

## Why Me? - Lamenting

- <sup>1</sup> How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?
- <sup>2</sup> How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
- <sup>3</sup> Look on me and answer, LORD my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
- <sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
- <sup>5</sup> But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
- <sup>6</sup> I will sing the LORD's praise,  
for he has been good to me.

### Psalm 13

- <sup>1</sup> The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.
- <sup>2</sup> How long, LORD, must I call for help,  
but you do not listen?  
Or cry out to you, "Violence!"  
but you do not save?

### Habakkuk 1

Sorrow is sacred. Suffering is not an indictment against God; it can be the single space we identify most deeply with Christ, who knows it best.<sup>i</sup>

If we fail to dig into a theology of suffering and the way we as Christ followers will hurt right alongside a troubled world, we write off people's trials as an anomaly or a reaping they had coming instead of a place we connect with God's solace and peace and even our purpose in walking with and weeping with those who weep.<sup>ii</sup>

Let us not forget the wails and cries and pounding fists. God is here too.<sup>iii</sup>

What if instead we were a people who learned to lament? What if we believed faith was less about blind devotion to all the right answers and more of an invitation to come fully into relationship with Christ and be met in our most desperate and confusing moments? Lament . . . is an admission of our profound weakness and inability to carry a single thing on our own.

To stay in relationship with God, when our worlds turn upside down and nothing makes sense, He invites us to lament.<sup>iv</sup>

That native tongue swelling with the language of God's people. Hope. Can you imagine this? This praise. In the face of the absurd and horrific and terrifying. Because after lament, I am always found again in Him. All who belong to Him will never be lost.<sup>v</sup>

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We are translucent, shining the glory of God in a world gone dark, even in the dark places of our own lives. We have access to God. He hears our cries.<sup>vi</sup>

Lament is not the same as crying, however. It's different. And it's uniquely Christian. The Bible is filled with this song of sorrow. Over a third of the Psalms are laments. The book of Lamentations weeps over the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus lamented in the final hours of his life . . . Lament is a form of prayer. It is more than just the expression of sorrow or the venting of emotion. Lament talks to God about pain. And it has a unique purpose: trust. It is a divinely-given invitation to pour out our fears, frustrations, and sorrows for the purpose of helping us to renew our confidence in God.

### Four Elements of Lament

As Psalm 13 illustrates, most laments feature four essential elements:

1. **Turn to God.** Often a lament begins by an address to God: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" The point is that the person in pain chooses to talk to God about what is happening.
2. **Bring your complaint.** Every lament features some kind of complaint: "How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?" More than a sinful rehearsing of our anger, biblical lament humbly and honestly identifies the pain, questions, and frustrations raging in our souls.
3. **Ask boldly for help.** Seeking God's help while in pain is an act of faith: "Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed over him,' lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken" Unremitting sorrow can create a deadly silence as we give in to despair ("there's no hope") or denial ("everything's fine"). But lament invites us to dare to hope in God's promises as we ask for his help.
4. **Choose to trust.** This is the destination for our laments. All roads lead here: "But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me" More than the stages of grief, this prayer language moves us to renew our commitment to trust in God as we navigate the brokenness of life.

Lament is the prayer language for God's people as they live in a world marred by sin. It is how we talk to God about our sorrows as we renew our hope in his sovereign care. To cry is human, but to lament is Christian. <sup>vii</sup>

You may want to write down your own prayer of lament using the words "*though*" and "*yet*" to begin to phrase your lament. Do this when you are facing difficulty. Save this exercise in prayer for the hard moments in your life.

- **Find a quiet place with God** - Being alone with Him is a necessity for this kind of prayer.
- **Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you** - He will lead you in a prayer of lament. He will open up your heart to God.

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- **Be in God's presence** - We are often so much in a hurry but a prayer of lament takes time spent in God's presence. Give yourself wholly to God.
- **Write down the "though" circumstances in your life** - What difficulties and challenges are you right now facing? What pain or grief do you feel? These are the "though" circumstances.
- **Offer these things to God** - Offer God the hard things as a sacrifice. Don't ask for anything.
- **Worship God by completing the phrase** - "*Though these things have happened, yet \_\_\_\_\_.*" – Worship God in a series of yet statements. Bless and praise Him even in spite of the difficult things.<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Alia Joy, *Glorious Weakness: Discovering God in All We Lack* (Baker Books, 2019), p 146.

<sup>ii</sup> Alia Joy, pp 151-152.

<sup>iii</sup> Alia Joy, p 152.

<sup>iv</sup> Alia Joy, p 157.

<sup>v</sup> Alia Joy, p 158.

<sup>vi</sup> Alia Joy, p 161.

<sup>vii</sup> Mark Vroegop <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/dare-to-hope-in-god>, April 6, 2019

<sup>viii</sup> Debbie Przybylski <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/pouring-out-your-heart-in-lament-to-god.html>, August 27, 2014