

How do I Lament Well?

Presented by Mary Lowman

Air Dates: July 20-24, 2026

Day One

Sometimes it seems the Bible gives us conflicting guidance. For example, in Philippians 4:4 the Apostle Paul exhorts us to *rejoice in the Lord always*, and in case we didn't hear him the first time, he repeats, *again I say rejoice*. Christ-followers should be rejoicing people. That would seem to say we should always be positive, have smiles on our faces, and never feel sad. But then in Romans, the same Apostle Paul tells us to weep with those who weep.

King David in the Psalms repeatedly poured out his rawest grief and deepest questions to God. Over half of the Psalms are called Psalms of lament.

Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion (Psalm 77:7-9)?

That doesn't sound much like rejoicing in the Lord always. In fact, it is a lament—a prayer of pain, a raw, honest expression of grief and sorrow. Think of how Jesus lamented in the Garden of Gethsemane when he confessed *My soul is very sorrowful, even to death*. And on the cross, he cried out with a loud voice, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* And there's an entire book in the Old Testament called Lamentations!

Even a brief survey of Scripture confirms those who follow Christ will have times of lament in their lives. Somehow, we've often overlooked that biblical practice so many Christians feel guilty when they lament. But honest lament is not only permitted, it is encouraged in God's Word. Could it be you need to learn to lament?

Please understand I'm not talking about throwing a pity party every time your feelings are hurt! But feeling sorrow and pain and hurt when life throws unexpected bad news or difficult dark days our way should lead us to honest and candid prayers of lament. The Bible gives us some guidance on expressing our laments—laments which lead to acceptance or deliverance or guidance and eventually to joy, whatever your need may be.

Day Two

Is lamenting absent from your prayer life? Jesus said in this world we will have tribulation, and that confirms the need we have to learn what lament is and how we should use it. If you don't know how to prayerfully lament when those tribulations come your way, you are missing a marvelous way God has provided for us to deal with hard times and dark days.

How should we lament? There is no one right way; for each of us it will be somewhat different and personal. But there is a common thread in the prayers of lament in the Psalms, and that is, you take your lament to God and sometimes it's to God only. Be sure you go to God first with your lament.

Often laments begin with a question, like Psalm 13:

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me (Psalm 13:1-2)?

Actually, David had five questions of the Lord—five unanswered questions. Five things that puzzled him greatly; five things he wonders if God even knows or cares.

Ever been there? Your lament might sound more like how long, Lord, before my prodigal child comes to you? Or, how long will I have to endure this physical problem? Or, how long do I have to put up with a mate who is not true to you or to me? Or how long must I bear this unbearable pain of the loss of my child or parent or mate?

Whatever questions you have, your prayer of lament is your opportunity to express what's going on inside of you, even in stark, angry words. Maybe that's what you need to do even today—begin your lament to God. You don't have to sugar-coat it or worry about hurting his feelings. Tell God exactly what's going on inside you. He knows already, of course, but you need to put it into words and pour it out to God.

Day Three

I'm examining the need for and the benefit of learning when and how to lament. Unfortunately, lamenting is sometimes seen as spiritual immaturity. You just haven't learned to trust God, some would say.

I want to reassure you God has given us the green light to lament when it is needed. He invites you to pour out your heart to him, no holds barred, and express the deepest sorrow and grief you're going through. And a lament always begins with talking to God first.

In Psalm 13 David began with questions—almost accusations to God from his broken heart and his puzzled mind. He prayed, *consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death...* And again, in Psalm 88:2, *let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry!*

What questions of lament do you need to bring to God today? It could be you've never really allowed yourself to verbalize your questions—the ones that sound like accusations. Like: Lord, I don't understand why you haven't healed my friend. I know you can, but you haven't. Or, Lord, I know it is your will for my son to be born again, but even though he knows the truth, he refuses to accept you. Why? Or, Lord, you know how totally unfair and abusive this situation is at work, and I've prayed and prayed about it. Why haven't you changed it?

Maybe those are the kind of questions you've thought, but you've never asked God. You probably won't get answers to all your questions—God is not obligated to answer all our questions—but you will find comfort from bringing those questions to God.

Remember, don't neglect the Word of God which will give you guidance and comfort. Talk to God and let him talk to you through his Word. You probably won't feel like reading the Bible or even taking time to pray. That's because when you're in the midst of a troubling situation, your emotions become jumbled messes sometimes. But don't let the enemy keep you from reading the Bible and praying your prayer of lament. Lean into what you know is true, not to your unreliable feelings.

Day Four

I'm examining Christian lamenting. You could describe it as a prayer language, which God encourages us to use when we're in deep grief or anger or confusion. But this desperate prayer, as raw and painful

as it may be, intentionally maintains trust in God's character. Some have characterized lamenting as "crying human but lamenting Christian."

I have a note taped to my desk that says, "Today I will not complain about anything!" It's there to remind me complaining in general is not good, not biblical, and should not be the language of a Christ-follower. Yet when David was hiding in a cave, running for his life from King Saul, he begins Psalm 142 like this:

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).

He complains! Guess he never saw a sign like mine! But here's the thing: David is lamenting to the Lord about a very grievous, frightening situation. There's a difference in biblical laments and sinful complaints. Remember when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, having been miraculously rescued from slavery in Egypt. And what did they do? They complained! They complained about the food, about missing what they had in Egypt, about not having water, and they complained to Moses and to God. That is sinful complaining.

I've done more than my share of it, too, haven't you? From complaining about the weather to having to deal with a difficult coworker or not getting a raise, complaints can truly become our language. We have to be intentional about not complaining and griping, and truly learning to give thanks in everything, as the Bible says.

But a biblical lament is not a complaint against God; it is an appeal to God, and it's based on trust in who God is, on what he's done for you in the past, on his very character. Lamenting should move you along toward finding that peace that passes understanding, even when your questions are not answered. Complaining, on the other hand, will keep you mired in selfish attitudes and bring you down.

Day Five

The Bible never denies or ignores human suffering and emotions. You'll find throughout Scripture God understands and provides a sacred dignity to anger and despair, to injustice and sorrow. Christians are invited to share their grief, not to cover up and "fake fine" and hide their struggles.

That's why it's really important for all of us to use this spiritual means of lamenting when we find ourselves overwhelmed by life. I've encouraged you to lament to God when you're baffled and worried. Ask your questions, express your outrage, tell God just how you feel. That's where a lament begins.

Lament is often living in the reality of our faith journey—"the already but not yet" aspect of our faith. It's the tension between knowing God is good, he has good plans for you, he is sovereign and in control, while living in a world that is terribly broken and often very evil. Lamenting is an acknowledgement of that tension, sitting in the grief and pain of the present while looking forward to the promise of the future, our eternity with Christ.

You will note the Psalms of lament always end with a reaffirmation of trust in God. For example, Psalm 13 begins with *how long, oh Lord, will you forget me* and begs God for deliverance. But here is how David closed that Psalm of lament:

But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me (Psalm 13:5-6).

He sets his heart and his mind to trust in God's love, to rejoice in his salvation, and to sing to the Lord. Let me encourage you to follow his example. Pour out the fear, the anger, the confusion, and all the questions you have to God, with total honesty. But don't end there. Always, always confess that you still trust God; you will rejoice again, and recite all you have to be thankful for.

Jesus invites you to exchange your heavy burden for his light one because he can handle the heavy stuff; you can't. Leave your heavy burden with Jesus; take his light one. He'll always walk through it with you and bring you out to a good place. You can trust him.