

Finding Your Voice of Suffering:
Processing Trauma through Scripture
Engagement

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering... (Lam. 1:12, NIV)

1

Engaging Trauma and Its Silence

2

Introduction to Trauma

Traumatic events are events that overwhelm your body, mind and soul, accompanied by fear, helplessness, and horror.

3

The Silencing of Trauma

Unspeakable horror that shatters

אִיכָה
Eikhah

The ministry of silence

4

Wandering in the Silence of Trauma

You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through. (Lam. 3:44, NIV)

I am speechless.	I feel worthless and negative about myself.
I am isolated and alone.	I am angry.
I feel trapped and helpless.	My faith is shattered.

You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its fractures, for it is quaking. (Psalm 60:2, NIV)

5

Wandering in the Silence of Trauma

You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through. (Lam. 3:44, NIV)

My life feels dark, unclear, and lifeless.	The world is unfamiliar and I can't navigate it anymore.
I feel forgotten and abandoned.	I feel hopeless.
	God feels distant.

You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its fractures, for it is quaking. (Psalm 60:2, NIV)

6

Engaging Scripture and the Voice of Suffering

7

Scripture and the Language of Suffering

Scripture is full of suffering and expression of emotional language.

The words of suffering and emotion are especially found in Wisdom and Prophetic Literature.

- The Community of Suffering
- Paths of Suffering (Affirmation of the road of the path)
- Focus on individual and group experience.
- Expresses disillusionment with theology and experience of evil.
- Specific form: Lament (almost half the Psalms).
- Paths of Processing Suffering (Disorientation to Orientation).

8

Voice for Emotional Language

The Language of Suffering gives expression of the full range of emotions (Anger; Grief; Hopelessness; Anxiety/ Distress; etc.)

He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord. (Lamentations 3:16-18, ESV)

9

Poetic Language that Builds Bridges

The Language of Suffering gives us poetic pictures that help us engage the reality of our trauma.

He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy; though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer; he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked. (Lamentations 3:7-9, ESV)



10

Theological Disillusionment

The Language of Suffering gives voice to disillusionment and disappointment with God.

He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate; (Lamentations 3:10-11, ESV)



11

Confronting Critical Voices and Honoring Faith in Suffering

12

The Right Voice at the Right Time

Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay. (Job 13:12, NIV)

If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! (Job 6:2, NIV)

Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty. (Job 6:14, NIV)

Now you too have proved to be of no help; you see something dreadful and are afraid. (Job 6:21, NIV)

13

Critical Voices

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are being impatient. • God is disciplining you. • You must've done something wrong. • Just seek God and it will be better. • You deserve your suffering and worse. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You don't have enough faith. • This is just how things go, stop complaining. • Only bad people suffer. • Your problems are too small and insignificant to God. |
|--|---|

14

Faith in Suffering

*I am worn out calling for help;
my throat is parched.
My eyes fail, looking for God. (Psalm 69:3, NIV)*

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1, NIV)

15

Defining Lament and Honoring it's Path

16

The Essence and Faith of Lament

Lament is the expression of deep faith that God sees, hears, and responds to our suffering.

The Parts of a Lament (UBS)

1. Address to God ("O God")
2. Review of God's Faithfulness in the past
3. **A complaint**
4. A confession of sin or a claim of innocence.
5. **A request for help**
6. God's response (often not stated)
7. A vow to praise, statement of trust in God

17

The Path of Grief

5 Stages of Grief:

- 1) Denial
- 2) Anger
- 3) Sadness/
Depression
- 4) Bargaining
- 5) Acceptance

Disorientation

Orientation

18

The Journey of Lament


Lament is a path: Disorientation to orientation

I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord. (Lamentations 3:17-18, NIV)

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. (Lamentations 3:21, NIV)

Lament asks God honest questions:

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? (Psalm 13:1-2, NIV)



19


The Journey of Lament

Lament asks:

Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint; heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony. (Psalm 6:2, NIV)

Lament describes the Experience:

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. (Psalm 69:1-2, NIV)



20


The Journey of Lament

Lament Describes Landscape:

O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble. (Psalms 79:1, NIV)

Expressing Negative Experience with God:

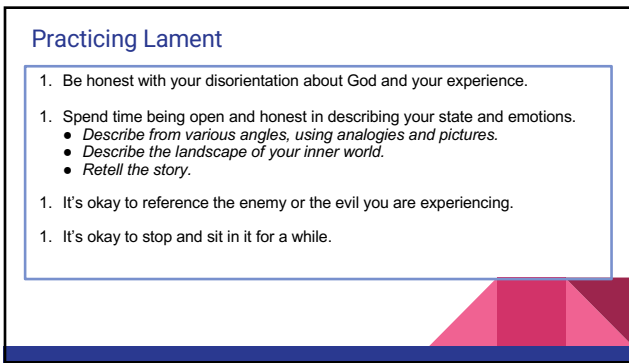
Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? (Psalm 80:12, NIV)



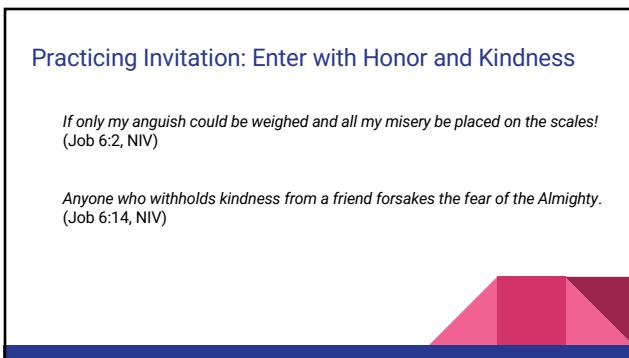
21



22



23



24

Invitation: Inviting Yourself into Kindness and Honor

- My suffering is my suffering and it unique to my experience.
- I have experienced great evil and it is good to tell the truth about it.
- My experience of negative emotions (anger, sadness, abandonment, grief) are valid and honored by God. They are appropriate reactions to my suffering.
- I reject voices that minimize, shame, and blame my suffering and response.
- I acknowledge that God is a God who witnesses to my suffering, honors it, and desires to act in kindness.



25

Create Your Own Lament

1. **Address to God** ("O God")
2. Review of God's Faithfulness in the past
3. **A complaint**
4. A confession of sin or a claim of innocence.
5. **A request for help**
6. God's response (often not stated)
7. A vow to praise, statement of trust in God



26

Example Lament

O God, you listened to the prophets in the bible but why not me. My sorrow is upon me like a heavy weight ever getting heavier. What did I do to ever deserve this? Why me? Help me, for you are stronger, lift the weight off my back. So I may be relieved of this sorrow and pain. I will do all your commands for you, O Lord, are more wonderful than I can ever imagine.

A Psalm of Isaac



27



28