

LAMENT TOOL

Adapted from Trauma Healing Institute and Lay Counseling Notes by Amber Helms

How can we help people who are grieving?

We can pray for them, we can listen to them, we can care for them in practical ways, and we can give them permission to express pain through lament. We lament over sins, brokenness over the world, the vulnerability of our heart, tragedies, death, destructive, loss, and in solidarity to weep with those who suffer.

Sixty-seven of the Psalms are laments*. Some were for use by individuals, others were used by the community together. In a lament, people pour out their complaints to God in an effort to persuade Him to act on their behalf, while resolving to trust in Him. Lament is not grumbling, but a prayer.

Laments allow a person to fully express their grief, and even accuse God, but this often followed by a statement of trust in God. This combination makes for very powerful prayers. This allows the grief to not stay hidden, but make space to call on God and express their heart to Him. Laments encourage people to be honest with God, to speak the truth about their feelings and doubts. It is human to grieve, but it is Christian to lament. To God, lament is a sign of faith, that the sufferer looks to God as the one in control, not the enemy.

Lament IS:

- a relational pathway through suffering
- a prophetic cry for justice and righteousness in a fallen world
- a tool to draw sufferer to truth and deeper into hope and trust
- expressing deep, unedited emotions to God
- a request crying out to God for help rather than taking action themselves

Lament IS NOT:

- Lament is not an attempt to solve the problem ourselves
- Lament is not our final prayer, but *in the meantime*.
- Lament is not our conclusion, but our process.
- Lament does not attempt to change truth based on feelings, but, through an authentic expression of feelings, clears the way for truth to be revealed.

Laments can have 6 parts, but the only part that has to be in a lament is the complaint:

- address to God (“Oh God”)
- **complaint (feelings, problem, your anger, pain, heartache or sadness)**
- confession of sin or innocence
- request for help (help, deliverance, intervention)
- a vow of remembrance, praise, or trust (remembrance, praise, trust, hope in God)
- selah (wait on the Lord, God’s response)

LAMENT TOOL EXAMPLE

The bible contains more lament psalms than any other kind of Psalm. This means we, too, can lament and pour out pain to God.

Psalm 13 vs 1-2 (complaint); vs 3-4 (request); and vs 5-6 (statement of trust and praise)

Psalm 13

1 How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,

Having sorrow in my heart daily?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

3 Consider and hear me, O Lord my God;

Enlighten my eyes,

Lest I sleep the sleep of death;

4 Lest my enemy say,

“I have prevailed against him”;

Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

5 But I have trusted in Your mercy;

My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord,

Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

***Individual Psalms of Lament include:** 3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89, 120, 139, 141, 142. **Corporate Psalms of Lament include:** 12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129.