praying our way back to hope I healing

WRITTEN BY Lessie Bowers





A Study on Biblical Lament

Written by: Leslie Bowers

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Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

Psalm 85:6

we fcome to Revive!
I am so glad you are here.

My name is Leslie Bowers. I am a follower of Jesus, lover of God's Word, and Bible study teacher at Green Acres Baptist Chruch in Tyler, TX. I have been married to my husband, Andrew, since 2011, and we have two children (William and Avonleigh). We were both raised in Louisiana, but we joke that we got to Texas as soon as we could!

I was called to teach the Word several years ago and am currently following through on that call through an active pursuit of a seminary degree in Biblical Exposition. During my studies at Columbia Biblical Seminary, I was introduced to the concept, context, and practice of lament. "Lament" was a word I had heard but definitely did not fully understand, as the practice has largely fallen out of use in many modern churches. God began to stir in my heart a desire to learn more about lament and how it could be better utilized within the church community and beyond. This study is the result of my prayers, research, and faithfulness to God's (persistent) direction.

Whether you found this study because you are going through or have gone through a difficult season, simply have a desire to learn more about lament, or only came because your friends are here... I am so glad God brought you to learn more about the beautiful gift of Biblical lament. My prayer is that you will add an invaluable discipline to your spiritual toolbox to use when you or a neighbor is in need of a lament. My prayer is that this practice will teach you to run toward God in times of pain and sorrow instead of away from Him. My prayer is that you will come to know and love the heart of God for you beyond what you could have ever imagined. So grab your Bibles, your favorite pen, and a friend... and let's get started!

"Laments turn you toward God when sorrow tempts you to run from him." Mark Vroegop

"Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds." Hosea 6:1

week 1: what is lament?

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, and shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

-C. S. Lewis

I. What does "lament" mean?

A. Oxford/Merriam-Webster B. Hebrew 1. different Hebrew words for "lament" 2. A version of "lament" occurs ______ times in the Old Testament 3. 3 Most Common: a) Bakhah-_____, bemoan, shed _____ b) 'Aval-_____, mourn c) Safad-_____, "beat the _____ as a sign of ______, especially for the dead" (Isaiah 32:2) C. Greek 1. ____ different Greek words for lament 2. A version of "lament" occurs _____ times in the New Testament 3. 3 Most Common: a) Thrēnēo (G2354)- be and saddened b) Penthēo/Penthos (G3996/G3997)- mourning, sorrow, c) Klauthmos (G2805)- act of expressing bitter _____ while feeling utterly _____; usually accompanied by _____ D. DISCUSSION 1: What do these definitions tell us about the act of lamenting? What do they have in common (any keywords)? Did anything surprise you?

II. Purpose of Lament

A. Historical/Biblical			
a) What were these lamen	ts about?		
b) What was the purpose	of these laments?		
2. What is the opposite of lame	ent?		
3. How does a grievance move	from venting/raging to lament?	?	
a) We have to make	the boo	kends when we express our grievances in prayer.	
b)	leaving God	d out of it;	
	keeping God the be	eginning and the end	
B. Modern Judaism			
1. TishaB'Av			
a) This time is deeply spiri	itual- and requires fasting from	most things (food, work, bathing, intimate activities,	
and any other things that	may be considered extraneous).		
b) The book of		is traditionally read during this synagogue service	
by the leading Rabbi.			
2. These historical laments are	used as a time of	for the modern Jewish	
congregation and would not be	e considered a	practice to any modern practicing Jew.	
3. DISCUSSION 2: What can	we learn from our Jewish broth	ers and sisters about the practice of lament? Did anything	
surprise you? What aspects (if	any) might you want to adopt is	n your own spiritual life?	
			_
			_
			_
			_
C. Modern Christianity			
1. DISCUSSION 3: What did	you know about lament prior to	today? Do you remember your pastor preaching a sermon	
on a lament? Have you ever be	en taught or offered a lament in	a difficult time by a member of your church?	
			_

2. Why do Christians not know how to lament? According to Mark Vroe	gop:
a) We need to know what it means to be in	and
b) We don't know what to do with lament because it makes us and o	thers
3. What happens when we, as Christians, do not utilize lament?	
a) We trust in the instead	of
b) This misplaced trust leads us into,	, and
c) This emotional response can cause us to miss out on God's	for our situation.
d) This squandered opportunity leaves us stuck in	,, and
continued (and often unnecessary)	<u> </u>
4. What is OUR purpose for lament?	
a) Learning to lament equips us to tackle life's	in a raw and honest way that is
firmly rooted in our in God's sovereignt	ry and perfect plan.
III. Non-Psalmic Biblical Laments	
A. Lamentations	
1. Jeremiah	
2. What was there to lament?	
B. Job	
1. Job 3	
2. He was in his deepest	
3. How did God respond?	
a) Job 38-41	
4. How does his story end?	
C. Miscellaneous	
1. Isaiah 1:2-15	
a) God laments through his prophet Isaiah over the people of	for their rebellion
2. Jeremiah 20:7-18	
a) Jeremiah is lamenting his role as a	during the last days of Judah
before the Babylonian exile	
3. Did Jesus lament?	
a) Luke 13: 34-35 (Jesus laments over)
b) Mattew 27:46 (Jesus laments from the	(Psalm 22:1)

IV. Psalms of Lament

A. Purpose		
1. Present a public	to God about a	problem
B. Mood		
C. Types (Who was lamenting?)		
1		
2		
3. DISCUSSION 4: Why is this im	portant to know the type? What does thi	s mean for us in our modern application
of lament?		
D. Common Features		
1		
2. Description of the current		
3. Petition for		
4. (Sometimes)		
5. Confession of	on the basis of prayer	
6. Psalm 13 (MEMORY VERSE C	HALLENGE)	
a) 1- How long, Lord? Will yo	u forget me forever? How long will you h	ide your face from me?
b) 2- How long will I store up	anxious concerns[a] within me, agony in	my mind every day?
How long will my enemy dom	inate me?	
c) 3- Consider me and answer	, Lord my God. Restore brightness to my	eyes; otherwise, I will sleep in death.
d) 4- My enemy will say, "I ha	ve triumphed over him," and my foes will	l rejoice because I am shaken.
e) 5- But I have trusted in you	r faithful love; my heart will rejoice in yo	ur deliverance.
f) 6- I will sing to the Lord bed	cause he has treated me generously.	
E. Prevalence		
1/150 Psalms		
2. As many as% of the Psa	alms include a lament	

F. LET'S PRACTICE: Identify the common features in the following Psalm.

1. Psalm 6

- a) 1- Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath.
- b) 2- Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint; heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.
- c) 3- My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?
- d) 4- Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.
- e) 5- Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?
- f) 6- I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.
- g) 7- My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.
- h) 8- Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping.
- i) 9- The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer.
- j) 10- All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish; they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.

week I homework:

<u>DAY 1:</u>

1. Reflection:
What did studying the prayers of lament teach you about the character of God?
What was the most interesting thing you learned about the prayers of lament?
Did anything surprise you?
Did any particular lament we discussed stand out? Why?
2. How does Jesus' practice of lament influence you to incorporate lament into your own prayer life?
3. Write a prayer asking God to guide your study of lament. Think about incorporating situations that you might need to lay at the feet of God through lament.

DAY 2:

1. How do the Biblical stories of lament (Jeremiah, Job, Isaiah) inspire you to hope instead of despair in difficult seasons?
2. Read the following verses and consider how each verse might guide your study of lament.
• Psalm 10:14
• Psalm 40:17
• Isaiah 50:10
1 Theoretonians 5:17
• 1 Thessalonians 5:17
• James 1:2-4
• 1 Peter 2:23
• 1 Peter 5:7
3. What do you think will be your biggest challenge in studying the practice of lament? How can the previous Scriptures encourage you to overcome your fears?

DAY 3: Read Psalm 42 and answer the following questions: 1. Did any verse immediately stand out to you?

1. Did any verse immediately stand out to you:
2. What is the Psalmist feeling? How does he express those feelings?
3. Have you ever felt similar to the Psalmist?
4. In what ways does the Psalmist reveal his faith in God despite feeling forgotten?
5. How can the repeated encouragement to hope in God guide us in our daily lives?
6. In a world that often seems to be filled with despair, how can we hold onto our faith and hope as the Psalmist did?
7. Can you think of a situation in your life where you felt a deep yearning for God's presence? How did you respond to it?
8. Pray this Psalm out loud. How did it make you feel to say these words aloud?

DAY 4: Read Psalm 88 and answer the following questions: 1. Did any verse immediately stand out to you? 2. What is the Psalmist feeling? How does he express those feelings? 3. When have you ever felt similar to the Psalmist? 4. Why do you think the Psalmist keeps on praying- even though his prayers have seemed to go unanswered? 5. How might this Psalm comfort those going through a difficult time? 6. How does Psalm 88 inform your understanding of God's presence during suffering? 7. How might you incorporate the lessons within this Psalm into your relationship and understanding of God?

8. Pray this Psalm out loud. How did it make you feel to say these words aloud?

DAY 5: Read Psalm 90 and answer the following questions:

1. Did any verse immediately stand out to you?
2. What is the Psalmist feeling? How does he express those feelings?
3. Have you ever felt similar to the Psalmist?
4. How does this Psalm encourage you to seek God's presence?
5. How does the shortness of life affect how you think about times of trial? Does this Psalm alter or strengthen that perspective?
6. What does the term "our dwelling place" (v. 1) mean to you personally, specifically in times of difficulty?
7. How can the truths from this Psalm help us in our response to life's trials?
8. Pray this Psalm out loud. How did it make you feel to say these words aloud?

week 2:
how do Plament?

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear."

-C. S. Lewis

<u>Homeworl</u>	k Discussion:	
A. Day 1_		
B. Day 2		
C. Day 3: F	Psalm 42	
D. Day 4: F	Psalm 88	
E Day 5, B	00.00 00	
E. Day 5: P	rsaim 90	
. PERSON	AL TESTIMONY 1:	
T. C.	d D II d III	
1. Construc	cting Personal Laments: HELP	
A. H	to God First	
	y? God is	
2. Wh	at does this reveal about our faith?	
В. Е	Your Pain	
1. Wh	y is it important that we lament about a particular grievance?	
	Naming our grievance helps us	our pain in direct
	Naming our grievance prevents us from	our
	Naming our grievance allows us to focus on	instead of looking for the
	Naming our grievance helps us to better	with
	in the future.	
C. L	Up Your Need for Deliverance	
1. Wh	at is the desired outcome of our prayer?	
2. If w	re do not God, what is the point of lamenting in the	he first place?

D. P Faith & Trust in	God
1. When we find ourselves in the dept	ths of despair, there is nowhere else to look but
2. "God never gives you more than yo	ou can handle."
3. "If God brings you	it, He will see you it."
IV DEDSONAL TESTIMONY 2.	
V. Why should we practice lament?	Lament leads to:
A	(Ephesians 3:12, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:1)
В	(Psalm 24:18, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Isaiah 41:10)
C	(2 Timothy 1:7, Psalm 22:24, Psalm 118:5, Ecclesiastes 7:14)
D	(Jeremiah 29:11, Lamentations 3:31-33, Psalm 30:5)
E. Deeper	(Joshua 1:9, James 1:3, 1 Chronicles 16:11, Isaiah 40:29)
_	(Lamentations 3:19-24, Psalm 30:11, Psalm 51:8)
VI. Do I have to write my own lame	ent?
VII.PERSONAL TESTIMONY 3:	
VII.PERSONAL TESTIMON 1 5:	

VIII.GROUP PRACTICE AND SHARE:

Grievance:
H- HEAD TO GOD FIRST
E- EXPRESS YOUR PAIN
L- LIFT UP YOUR NEED FOR DELIVERANCE
P- PUT FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD



DAY 1: Class Reflection & Scripture Reflection on the Process of Lament

1. F	
	ow does knowing how to personally lament reflect the spirit of God within you?
_	
_	
э г	o you feel more or less comfortable about implementing prayers of lament into your spiritual practice? Why?
د. ب –	o you reef more of less connortable about implementing prayers of familiant into your spiritual practices why:
_	
_	
3. V	Thich of the six reasons for practicing lament stood out to you the most? Why?
_	
_	
OI	up the following verses and explain how they relate to the first step in the process of lament: "Head to God Fin
	up the following verses and explain how they relate to the first step in the process of lament: "Head to God First step in the process of lament:
l. <u>P</u>	
l. <u>P</u>	salm 6:2
l. <u>P</u>	salm 6:2
l. <u>P</u>	salm 6:2
	salm 6:2 salm 16:1
	salm 6:2
1. <u>P</u>	salm 6:2 salm 16:1
1. <u>P</u>	salm 6:2 salm 16:1
1. <u>P</u>	salm 6:2 salm 16:1
1. <u>P</u>	salm 6:2 salm 16:1
1. <u>P</u>	salm 16:1 salm 40:1
1. <u>P</u>	salm 16:1

DAY 2: Scripture Reflection on the Process of Lament

Pain."	
1. Psalm 34: 17-18	
2. Psalm 147:3	
3. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4	
4. 1 Peter 4:19	
2. Look up the following verses and explain how they relate to the third step in the process of lament: "Lift Up Your For Deliverance."	Need
1. 2 Samuel 22:2-3	
2. Psalm 34:4	
3. Psalm 50:15	
4. Jeremiah 1:8	
5. 2 Timothy 4:18	
3. Look up the following verses and explain how they relate to the fourth step in the process of lament: "Put Faith a in God."	nd Trust
1. Psalm 91	
2. Proverbs 3:5-6	
3. Jeremiah 29:11	
3. Jeremiah 29:11	
4. 2 Corinthians 1:10	
5. Revelation 21:4	

1. Look up the following verses and explain how they relate to the second step in the process of lament: "Express Your

DAY 3: Write a personal lament using the HELP method. Grievance: H- HEAD TO GOD FIRST E- EXPRESS YOUR PAIN L- LIFT UP YOUR NEED FOR DELIVERANCE P- PUT FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD

Day 4: Write a communal lament using the HELP method. Grievance: H- HEAD TO GOD FIRST E- EXPRESS YOUR PAIN L- LIFT UP YOUR NEED FOR DELIVERANCE P- PUT FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD _____

Day 5: Looking Forward to Application

1. How does the world tell you to respond to difficulties in life? How does the Bible say you should respond to difficulties in life?
2. Where does lament fit into the Biblical approach of responding to life's challenges?
3. In what situations- personal and communal- can we apply prayers of lament?
4. How can we love our neighbor who is going through a season of lament?
5. Is the practice of lament appropriate to teach children? Why or why not?
6. How can we raise awareness of the practice of lament within our church and community?

week 3:

how do l'apply
lament
to my life?

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern.

Beautiful people do not just happen."

-Elizabeth Kübler Ross

A. Day 1: Reflection & Scrip	ure Reflection on the Process of Lament
B. Day 2: Scripture Reflectio	on the Process of Lament
B. Day 2. Scripture Reflection	on the Process of Lament
C. Day 3: Personal Lament	
D. Day 4: Communal Lamer	:
E. Day 5: Looking Ahead to	application
. In what situations do we	need prayers of lament?
T. How do Limonmonatoli	montinto may monomal muovon lifo?
_	ment into my personal prayer life?
	the Psalms of Lament
1. Examples:	10 12 14 17 22 25 26 27 20 21 26 20
	-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 3, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89, 120, 139, 141, 142
	3, 54, 53, 36, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89, 120, 139, 141, 142 3, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129
2, 23	,, · -, · -, · -, · -, · -, · -, · -
2. Read	Psalms of lament during your prayer time

I. Homework Discussion:

3	a psalm of lament and put it somewhere yo	u will see it. 4. Ask yourself
questions a	about that particular psalm:	
a) Wh	nat is the Psalmist feeling? How does he express those feelings?	
b) Wh	nat does this Psalm teach me about God?	
c) Hov	w does he show his faith in God?	
d) Car	n I relate to any part of this Psalm? How? Why?	
e) Did	d any verse stand out to me? Why?	
f) Is th	he Holy Spirit prompting me to action through this Psalm?	
В	your own lament and pray it out loud.	
1. Keep it i	in a	
2. Be	!	
C. Listen to _	and	of Lament (see additional
	ow for examples)	
IV. How do I	incorporate lament into my communal prayer life?	
A. Find a	<u>!</u>	
В	together	
C. Encourage	the of lament as a group	
D. Respond to	o community and world crises first with	
1	,	
V Teaching (Children to Lament	
	hod (motions)	
1. Younger	r Children- Take each step slowly and help apply the child's situation to each step	
	children- Explain each step, and then allow them to come up with their own part of e	each step
	if needed	
b) Pro	ovide	
В	lament in personal times of difficulty;	children to
	with you	
C	prayers of Lament (Especially helpful with very young cl	nildren)

D. Read and Teach Stories of God's	in Difficult Times
1. Why? 2. Examples:	
a) Noah's Ark (Genesis 6:5-9:17)	
b) Esther (Esther)	
c) Jonah & the Whale (Jonah 1-3)	
d) Daniel and the Lion's Den (Daniel 6)	
e) Paul Singing in Prison (Acts 16:16-40)	
VI. Where do I go from here?	

Date:
Grievance:
What is running through your mind regarding this current situation?
Construct a prayer of lament:
H- Head the God First
E- Express Your Pain
L- Lift Up Your Need for Deliverance
P- Put Faith & Trust in God
Proof of God's Faithfulness (Come back to this prayer at a later date and record how God responded to your lament in big or small ways.):

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additional resources

A. Situation-Specific Resources:

- 1. Counseling- GraceWorks Counseling (903-533-1817)- by appointment
- 2. Community Groups
- a) GriefShare (amyc@gabc.org)
- b) Celebrate Recovery (help@celebraterecoverygabc.com)- Monday Nights
- c) Green Acres Women (Flourish Groups, Bible Study, Senior Adults, MOMS)

B. Books

- 1. Psalms by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- 2. Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy by Mark Vroegop
- 3. Gentle & Lowly by Dane Ortlund
- 4. The Problem of Pain by C. S. Lewis

C. Contemporary Songs/Hymns of Lament

- 1. Shane & Shane- Psalm 13
- 2. Shane & Shane- Though You Slay Me
- 3. Resound Worship- Hear the Song of our Lament
- 4. Rend Collective- Weep with Me
- 5. Sandra McCracken- Have Mercy
- 6. Casting Crowns- Just Be Held
- 7. Natalie Grant- You Will Be Found
- 8. Providence Church- How Long, How Long?
- 9. Keith and Kristyn Getty-Lord from Sorrows Deep I Call (Psalm 42)
- 10. Toby Mac- I'm Sorry (a Lament)
- 11. Abide with Me
- 12.It is Well with my Soul
- 13.Great is Thy Faithfulness

sources:

- ESV & CSB (Accordance Bible Software)
- "Psalms" Lecture- Dr. Michael Lyons, Columbia Biblical Seminary
- "Overview of Psalms" Lecture- Dr. Brian P. Gault, Columbia Biblical Seminary
- https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/learning-to-lament-a-guide-to-praying-in-ourhardest-moments/
- https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-art-of-lament/
- https://yalebiblestudy.org/courses/psalms/lessons/psalms-of-complaint-study-guide/
- How to Read and Understand the Psalms by Bruce K Waltke & Fred G Zaspel
- Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- New Bible Commentary by Wenham, Motyer, Carson, & France
- Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy by Mark Vroegop
- Gentle & Lowly by Dane Ortlund
- The Problem of Pain by C. S. Lewis
- Special Contributions & Gratitude: Debbie Stuart (GABC Women's Minister) & Women's Ministry Team, Dustin Lee (GABC Children's Pastor), Rabbi Neal Katz, Dr. Micahel Lyons, & Carye Gillen





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