



A GUIDE FOR LAMENT

In Spiritual Disciplines Handbook, author Adele Calhoun says, “Sometimes the best response to the brokenness of the world and my own life is a mixture of tears and prayers. ... At the end of our resources we seem wired to weep and cry ‘help.’” Lament is the ancient practice of reaching out to God in our pain. The Psalmist gives us rich prayers of lament, with words and a rhythm we might emulate. In lament, we open our whole hearts to God—in pain and in joy.

01. PAIN + STRUGGLE | **PSALM 6:3, PSALM 38:9-11, PSALM 42:1-11**

Psalms often begin with a raw description of a troubling issue or complaint the Psalmist faces. “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!” (Psalm 130:1-2). Come to God honestly with your pain, sorrow and struggle, giving Him access to your innermost thoughts. Your pain might be personal or a cry on behalf of others, or even for the whole world.

02. MOURNING | **MATTHEW 5:4, PSALM 34:18**

The issues we face bring pain and sadness. In lament, God desires to meet us right in the midst of our mourning and deep grief. God invites us to pay attention to the somber, even desperate, feelings associated with loss, hurt, anger and sorrow. Sit with those feelings for a moment and ask the Lord to hear you.

03. CONFESSION | **PSALM 51, PSALM 32, PSALM 130**

Out of the pain, we hopefully will sense the need to confess—our sin, our lack of trust, our complicity in the brokenness of the world. Ask God to create a clean heart within you. Confess your need for God to be the Lord of your life and of the particular situation you are facing. God is always ready to forgive.

04. JUSTICE + MERCY | **PSALM 9:9-10, PSALM 103:11, PSALM 23:6, PSALM 100:5, PSALM 32:10**

We desperately need God’s mercy, steadfast love and forgiveness, and so does the whole world. God cares about those suffering in unjust systems and relationships. In your lament, include prayers for those experiencing injustice in its many forms: unfairness, slavery, human trafficking, racism, inequality, poverty, displacement and more. Ask God to bring justice and extend His mercy to those experiencing injustice both personally and systemically.

05. TRUST | **2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4**

As we pray through lament, we have the opportunity to recognize that God meets us—and comforts us—in our affliction, and that He invites us to a deeper empathy and care for others who suffer. Ask God to help you know His nearness and care more deeply, renewing your confidence that He is trustworthy and able to intervene in the midst of sorrow.

06. PRAISE | **PSALM 40, PSALM 30:4-5**

No matter the depth of pain the Psalmist feels and offers to God, the psalms end with a note of hope and praise. After truly lamenting, we have a greater capacity to see God at work. We grow in our understanding that evil won’t have the last word and that God will be faithful to His people. Pray in confidence that God is with you and hears all of our prayers.



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