

“Lament”

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Lent is a season of sorrow. More than usual, we are aware of the frail and fallen condition of our world, and certainly in our own body and soul. Our reflection during this season could be stirs a deep sense that something is wrong.

Something greater than just our individual sin, it is the pervasive effects of sin. Distraction. Deception. Discord. Despair. Disaster. Death. These are deep wounds.

What are we supposed to do with our pain, anger, grief, and confusion? Can I bring these things before God? People like Job, David, Jeremiah, and even Jesus reveal to us that these emotions can be turned into prayers of faith.

First, hear the good news: “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

Not only does God hear and understand our pain, he is especially inclined toward those who are hurting. We often think that being a Christian means we must always be happy in God, sweeping our grief under the rug of God’s sovereignty. Yet, God desires to enter into our pain: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26).

Second, the Scriptures teach us to lament, to wail and mourn and plead before the God who draws near to the brokenhearted.

- Jeremiah lamented over the plight of Israel because of her sin: “All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength. Look, O LORD, and see, for I am despised ... For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit; my children are desolate, or the enemy has prevailed” (Lamentations 1:11,16).

- The psalmists lament in times of trouble: “With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD. I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him” (Psalm 142:1-2).
- Jesus lamented over Jerusalem: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37).

Lament is not about getting things off your chest. It's about casting your anxieties upon God, and trusting him with them. Mere complaining indicates a lack of intimacy with God. Because lament is a form of prayer, lament transforms our cries and complaints into worship.

Lament help us to have a relationship with God and allows us to be close to our Father to remember his covenantal promises.

Anyone can complain, and practically everyone does. Christians can lament. They can talk to God about their condition and ask him to change things because they have a relationship with him. To lament is to be utterly honest before a God whom our faith tells us we can trust.

Biblical lament affirms that suffering is real and spiritually significant, but not hopeless. In his mercy, our God has given us a form of language that bends his ear and pulls his heart.