

Lament

*A good name is better than fine perfume,
and the day of death better than the day of
birth.*

*It is better to go to a house of mourning
than to go to a house of feasting,
for death is the destiny of everyone;
the living should take this to heart.
Frustration is better than laughter,
because a sad face is good for the heart.
The heart of the wise is in the house of
mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of
pleasure.*

*It is better to heed the rebuke of a wise person
than to listen to the song of fools.*

Ecclesiastes 7:1-5

*My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, LORD, how long?
Turn, LORD, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.*

Psalm 6:3-4

*Sometimes the best response to the brokenness
of this world and my own life is a mixture of
tears and prayers. ... Tears and prayers of
lament won't solve the problem of suffering, but
they can staunch the raw nerve of pain by
throwing us into the arms of God.*

*from Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices
that Transform Us*

What Is Lament?

Lament is crying out to God with all of our emotions and asking for help. We ask “why” the bad and hard things are happening. We ask God to help us and make the situation right. We ask for forgiveness for our sins and whatever role we may have in the hard and sad things that are happening. Lament reminds us that God can handle our emotions and is with us in the midst of suffering. Laments builds our resiliency to continue on through hard times, reminds us of our own sinfulness and helps us stay humble, and strengthens our intimacy with God as we trust in God to respond to us when we cry out.

Practicing Lament

Read one of the psalms of lament and pray the words of the psalm as you think about your own life or a situation happening for someone you know or in the world at large. Some lament psalms to start with include Psalm 3-7, 9-10, 12-14, 17, 22, 25-27, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89-90, 94, 123, 126, 129.

Write your own lament. Use the structure below if that is helpful.

1. Address to God
2. Complaint – what is the problem, what are you grieving, what injustice do you see in the world
3. Petition – what do you want God to do about it; why should God do something
4. Expressions of confidence and trust – what do you know about God and God’s character that brings hope even in the midst of suffering and pain
5. Your response to God – what can you do in the midst of suffering, even as you continue to lament