so entrapped in their body, that they've gotta have some way of getting that out and saying this is real."* What are some other reasons that a person undergoing severe emotional pain might engage in self-injury?
- Many see the self-injury (mostly cutting and burning) that many young people do as a way of "self-expression" or just a way to get attention, maybe like getting a tattoo or piercing. After hearing Kari and from any of your own experiences, would you agree with that? Is it still difficult to see why and how someone could do this to themselves?
- Kari made a strong statement about how some people treated her when she was experiencing depression. They said, *"If you'd just pray more, if you would commit your life to Christ, read this book and you'll be closer to Christ, and then you won't have these problems. And I've come to realize over the years that it's a biological illness, and I have to take my meds. If I don't, I get off track right away."* What is your reaction to this? How would you talk to someone like Kari who deals with life-long depression?

Listen to this week's "My Turn" segment with Emily Ralph, a youth leader in Pennsylvania. Engage with the following questions.

- As a group, discuss your reactions to Emily's perspectives on self-injury.
- *To Write Love on Her Arms* is dedicated to letting young people tell their story about depression, self-injury, and suicide. How can you as a group/church/organization encourage young people to be honest about their struggles?