



This study has been developed
for Huntingdon Valley Presbyterian Church
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A Process for Lament

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance..." - Ecclesiastes 3: 1,4 (ESV)

Introduction

Michael Card, singer, songwriter, author, says, "We were created to live with God in a garden, yet we wake every morning in the desert of a fallen world."

Not only is the world fallen around us, but often we are broken within it. Life hurts and we need help.

Some would tell us to just put on a happy face. Walk on the sunny side of the street! Fake it to make it! Endure and move forward. But, in our heart of hearts, we know this is easier said than done. In the face of a sorrowful situation, the only proper response, and the only response that leads to true healing, is to be sorrowful. To lament.

Card explains, "Think of lament as an essential ingredient of honest faith. It's the deep sense that something is wrong, whether with yourself or the world." He goes on to say, "Our inability or refusal to enter into personal lament betrays the fact that we do not recognize the depth of our sin. We stubbornly refuse to have our hearts broken by it."

Why is this important? Because Card concludes, "Until we learn to lament, we have nothing to say to most of the world."

At Huntingdon Valley Presbyterian Church, we tended to experience a lack of growth, a lack of vitality, and failure to fully care for our community. Even before COVID-19 came along, we have tended to turn our attention and energy inward, addressing our need for comfort, rather than seeing the need around us outside our doors.

While caring for each other within the body is a legitimate endeavor, it is not the heart of our calling.

Our calling is found in the Great Commission: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28: 18-20).

Our call is to GO! To go out into the community around us, out into the fallen world, to bring the Good News to those who are hurting, to baptize, to teach, to shepherd, and to make disciples who will themselves go and do likewise.

In Matthew 18: 12-13, Jesus explains that the ones out there, lost and wandering are indispensable. It is not that they are more important than the 99 inside the safety of the church. Rather, unlike those in the safety of the fold, they are in danger, and must therefore be rescued. He says, "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray."

Until our hearts break for the lost, we are unlikely to leave our comfort zones to go out and bring the Good News to them.

The goal of this study is to recognize and lament our personal sins, our corporate sins, and our society's sins. To receive God's comfort and forgiveness, and then in his joy, take his comfort and joy to others who are out there, all around us, in need of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. First we lament. Then we go out in joy. And finally we find and bring in the lost.

How To Use This Study Guide

This study guide contains five (5) short discussions covering various aspects of lament:

1. Nehemiah's Lament
2. For Whom Do We Lament?
3. Avoiding Avoiding Pain
4. Looking To God
5. Sorrow & Repentance Brings Comfort & Joy

We've also created prayers for each part which you can find on page 11.

Whether you are using this guide for personal study, or are going through it in a group, do each study one at a time.

Before you begin each study, spend time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to learn.

Take time to meditate on the questions and to carefully consider your answers. Look up the referenced scriptures in your Bible to see them in context.

Write your responses in the space provided, or even use a separate notebook as a journal to capture your thoughts and impressions on lament.

Two optional reference sections are included following the five studies and prayers:

Excerpts From Books Related To Lament - You can use these excerpts to (a) facilitate further group discussion on lament or enhance personal mediation on lament. And (b) as introductions to the books which you may wish to read to learn more about biblical lament.

Articles, Videos, And Music About Lament - These are selected resources that you can access to learn more about lament and use to enhance your own journey through lament.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, please feel free to contact any of the GO Project Vision Team members.

After completing the study, we would appreciate if you would share with us your experience.

- How has learning about lament enhanced your spiritual disciplines?
- What did you learn that changed your thinking about how you approach God?
- What new insights did you gain?
- How have you been reshaped by learning and practicing lament?

Please share your experience by speaking with any of the Vision Team members. You can also send an email to lament@HVPC.org.

Our prayer is that you will be blessed and that your relationship with the Lord will be deepened by going through this process and study of lament.

This study guide and other lament resources can be found online at www.HVPC.org/lament.

PART ONE/ Nehemiah's Lament

The year 2020 will likely be remembered as the year of lament. And for good reason! To lament is to passionately express grief or sorrow. It is to mourn and weep. And it's a perfectly reasonable response to what we endured throughout the year.

In the Bible, there's an entire book called Lamentations. It records the sorrow of Jeremiah marveling at the utter destruction that has fallen on Jerusalem around 586 B.C., brought on by the foolishness of God's people.

About a century and a half later, when Nehemiah learns that Jerusalem is again in tatters, his first response is to lament (Nehemiah 1).

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislew, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ² that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. ³ And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

For discussion

1. Look at the two sentences of verse 3. What realities and events triggered Nehemiah's lament?

2. The Babylonian Exile (586-516 BC) was the result of the Jews being uprooted from Israel and forcefully relocated to Babylon following the invasion by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. This is also known as the Diaspora, or the dispersion of the Jews. What must it have been like to be forcefully moved from all that was familiar into a new country, a new culture where nothing was familiar?

3. Now, with the conquering of Babylon by another ruler, the Jews have been allowed to return to Jerusalem. Why do you think verse 3 mentions only a "remnant" who have returned? What did they discover?

4. Describe Nehemiah's immediate response to the news.

5. Look at the elements of the prayer. Is there any sense of "Woe is me!?" How would you characterize the tone and overall arc of the prayer?

- Acknowledging and honoring the faithfulness of God (v. 5)
- Asking humbly for the attention of God (v. 6a)
- Confessing the sins of the people, and getting specific (v. 6b - 7)
- Reminding God of his promises to his people (v. 8-9)
- Reminding God who his people are (v. 10)
- Requesting the acceptance of the prayer of his people (v. 11)
- Asking for mercy and an answer to the prayer of his people (v. 12)

6. What can we learn about lament from Nehemiah's prayer?

PART TWO/ For Whom Do We Lament?

About a third of the Psalms are laments, and even Jesus lamented over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing!"

Destruction of homes and businesses through earthquakes, fires, riots, floods, or hurricanes is lamentable. Death, whether from COVID-19, at that hands of irresponsible police, through wanton gun violence, from planes flown into towers, or by abortion, is lamentable. Human trafficking -- the dehumanizing and commoditizing of children for the pleasure of the perverted -- is lamentable. Political bitterness fomenting antagonism and hostility among friends and within families is lamentable. Racism and racial injustice is lamentable.

All of this causes a sense of sorrow in us. A mourning for the bentness of the world -- a world bending away from God. The proper response is to lament. Why? Because Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

For discussion

1. Nehemiah lamented on behalf of the Jews. Jesus lamented on behalf of Jerusalem. In addition to lamenting for our individual sins, can we lament corporately for our church? For our society?

2. What are some things you need to lament for in your life?

3. What are some things our church may need to lament for?

4. What are some things in our culture, nation, society that we need to lament?

PART THREE/ Avoiding Avoiding Pain

Typically we hate pain. Our first reaction is to make it stop hurting, find a way to fix whatever must be broken, to ignore the source of the pain, to get it over with and move on. Lament says, "Not so fast. Perhaps you need to sit in your pain for a while and understand what's happening before you're ready to be delivered." It's not an option, but the heart of lament.

But when pain persists our next response is often complaint. "Why me? I don't deserve this! Life is not fair!" Complaining focuses on us and our situation robbing us of joy and gratitude. Lament can act as catharsis allowing us to release the emotion and regain our bearings.

For discussion

1. What are some ways we tend to avoid or shutdown pain and discomfort? Are these healthy or unhealthy?

2. Can you describe a time in your own life when you were in pain, and instead of shutting it down, sat in your pain and fully experienced it? How was this helpful for you later?

PART FOUR/ Looking to God

Lament acknowledges our neediness, reveals the condition of our heart, admits we are weak, and reorients us to the strength and sovereignty of God. It renews the image of God within us. It fosters empathy for others and leads us out of denial. It shuts down solution-making and turns our attention to the Savior, to God, getting us outside ourselves into his hands and opening ourselves to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Without lament, we tend to look to our own strength, or the strength of something other than God to provide an escape for us. What do we want? Relief! When do we want it? Now!

Until we mourn -- lament -- we can't be comforted. And we can't mourn when we're in a constant state of attempting repair by our own strength or in denial that we need God.

Heath A. Thomas, a dean and professor at Oklahoma Baptist University, writes, "Lament is a tool that God's people use to navigate pain and suffering."

And noted theologian N. T. Wright explains, "If he is to be Emmanuel, God-with-us, he must be with us where the pain is."

Are you ready to lament, acknowledge your need of God, and receive his grace and healing?

For discussion

1. What are some issues in your community, church, or personal life you need to lament?

PART FIVE/ Sorrow & Repentance Brings Comfort & Joy

The year 2020 was a tear-filled year. But that's okay. God comforts those who mourn and turn to him. As the Psalmist reminds us, "For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning" ([Psalm 30:5](#)).

Sorrow serves a purpose as Paul explains, "For our light and momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal glory that is far beyond comparison" ([2 Corinthians 4:17](#)).

We can move from pain via lament to receive comfort and gain eternal glory!

When lament passes, we can sing with the Psalmist, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!" ([Psalm 30:11-12](#)).

The best is always gained through tears. But before we can dance or laugh, we must weep and mourn.

For discussion

1. What are some ways you can encourage yourself to regularly pursue a spiritual discipline of lament?

2. What are some strategies we can employ to turn our attention outward and go bring the Good News to the lost ones around us?

Prayers for a Process for Lament

Part One: Nehemiah's Lament

Faithful and merciful God, the clear light of your Word reveals how we've missed the mark in our understanding of you. We have not fully acknowledged your sovereignty over all the earth, its past, present, and future, and so we have failed to engage in your concern for humankind with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We have not taken seriously enough the task you have assigned us as your daughters and sons, emissaries of your Kingdom, to bring the power of your peace and reconciliation in Jesus Christ, and the real-time goodness of that message, into the foreground of our witness.

Part Two: For Whom Do We Lament?

Hear our prayer, O Lord! At the Messiah's coming, angels proclaimed your peace, echoing the message of the prophets. We are not at peace, yet you have given us the message of reconciliation, ratified through the cross, and made present in your Holy Spirit. We have felt inadequate to the mission, and intimidated, and we have hidden ourselves away. Yet you, O Lord, have promised to be with us always, and to work your will in us through that mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead. Please accept, our Heavenly Father, our cry of lament, as we join our prayers with those of the risen Lord. Please send us out again, as agents of justice, mercy, healing, and restoration in the midst of confusion and despair. Bring your Way; bring your Truth; bring your Life.

Part Three: Avoiding Avoiding Pain

"Peace, be still! Be made whole! Neither do I condemn you!" Jesus, our elder Brother, these words of yours make possible for us to welcome the knowledge of our brokenness. This admission is painful, yet it is the only path to restoration and healing. You, our Great Shepherd, will lead us in paths of righteousness for your Name's sake. You will restore our souls. So sit with us, Lord, and hold us closely until our spirit is quieted within us. Breathe into us altogether, the Breath of Life. Feed us as your Body, with the Bread of Life. Slake our thirst, and make within us a spring of the Living Water. Anchor us securely upon the solid rock of faith.

Part Four: Looking to God

Our Triune God, may we be ransomed captives in your parade of victory over sin and death. May our prayers go up to your throne as a sweet fragrance and go out to our neighbors near and far, as light, strength and hope. Make us practical in our practice of the Gospel, both in the here and now, and in eternity. You, O Lord, are sovereign over heaven and earth, and we your servants, are not of the world, but we are in the world to do your will and bring you glory.

Part Five: Sorrow and Repentance Brings Comfort and Joy

Our Redeeming God, you are with us! Draw us now, to spend time daily with you as a cherished discipline. Let this become our first assignment of each day, taking our reserved seat, listening and learning from you. Open our awareness to the divine appointments you have placed on our calendars for each new day. Fit us with energy, creativity, imagination, and love, no matter what our circumstances may be, to bring comfort and joy to our neighbors near and far, and peace to the Family of God. At the end of the day, Lord, lead us into thoughtful review, to repent and put aside all that was not of you, and rejoice and rest in thanksgiving for all that that was of you. In this way, may we always be growing, as a community of faith, into the full stature of Christ. Amen, may it be so!

Excerpts From Books Related To Lament

You can use these excerpts to (a) facilitate further group discussion on lament or enhance personal meditation on lament. And (b) as introductions to the books which you may wish to read to learn more about biblical lament.

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***Lament for a Son* by Nicholas Wolterstorff (Eerdmans 1987)**

Made in the image of God: That is how the biblical writers describe us. To be human is to be an icon of God. This glory is one we cannot lose. It can be increased or diminished, though; our imaging can be closer or farther, more glorious or less. Authentic life is to image God ever more closely by becoming like Jesus Christ, the express image of the Father.

In what respects do we mirror God? In our knowledge. In our love. In our justice. In our sociality. In our creativity. These are the answers the Christian tradition offers us.

One answer rarely finds its way onto the list: in our suffering. Perhaps the thought is too appalling. Do we also mirror God in suffering? Are we to mirror him ever more closely in suffering? Was it meant that we should be icons in suffering? Is it our glory to suffer?

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Standing on a hill in Galilee Jesus said to his disciples: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Blessings to those who mourn, cheers to those who weep, hail to those whose eyes are filled with tears, hats off to those who suffer, bottoms up to the grieving. How strange, how incredibly strange!

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Who then are the mourners? The mourners are those who have caught a glimpse of God's new day, who ache with all their being for the days coming, and who break out into tears when confronted with its absence.

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***A Sacred Sorrow* by Michael Card (NavPress, 2005)**

Our inability or refusal to enter into personal lament betrays the fact that we do not recognize the depth of our sin. We stubbornly refuse to have our hearts broken by it.

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Without pain, Job might have never realized either the depth nor the dimensions of this kind of relationship with God [loving God for himself and not simply as the source of all His blessings], and perhaps never would we.

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We are a people in perpetual denial of the hidden hate we have for our enemies. Jesus showed us that hatred is a wound that must be healed, that denial is a paralysis only He can heal.... [Imprecatory laments] represent an invitation to the beginning of a process in which first, we admit that we do have enemies.

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Lament leads us in the direction of that kind of clarity [that David had after lamenting his dying child]. Only by realizing the reality of pain and acknowledging through lament to God our powerlessness and hopelessness, can we arrive at such a place of freedom as David inhabited.... As much as we can bear, the pain needs to be acknowledged.

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...the ultimate answer to all laments is not to be found in the specifics of what is lamented for.... The answer is always found in the Presence of God. It is rarely what we ask for, but it is always what we ultimately need.

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The Sweet Scroll of Lament: Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.

And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth" (Ezekiel 2:9 -3:3, NIV).

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Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy by Mark Vroegop (Crossway, 2019)

To cry is human, to lament is Christian.

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Lament is a prayer of pain that leads to trust.... Most biblical laments follow a pattern as God takes grieving people on a journey. This poetic odyssey usually includes four key elements: (1) an address to God, (2) a complaint, (3) a request, and (4) an expression of trust and/or praise.... Each step of lament is part of a pathway toward hope.... lament ends with renewed trust and praise.

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You need to know that lament does not always lead to an immediate solution. It does not always bring a quick or timely answer.

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Writers of laments and complaints in the psalms often seek to make their 'case' against God, frequently citing God's promises in order to complain that God seems to be forgetting his promises. They throw the promises of God back at him."

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Complaint is the turning point of lament. Be honest. Talk to God about your struggles. Even if it's messy or embarrassing to let biblical complaining push you toward what comes next: asking God for help."

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You might think that praying with someone in pain is a small and insignificant thing, but it's not. You'll likely be able to ask God for help with a different level of faith than your hurting friend can muster. The boldness of your request and the confidence in your approach to the throne of grace can be a great help. You can pray with a firm belief that creates stronger faith in others.

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Pain can bring clarity. Loss affirms trust.

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Prayers of lament are designed to remind us that God is worthy to be trusted -- even in this!

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Lament calls us to point our hearts Godward by rejoicing in God's grace.... Entering lament leads to rejoicing... Lament tunes the heart so it can sing about trust.... Lament leads to trust, but the path is not always clear or straightforward.... Lament creates a path through the messy wilderness of pain.... Keep trusting the One who keeps you trusting.... Laments pivot on God's promises.

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Lament can retune our hearts to what's really important.... Without sin there would be no lament.... Lament has the potential to turn our hearts Godward as we sing in a minor key about our individual and corporate need for God's mercy. Lament reminds us that the problem in the world is sin, and God is the only one who can make it right.

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Lament can point our hearts toward a future victory.

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Lament can be a roadmap to God's grace.... Lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust....

1. It is a language for loss... biblical vocabulary and a model for talking to God.... 2. It is the solution for silence...[for those] afraid or who refuse to talk to God about their struggles. 3. It is a category for complaints...complaining to God is not necessarily sinful. 4. It is a framework for feelings...Lament validates the expression of pain. 5. It is a process for our pain...It invites God's people on a journey as they turn to God. 6. It is a way to worship....through discovery, we open ourselves to God's grace and his ability to shape and change us.

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Lament can be uniquely a helpful framework for people who need spiritual guidance.

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Practicing lament can facilitate personal confession and a greater sensitivity to sin.

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There's something powerful hearing a congregation say, "We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and weakness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed by thought, word, and deed."

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Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times by Soong-Chan Rah (IVP Books, 2015)

Laments are prayers of petition arising out of need.

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The American church avoids lament. The power of lament is minimized and the underlying narrative of suffering that requires lament is lost.

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To only have a theology of celebration at the cost of the theology of suffering is incomplete.

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YHWH does not operate like a vending machine nor does he follow a simplistic pattern yielding the exact outcome we want. Defeated exiles would be tempted to forsake the complexity of YHWH worship for the simplicity of hearing exactly what they wanted to hear. In difficult times of great challenge, the people of God are tempted to believe solutions that are easy to follow because they align with what they desire. Jeremiah 29:8-9 presents a

warning to the exiles to not to give in to the temptation of easy but false answers advocated by false prophets.

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But Jeremiah 29 challenges these presuppositions and the simple solutions that tickle the ear of the typical American pastor. It is the same message that so many American Christians want to hear: they are still in control, there is no need for judgment, and there is no suffering. But easy answers that offer false hope are not solutions.

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Withdrawal from the world or accepting simplistic answers reveals human effort or human problem solving, while lament acknowledges who is ultimately in control. In the midst of a crisis, Lamentations points toward God and acknowledges his sovereignty regardless of the circumstances.

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By challenging the two primary temptations facing the exiles, Scripture now points the people of God toward the proper response to a broken world: lament.

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“Lament stems from an acute experience of pain, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual.” It is the human response to anguish and adversity, and it is not bound by the rules of praise.

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The exiles in Babylon are susceptible to false prophets who promise them what they want to hear: the hope that they will soon return to Jerusalem.

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It is not the moment to explain or justify. It is not even a moment to plead for a better future. Lamentations 1 provides the space and time to mourn. The funeral dirge does not allow for the denial of death, nor does it allow for the denial of culpability in the that death. The funeral dirge is a reality check for those who witness suffering and allows mourning that is essential for dealing with death.... Even if God’s people wanted to close their eyes and shut out the suffering around them, Lamentations won’t allow it.

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Lament is honesty before God and each other.

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Our nation’s tainted racial history reflects a serious inability to deal with reality. Something has died and we refuse to participate in the funeral.

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American culture tends to hide the stories of guilt and shame and seeks to elevate stories of success. American culture gravitates toward narratives of exceptionalism and triumphalism which results in amnesia about a tainted history. The reality of a shameful history undermines the narrative of exceptionalism, so it must remain hidden.

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Lament calls for authentic encounter with the truth and challenges privilege, because privilege would hide the truth that creates discomfort..... triumphalistic narratives that minimize stories of struggle.

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Our ears have been tuned to hear the call for successful pastors who will go and conquer the world with muscular Christianity, where celebration exists without lament.

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Praise, therefore, can seem hollow when neither lament nor petition has been sufficiently offered. Petition arises out of lament.

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Lament presents the opportunity to call out to God for his mercy. It acknowledges the need for God's justice and mercy that does not arise out of one's own strength and ability. Lament challenges the church to acknowledge real suffering and plead with God for his intervention.... The evangelical culture moves too quickly to praise from lament.

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But lament cannot and must not be ignored. In the biblical world, hope does not emerge from the self-aggrandizing act of recounting our successes. It is the desperate plea for God's intervention that arises out of lament that reveals a flickering glimpse of hope.

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Lament presents an appropriate response to suffering, but lament must also correspond to the recognition that God is in control.

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One of the most effective means of disengaging the church from the work of justice is making injustice a philosophical concept.

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The language of lament is the language of humility.

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...place and events did not make Jerusalem special. Instead, it was YHWH's presence that made Jerusalem special.

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Jeremiah directly speaks God's truth, but just as important, Jeremiah's expression of compassion reflects God's compassion. Jeremiah's heart was broken by the things that break the heart of God.

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[The book of] Lamentations recognizes that hope can arise in the midst of suffering because of God's faithfulness. Celebration can arise out of suffering, but lament is a necessary expression of that suffering. In a triumphalistic world, Lamentations makes no sense. The theology of celebration will always be more attractive than the theology of suffering.

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Deep suffering can result in a deep despair, unless the boundaries of suffering are laid out.

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...many American churches steeped in the theology of celebration lack lament as an expression of worship. This absence of lament is attributable in part to the denial of suffering, the fear of what an unfettered suffering may mean to the community and the lack of the practice of lament causing one to forget its importance.... Lament is truth telling....

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Western churches often present modes of worship that elevate celebration over suffering. The corrective of lament must be intentionally built into the structures of liturgy and worship life.

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Justice must move from the third person to the first person, from the abstract to the personal.

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In Lamentations, the people's hope is tied to submission to God, not to an assertion of their own abilities.

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Lamentations 3 reminds us that confession should be offered not only on an individual level but also on a corporate level. The reality of corporate sin requires the power of corporate confession. As the nation of Israel sinned collectively before God, they must now offer a collective confession.

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Authentic witness that arises from lament requires a level of confession that has often been neglected. Confession must operate on all levels to bring healing and hope for forgiveness.

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One of the gifts of Pentecostal forms of worship is the depth of emotions that arise from the context of suffering. Historically, Pentecostalism has drawn from urban settings, from the poor and disenfranchised of the community. Worship that encompasses the breadth of emotion and corresponds to the breadth of suffering is an important expression of complete worship. Lament allows for the fullness of emotions to be expressed.... Suffering and celebration must continue to intersect our communities.

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A corporate view of sin recognizes the power of sin to impact not only the individual but also the community.

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God is not impressed by what we have done or what we are doing, but instead he honors what he is going to make of us -- what he does in us and through us.

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As the prayers of lament were offered, there was recognition that responsibility could not be absolved. There is great value to lament, lament needs a response. That response comes from the Father above, but could it also require something from us?

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The worship life of Israel took seriously the role of lament. In contrast, the worship life of American evangelical Christianity is often devoid of lament. We ignore a key expression of worship and prayer and the opportunity to speak to God out of the midst of suffering.

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A theology of celebration has the luxury of being able to objectify God, and because suffering is kept at a distance it is not necessary for the presence of God to be immanent.

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Our prayers border on idolatry where we expect vending-machine type of results.

Articles, Videos, And Music About Lament

These are selected resources that you can access to learn more about lament and use to enhance your own journey through lament. You can find these links posted at www.HVPC.org/lament.

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The Need for Lament: Soong-Chan Rah (video)

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/the-need-for-lament-soong-ghan-rah/>

Bringing Our Pain To God: Michael Card and Calvin Seerveld on Biblical Lament in Worship

<https://crc-resources.platform.rapidgg.net/worship/bringing-our-pain-god-michael-card-and-calvin-seerveld-biblical-lament-worship>

3 Reasons We Ought to Corporately Lament

<https://www.9marks.org/article/3-reasons-we-ought-to-corporately-lament/>

Ideas for Including Lament in Your Worship

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/december-2006/ideas-including-lament-your-worship>

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

<https://worship.calvin.edu/search/?q=lament> (several items are listed)

The Psalm with a Painful Lament - Psalm 13

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/the-psalm-with-a-painful-lament-psalm-13/>

Psalm 42 and 43 - A Psalm of Lament

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/psalm-42-and-43-a-psalm-of-lament/>

TobyMac - I'm Sorry (a lament) (Lyric Video)

<https://youtu.be/KUYCIC6vqKk>

A New Liturgy: 15 minute guided lament liturgy

<https://www.anewliturgy.com/no-7-lament>

U2 Music Videos: Yahweh & 40

https://youtu.be/SEV-Y3b_hvw

Bono & Eugene Peterson talk about Psalms

<https://youtu.be/-l40S5e90KY>

Michael Card on Lament

Brief video: <https://youtu.be/9nF4TBkA9lc>

Podcast: <https://www.michaelcard.com/lament-erik-divietro>

(This also touches on the topics of healthy churches and related topics.)

Article: The Porter's Gate's songs give voice to the realities of 2020

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/music/porter-s-gate-s-songs-give-voice-realities-2020>

The Porters Gate Website & Lament Songs

<https://www.theportersgate.com/> / <https://push.fm/fl/lamentsongs>



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Email comments, questions, corrections, suggestions to lament@HVPC.org.

This study guide and additional lament resources are posted at www.HVPC.org/lament.