

Lament

one year
PRAYER EXPERIMENT

Life is hard. Usually we can handle the difficulties of life. We can easily imagine solutions for the difficulties. Our solutions then become our requests to God. Sometimes though, the hurt that life drops on us just becomes too big. We can no longer create solutions in our minds. We may be unable to even come up with words to express our pain. This is the place of lament. Lament is prayer born of powerful emotion.

Lament is prayer born from pain. It is a cry for help born from hurt and frustration. Given the way life is, we should be no stranger to lament. The Bible is no stranger to it. Jesus prayed prayers of lament. Over one-third of the Psalms are laments. Job lamented. These examples show us that lament is not only allowable, it is vital. Lament is good for us.

Proper lament allows us to be fully human in our relationship with God. Through it we get to express our mind, will *and* emotion. Proper lament also allows us to process these hurts in a way that prevents them from taking over our being. In a way that after we are done, reorients us to God.

So next time the burden of life becomes a little too much to bear, pray a prayer of lament that includes the elements below.

Elements of Lament

Addressed Directly to God

All prayer is personal communication, including lament. Open by directly addressing God.

Ask Heartfelt Questions

Bring before the Lord our honest questions about what is going on around us. The questions are not so much appeals for information as they are expressions of hurt and pain.

Describe the Afflictions

Tell God about the circumstances that arouse so much emotion within us. Go into detail, name names if needed.

Pray for Deliverance

After sharing with God about the injustice and the suffering occurring right before us, ask God to intervene. Ask God to deliver.

Express Confidence & Trust in God

After expressing our hurts and our pleas for help, we have reason for confidence because God's God this. Praise him for his attributes which full us with hope and confidence as we lean on him.

Some Tips for Lament

We can pray a prayer of lament at any time. It can be a part of our usual prayer time, or it can be a stand-alone prayer. Whenever we are particularly bothered by life, it is time to lament.

As we pray, work through all the elements shown at left. The order is not set in stone, but the order is helpful. The Psalms shows us some variation, and even some repetition of the elements. Feel free to make it our own, but following the order, especially the first few times, will ensure a good flow. And it will ensure we finish by focusing on God – and not the troubles that caused us to lament.

While praying a prayer of lament, do not feel burdened to pray a long prayer. The Bible records both long and short prayers of lament. The length of our expression is not important, but our authenticity is. Don't be long-winded, be honest.

Examples of lament in the Bible

The Psalms record wonderful examples of lament for us to learn from. Look to these Psalms for guidance:

10, 13, 22, 39, 44, 51, 56, 60, 74, 79, 80, 85, 90, 92.