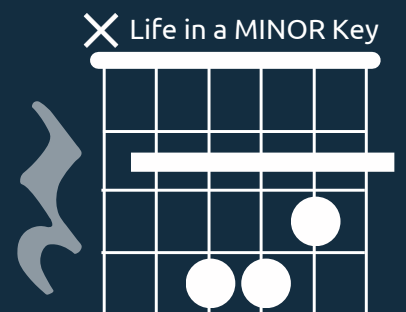




STUDY GUIDE

Aug 27
-
Sep 24

A series in *Lamentations*



LEARNING TO LAMENT

A STUDY

through the Book of Lamentations

August 27 - September 24

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Written by TJ Johnson

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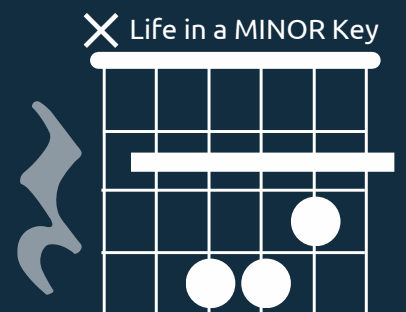
STUDY GUIDE

A series in *Lamentations*

A LAMENT OVER THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

LAMENTATIONS ONE

August 27



A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

Lamentations 1

How Lonely Sits the City

1 How lonely sits the city
that was full of people!

How like a widow has she become,
she who was great among the nations!

She who was a princess among the provinces
has become a slave.

2 She weeps bitterly in the night,
with tears on her cheeks;
among all her lovers
she has none to comfort her;
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her;
they have become her enemies.

3 Judah has gone into exile because of affliction
and hard servitude;
she dwells now among the nations,
but finds no resting place;
her pursuers have all overtaken her
in the midst of her distress.

4 The roads to Zion mourn,
for none come to the festival;
all her gates are desolate;
her priests groan;
her virgins have been afflicted,
and she herself suffers bitterly.

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

Lamentations 1

5 Her foes have become the head;
her enemies prosper,
because the Lord has afflicted her
for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away,
captives before the foe.

6 From the daughter of Zion
all her majesty has departed.
Her princes have become like deer
that find no pasture;
they fled without strength
before the pursuer.

7 Jerusalem remembers
in the days of her affliction and wandering
all the precious things
that were hers from days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the foe,
and there was none to help her,
her foes gloated over her;
they mocked at her downfall.

8 Jerusalem sinned grievously;
therefore she became filthy;
all who honored her despise her,
for they have seen her nakedness;
she herself groans
and turns her face away.

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

Lamentations 1

9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts;
she took no thought of her future;^[d]
therefore her fall is terrible;
she has no comforter.
“O Lord, behold my affliction,
for the enemy has triumphed!”

10 The enemy has stretched out his hands
over all her precious things;
for she has seen the nations
enter her sanctuary,
those whom you forbade
to enter your congregation.

11 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.”

12 “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Look and see
if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
which was brought upon me,
which the Lord inflicted
on the day of his fierce anger.

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

Lamentations 1

13 "From on high he sent fire;
into my bones he made it descend;
he spread a net for my feet;
he turned me back;
he has left me stunned,
faint all the day long.

14 "My transgressions were bound into a yoke;
by his hand they were fastened together;
they were set upon my neck;
he caused my strength to fail;
the Lord gave me into the hands
of those whom I cannot withstand.

15 "The Lord rejected
all my mighty men in my midst;
he summoned an assembly against me
to crush my young men;
the Lord has trodden as in a winepress
the virgin daughter of Judah.

16 "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,
for the enemy has prevailed."

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

Lamentations 1

17 Zion stretches out her hands,
but there is none to comfort her;
the Lord has commanded against Jacob
that his neighbors should be his foes;
Jerusalem has become
a filthy thing among them.

18 "The Lord is in the right,
for I have rebelled against his word;
but hear, all you peoples,
and see my suffering;
my young women and my young men
have gone into captivity.

19 "I called to my lovers,
but they deceived me;
my priests and elders
perished in the city,
while they sought food
to revive their strength.

20 "Look, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my stomach churns;
my heart is wrung within me,
because I have been very rebellious.
In the street the sword bereaves;
in the house it is like death.

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

Lamentations 1

21 "They heard my groaning,
yet there is no one to comfort me.
All my enemies have heard of my trouble;
they are glad that you have done it.
You have brought the day you announced;
now let them be as I am.

22 "Let all their evildoing come before you,
and deal with them
as you have dealt with me
because of all my transgressions;
for my groans are many,
and my heart is faint."

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

TLDR (too long; didn't read):

This Sunday we begin a five-week study through the book of Lamentations. Lamentations is a book give to us by God to help us process grief. Regardless if our grief is the result of our sin, another's sin against us, or our living in a fallen world, God gives us permission to mourn. There are no easy answers to our grief, but in the midst of it all there is God. This Sunday we begin a five-week study through the book of Lamentations. Since Lamentation is an often-neglected book in the church, many Christians may have very little understanding of HOW to study this book for themselves. That is why I have prepared some guidance on how to approach this book.

Want to go deeper into Lamentations? KEEP READING...

This Sunday we begin a five-week study through the book of Lamentations. Since Lamentation is an often-neglected book in the church, many Christians may have very little understanding of HOW to study this book for themselves. That is why I have prepared some guidance on how to approach this book:

1. Read the book in one setting.

This will take you approximately twenty minutes. Lamentations is poetry. Poetry is meant to move your heart. So, as you read/listen be moved the text. Don't ask questions. Don't analyze anything. Don't venture off into other books of the Bible in search of connecting truths. NOT YET! Simply allow the poet's grief to sit with you a while.

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

2. Re-read the book, but this time ONE chapter at a time.

Five Chapters. Five Poems. Like The Lord of the Rings Trilogy, the five poems collectively tell one story. But also like the Lord of the Rings Trilogy, each story is also meant to be taken by itself.

What is the theme of poem one? How does poem two differ from poem three? What big event is the poet retelling in poem four? What is poem five calling God's people to do in response to their suffering?

3. Note the beauty of its structure.

Note how many verses each chapter has (22, 22, 66, 22, 22). There's a reason for this. The poet has structured each poem around the Hebrew alphabet (22 letters). An English rendering would be something like:

Afflicted am I and beset...
Bones broken, wasted...
Chained so I cannot escape...
Desolate am I and desperate...

The structure calls us to KEEP READING. You KNOW you haven't gotten to the end until you reach Z (actually Tav-ת).

It is the poet's way of trying to say ALL there is to say about suffering. Or perhaps it is better to say, the poet is trying to make you FEEL all the feelings of suffering. This is God's dictionary for suffering. When you don't have the words to express your pain...turn here.

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

Chapter Three has sixty-six verses because the poet has TRIPLED the letter usage. Instead of A, B, C, D; it is now AAA, BBB, CCC, etc. It's a clue...PAY ATTENTION to Chapter Three. This is (very literally) the heart of the book.

Chapter Five loses its structure. There is no more alphabet pattern. I think the poet is trying to tell us, as much as we would like to structure our grief and order our sorrow, that just isn't possible. God is good (chapter three), but I still sometimes struggle to see His goodness. Even in light of God's goodness, I can't ALWAYS make sense of my grief.

4. If you're up for a challenge, read Jeremiah or at least 2 Kings 24-25.

Lamentations is Jeremiah's (my personal opinion of who wrote this book) funeral dirge over Jerusalem's destruction by Babylon in 586 BC. For over twenty years Jeremiah begged the people to repent. He warned them that if they did not, God would judge them for their sin. Instead of heeding that warning, the King burned Jeremiah's scroll (twenty years' worth of sermons), shackled Jeremiah, and threw him into a pit. When Babylon comes, they raid homes, destroy palaces, rape Jerusalem's daughters, desecrate the Temple, steal the holy furniture, and then burn it all to the ground. This, all after an eighteen-month siege where some citizens were so hungry they resorted to cannibalism.

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

In other words, Jeremiah's warnings came to pass. And instead of standing on a hill shouting, "I TOLD YOU SO," Jeremiah falls to the ground and weeps over the city. And this should certainly remind us of a FUTURE PROPHET who would be rejected, beaten, imprisoned, and even murdered by His own. Instead of raining down fire from heaven, this future prophet stands on a hill overlooking the city and sheds tears (*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.*). He will later go to an opposite hill, outside the city and instead of shedding tears, He will shed His own blood for the sins of the world.

As we read Lamentations, we will be forced to ask, "Where is God in our darkest moments." To answer that question, we must look past Jeremiah's Laments to hear the Laments of Jesus.

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me...
Father FORGIVE THEM...
It is FINISHED...

Jeremiah was placed in a cave...Jesus was placed on a cross!
Jeremiah shed tears...Jesus shed blood!
Jeremiah was rescued from death...Jesus endured death!

A Lament Over the Seriousness of Sin

5. Remember this is a communal book.

Lamentations is not about a person but a PEOPLE. It is a reminder that we must never grieve alone. For Jews, Lamentations is read on the 9th day of the month of Av. For Catholics, Orthodox, and Anglican, Lamentations is read on Good Friday. In both cases, the reading is communal reading. As a community, they gather TOGETHER to remember and grieve.

The best way to study Lamentations is to live it! There are hurting people in our community. Find them, then go and sit with them in their grief. Invite someone into your own grief. Mourn the losses...ALL OF THEM...Remember His faithfulness...ALL OF THEM! Don't seek simple answers. Let this book of wounds speak to our wounds.



Behold My Affliction

Discussion Questions

- 1. Have someone in the group give a summary of the events leading up to the writing of Lamentations (See 2 Kings 24-25; Jeremiah 52), then read/listen (NIV ESV) to Lamentations 1.**
- 2. List out the different words used in chapter one to describe Israel's sin. How does the Bible define sin and why is sin such a prominent theme throughout the Bible?**
- 3. Discuss the specific sins God brings against Israel (Jeremiah 1-24 mentions, idol worship, dishonesty, violence, oppression, injustice against the poor, widow, orphan, foreigner, hypocrisy, false teaching/prophecy, luxurious lifestyle to the neglect of the poor, etc)?**
- 4. What specific sins do you think God brings against the church & culture today?**
- 5. List the consequences of sin Israel experienced in Lamentations one. Which of these do you find most terrifying?**
- 6. In what ways do we see the consequences of sin played out in real life today (our own lives, our family, our community, our country, our world)?**
- 7. Is our suffering always the result of our sin? Give Biblical proofs for your answer.**



Behold My Affliction

Discussion Questions

8. List the verses where Lamentations One speaks of not finding anyone to comfort Jerusalem in their sin. Can you sympathize with Jerusalem? If so, how/where did you find relief for your own suffering?
9. Is God right to judge sin as harshly as He does? Explain.
10. In what ways do we see Jerusalem repent of their sin?
11. What is true repentance and how do you know when you have truly repented?
12. Read Lamentations 1:12. Why does she call on others to look and see her condition?
13. How can we use our past experiences with sin to help others avoid/turn from sin?
14. In what ways does Jesus and His own suffering for our sin help us make sense of Lamentations One?



Behold My Affliction

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



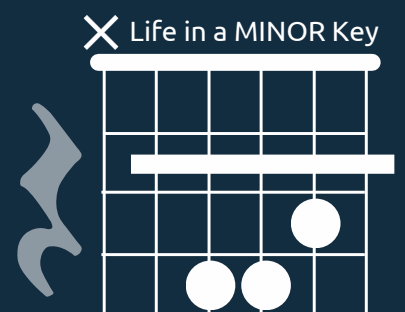
STUDY GUIDE

A series in *Lamentations*

WHEN GOD GIVES ME MORE THAN I CAN BEAR

LAMENTATIONS TWO

September
3



When God Gives Me More Than I Can Bear

Lamentations 2

The Lord Has Destroyed Without Pity

1 How the Lord in his anger
has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud!
He has cast down from heaven to earth
the splendor of Israel;
he has not remembered his footstool
in the day of his anger.

2 The Lord has swallowed up without mercy
all the habitations of Jacob;
in his wrath he has broken down
the strongholds of the daughter of Judah;
he has brought down to the ground in dishonor
the kingdom and its rulers.

3 He has cut down in fierce anger
all the might of Israel;
he has withdrawn from them his right hand
in the face of the enemy;
he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob,
consuming all around.

4 He has bent his bow like an enemy,
with his right hand set like a foe;
and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes
in the tent of the daughter of Zion;
he has poured out his fury like fire.

When God Gives Me More Than I Can Bear

Lamentations 2

5 The Lord has become like an enemy;
he has swallowed up Israel;
he has swallowed up all its palaces;
he has laid in ruins its strongholds,
and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah
mourning and lamentation.

6 He has laid waste his booth like a garden,
laid in ruins his meeting place;
the Lord has made Zion forget
festival and Sabbath,
and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.

7 The Lord has scorned his altar,
disowned his sanctuary;
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy
the walls of her palaces;
they raised a clamor in the house of the Lord
as on the day of festival.

8 The Lord determined to lay in ruins
the wall of the daughter of Zion;
he stretched out the measuring line;
he did not restrain his hand from destroying;
he caused rampart and wall to lament;
they languished together.

When God Gives Me More Than I Can Bear

Lamentations 2

9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;
he has ruined and broken her bars;
her king and princes are among the nations;
the law is no more,
and her prophets find
no vision from the Lord.

10 The elders of the daughter of Zion
sit on the ground in silence;
they have thrown dust on their heads
and put on sackcloth;
the young women of Jerusalem
have bowed their heads to the ground.

11 My eyes are spent with weeping;
my stomach churns;
my bile is poured out to the ground
because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,
because infants and babies faint
in the streets of the city.

12 They cry to their mothers,
“Where is bread and wine?”
as they faint like a wounded man
in the streets of the city,
as their life is poured out
on their mothers' bosom.

When God Gives Me More Than I Can Bear

Lamentations 2

13 What can I say for you, to what compare you,
O daughter of Jerusalem?
What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you,
O virgin daughter of Zion?
For your ruin is vast as the sea;
who can heal you?

14 Your prophets have seen for you
false and deceptive visions;
they have not exposed your iniquity
to restore your fortunes,
but have seen for you oracles
that are false and misleading.

15 All who pass along the way
clap their hands at you;
they hiss and wag their heads
at the daughter of Jerusalem:
“Is this the city that was called
the perfection of beauty,
the joy of all the earth?”

16 All your enemies
rail against you;
they hiss, they gnash their teeth,
they cry: “We have swallowed her!
Ah, this is the day we longed for;
now we have it; we see it!”

When God Gives Me More Than I Can Bear

Lamentations 2

17 The Lord has done what he purposed;
he has carried out his word,
which he commanded long ago;
he has thrown down without pity;
he has made the enemy rejoice over you
and exalted the might of your foes.

18 Their heart cried to the Lord.
O wall of the daughter of Zion,
let tears stream down like a torrent
day and night!
Give yourself no rest,
your eyes no respite!

19 "Arise, cry out in the night,
at the beginning of the night watches!
Pour out your heart like water
before the presence of the Lord!
Lift your hands to him
for the lives of your children,
who faint for hunger
at the head of every street."

20 Look, O Lord, and see!
With whom have you dealt thus?
Should women eat the fruit of their womb,
the children of their tender care?
Should priest and prophet be killed
in the sanctuary of the Lord?

When God Gives Me More Than I Can Bear

Lamentations 2

21 In the dust of the streets
lie the young and the old;
my young women and my young men
have fallen by the sword;
you have killed them in the day of your anger,
slaughtering without pity.

22 You summoned as if to a festival day
my terrors on every side,
and on the day of the anger of the Lord
no one escaped or survived;
those whom I held and raised
my enemy destroyed.

When God Gives Me More Than I Can Bear

Soong-Chan Rah, in his book "Prophetic Lament," highlights a prevailing issue within contemporary churches: the LAMENT, once an integral part of worship, has receded into obscurity. While denominational liturgical books (Lutheran Book of Worship, Book of Common Prayer, Lectionary from Mass, etc) are full of the Psalms, strikingly, almost NONE of those Psalms are Psalms of lament. For some reason, they are simply missing. Furthermore, only thirteen percent of hymns found in the average hymnal can be classified as lament. Even when we examine CCLI's list of the top one hundred worship songs used in the church today, a mere five percent qualify as lament. And yet when you read the Psalms, nearly HALF are Psalms of lament.

While we have been well-trained to encounter God in our joy, we find ourselves ill-equipped to meet Him in our sorrow. Perhaps the reason our generation is so overcome with fear and anxiety, perhaps the reason, "triggers" are such a buzzword in our generation, perhaps the reason we read almost daily of "deconstruction" stories, is precisely because there are no SONGS of lament, no PRAYERS of lament, no PSALMS of lament in our churches today.

We have gutted the church of God's gift to carry us through our grief.

This Sunday we will seek to rectify this great wrong as we walk through Lamentations 2.

Come lament with me,
Pastor TJ



Beyond Your Own Strength

Discussion Questions

- 1. Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-9. Share a personal experience when you felt overwhelmed “beyond your own strength.”**
- 2. Remind the group of the context of Lamentations. What specific things has Lamentations recorded that would qualify as, “burdened beyond their own strength”?**
- 3. How did Israel and the Church use song to encounter their own grief? Discuss why song, instead of some other medium, was employed in times of sorrow. (SEE: *Lamentations, Psalm 22, 13, 42, 51, 69, 88, 102, 109, 130, 137, 143; 1 Samuel 16: 14-23; 2 Samuel 1:17-27; 2 Chronicles 35:25; Job 35:10; Jeremiah 9:17-18, and Amos 5:16; Acts 16:25; Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Luke 1:46-55*)**
- 4. What are some songs that have ministered to you in your grief?**
- 5. Read Lamentations 2:10. Identify the various postures of grief found in Lamentations 2. What are other postures of grief mentioned in the rest of the Bible?**
- 6. Have you found the postures of grief to be helpful in your time of mourning? Explain.**
- 7. Read Lamentations 2:18 & Psalm 56:8. Who are some people in the Bible that wept in their grief? Consider the biblical teachings about weeping and contrast them with societal attitudes.**



Beyond Your Own Strength

Discussion Questions

8. Describe a personal experience where weeping helped you cope with grief.
9. Identify contemporary issues that the church should be actively weeping over today.
10. Analyze the complaints voiced by the poet in Lamentations, particularly in Lamentations 2:1-2, 20-21 (see also Psalm 13:1-2; & Psalm 44:23-26). How does this type of interaction with God make you feel and why?
11. Discuss why complaint a key part of lament and explore reasons why some Christians are reluctant to voice their complains to God in prayer?
12. When is complaint sinful and wrong?
13. How does the structure of Lamentations remind us that there are no simple answers to our grief or that overcoming grief will be quick and easy?
14. Read Lamentations 2:14. Why do you suppose these “prophets,” prophesied goodness instead of sorrow prophesied goodness instead of sorrow during Israel's time of grief?



Beyond Your Own Strength

Discussion Questions

15. Have you ever received “false and misleading” words in your time of grief? Compile a list of common unhelpful phrases to avoid when consoling someone in mourning.
16. Read Proverbs 25:11. When it is appropriate to speak the truth versus silently offering support and empathy to a grieving friend?
17. Summarize the four steps mentioned in the sermon for effective lament and explore how Jesus participated in each one.
18. What do you need to lament today?
19. Is there anyone suffering in your community you need to lament with?

Lament Together:

Take some time to practice lament by using the following structure:

- God, I know you are not _____, but it feels as if you are!
- God, I know you are good and holy, but I’m in pain, so I have to ask, **WHY** did you allow _____?



Beyond Your Own Strength

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



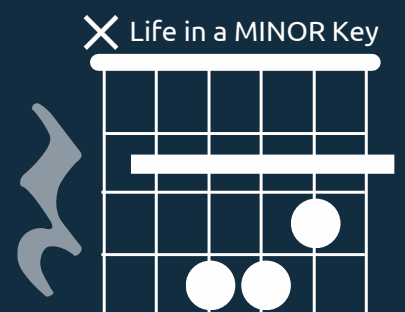
STUDY GUIDE

September
10

A series in *Lamentations*

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

LAMENTATIONS THREE



Great is Thy Faithfulness

Lamentations 3

Great Is Your Faithfulness

- 1 I am the man who has seen affliction
under the rod of his wrath;
- 2 he has driven and brought me
into darkness without any light;
- 3 surely against me he turns his hand
again and again the whole day long.
- 4 He has made my flesh and my skin waste away;
he has broken my bones;
- 5 he has besieged and enveloped me
with bitterness and tribulation;
- 6 he has made me dwell in darkness
like the dead of long ago.
- 7 He has walled me about so that I cannot escape;
he has made my chains heavy;
- 8 though I call and cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer;
- 9 he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones;
he has made my paths crooked.
- 10 He is a bear lying in wait for me,
a lion in hiding;
- 11 he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces;
he has made me desolate;
- 12 he bent his bow and set me
as a target for his arrow.
- 13 He drove into my kidneys
the arrows of his quiver;

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Lamentations 3

14 I have become the laughingstock of all peoples,
the object of their taunts all day long.

15 He has filled me with bitterness;
he has sated me with wormwood.

16 He has made my teeth grind on gravel,
and made me cower in ashes;

17 my soul is bereft of peace;
I have forgotten what happiness[a] is;

18 so I say, "My endurance has perished;
so has my hope from the Lord."

19 Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!

20 My soul continually remembers it
and is bowed down within me.

21 But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;**[b]**
his mercies never come to an end;

23 they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him."

25 The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul who seeks him.

26 It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Lamentations 3

26 It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.

27 It is good for a man that he bear
the yoke in his youth.

28 Let him sit alone in silence
when it is laid on him;

29 let him put his mouth in the dust—
there may yet be hope;

30 let him give his cheek to the one who strikes,
and let him be filled with insults.

31 For the Lord will not
cast off forever,

32 but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion
according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

33 for he does not afflict from his heart
or grieve the children of men.

34 To crush underfoot
all the prisoners of the earth,

35 to deny a man justice
in the presence of the Most High,

36 to subvert a man in his lawsuit,
the Lord does not approve.

37 Who has spoken and it came to pass,
unless the Lord has commanded it?

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
that good and bad come?

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Lamentations 3

- 39 Why should a living man complain,
a man, about the punishment of his sins?
- 40 Let us test and examine our ways,
and return to the Lord!
- 41 Let us lift up our hearts and hands
to God in heaven:
- 42 "We have transgressed and rebelled,
and you have not forgiven.
- 43 "You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us,
killing without pity;
- 44 you have wrapped yourself with a cloud
so that no prayer can pass through.
- 45 You have made us scum and garbage
among the peoples.
- 46 "All our enemies
open their mouths against us;
- 47 panic and pitfall have come upon us,
devastation and destruction;
- 48 my eyes flow with rivers of tears
because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.
- 49 "My eyes will flow without ceasing,
without respite,
- 50 until the Lord from heaven
looks down and sees;
- 51 my eyes cause me grief
at the fate of all the daughters of my city.
- 52 "I have been hunted like a bird
by those who were my enemies without cause;

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Lamentations 3

53 they flung me alive into the pit
and cast stones on me;
54 water closed over my head;
I said, 'I am lost.'
55 "I called on your name, O Lord,
from the depths of the pit;
56 you heard my plea, 'Do not close
your ear to my cry for help!'
57 You came near when I called on you;
you said, 'Do not fear!'
58 "You have taken up my cause, O Lord;
you have redeemed my life.
59 You have seen the wrong done to me, O Lord;
judge my cause.
60 You have seen all their vengeance,
all their plots against me.
61 "You have heard their taunts, O Lord,
all their plots against me.
62 The lips and thoughts of my assailants
are against me all the day long.
63 Behold their sitting and their rising;
I am the object of their taunts.
64 "You will repay them, O Lord,
according to the work of their hands.
65 You will give them dullness of heart;
your curse will be on them.
66 You will pursue them in anger and destroy them
from under your heavens, O Lord."

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Almost every lament in the Bible starts with complaint and ends with praise. Last week we looked at the Biblical way to complain. This week we will be reminded that Lament should NEVER get stuck at the complaint phase. Lament MUST proceed to praise. This is done not by looking at our circumstances, but by intentionally recalling to mind the character of Christ.

22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
23 they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

Join us this week as we learn how to say amen in our l(amen)t.

Having hope with you,
Pastor TJ



The Steadfast Love of the Lord

Discussion Questions

- 1. How does the poet's description of God change throughout the chapter and what causes that change?**
- 2. Share of a time in your life when you felt like Lamentations 3:17-18 was true for you. How were you able to regain hope?**
- 3. Read Lamentations 3:17-21. Why is it important as Christians that we live by what we believe (This I call to mind) and not just by what we see (Remember my affliction and my wanderings) and feel (I have forgotten happiness)?**
- 4. What are some strategies to help us "call to mind" what we believe about God? (ex. Apostle's creed, confession of faith, song, small group, Bible reading, etc)**
- 5. Read Lamentations 3:22a & Deuteronomy 7:7-8. How is God's steadfast love (Hesed) different from much love we see in the world today?**
- 6. What evidence is there that God loves us? (Work your way through the Old and New Testament).**
- 7. How do you reconcile a God who loves us and a God who allows great tragedy into our lives (think of the terrible suffering we have read about in this book)?**



The Steadfast Love of the Lord

Discussion Questions

8. Read Lamentations 3:22b-23a. How would you describe mercy? Give some examples of mercy in action today.
9. Read Nehemiah 9, noting how often mercy is used. What evidence is there of God's boundless mercy toward us? (both Old Testament and New Testament).
10. In light of Israel's tremendous suffering, in what ways did God prove to be a God of never-ending mercy?
11. How has God shown His mercy toward you recently?
12. How would you define God's Faithfulness? (Biblically speaking, God's faithfulness **MUST** be linked to His personhood and His commitment to honor and glorify His name (see 2 Tim. 2:13; Ps. 31:3, 79:3; Isa. 48:11, etc)).
13. What are some promises that God has made in the Old Testament that He has fulfilled? How does this create in us an ability to trust His faithfulness?
14. What are some promises given to us in the New Testament that have been particularly meaningful to you in dark times and why?
15. How does "the man" in this chapter help foreshadow (see Heb. 10:1) the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, our Savior?



The Steadfast Love of the Lord

Discussion Questions

16. Read Lamentations 3:24 and Numbers 18:20. What does Jeremiah mean when He says, “The LORD is my portion,” and why does this give him hope?
17. How does suffering help reveal to us what we have been incorrectly elevating as our portion?

Going Deeper in the Text

18. Why does the poem go back to complaint after v. 42 and what does that teach us about Biblical Lament?
19. Read Lamentations 3:25-26. What are some correct and incorrect ways to wait for God in our suffering?
20. Read Lamentations 3:33. What does this mean and why is it important to know in our suffering?
21. Read Lamentations 3:55-66. Notice the verb shifts in this section (Called, came, have, will). How does the past inform our present that in turn gives hope to our future?



The Steadfast Love of the Lord

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



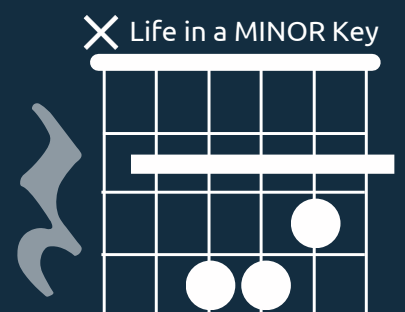
STUDY GUIDE

September
17

A series in *Lamentations*

JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED

LAMENTATIONS FOUR



Justice Will Be Served

Lamentations 4

The Holy Stones Lie Scattered

1 How the gold has grown dim,
how the pure gold is changed!

The holy stones lie scattered
at the head of every street.

2 The precious sons of Zion,
worth their weight in fine gold,
how they are regarded as earthen pots,
the work of a potter's hands!

3 Even jackals offer the breast;
they nurse their young;
but the daughter of my people has become cruel,
like the ostriches in the wilderness.

4 The tongue of the nursing infant sticks
to the roof of its mouth for thirst;
the children beg for food,
but no one gives to them.

5 Those who once feasted on delicacies
perish in the streets;
those who were brought up in purple
embrace ash heaps.

6 For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater
than the punishment of Sodom,
which was overthrown in a moment,
and no hands were wrung for her

7 Her princes were purer than snow,
whiter than milk;
their bodies were more ruddy than coral,
the beauty of their form was like sapphire.

Justice Will Be Served

Lamentations 4

8 Now their face is blacker than soot;
they are not recognized in the streets;
their skin has shriveled on their bones;
it has become as dry as wood.

9 Happier were the victims of the sword
than the victims of hunger,
who wasted away, pierced
by lack of the fruits of the field.

10 The hands of compassionate women
have boiled their own children;
they became their food
during the destruction of the daughter of my people.

11 The Lord gave full vent to his wrath;
he poured out his hot anger,
and he kindled a fire in Zion
that consumed its foundations.

12 The kings of the earth did not believe,
nor any of the inhabitants of the world,
that foe or enemy could enter
the gates of Jerusalem.

13 This was for the sins of her prophets
and the iniquities of her priests,
who shed in the midst of her
the blood of the righteous.

14 They wandered, blind, through the streets;
they were so defiled with blood
that no one was able to touch
their garments.

Justice Will Be Served

Lamentations 4

15 "Away! Unclean!" people cried at them.

"Away! Away! Do not touch!"

So they became fugitives and wanderers;

people said among the nations,

"They shall stay with us no longer."

16 The Lord himself has scattered them;

he will regard them no more;

no honor was shown to the priests,

no favor to the elders.

17 Our eyes failed, ever watching

vainly for help;

in our watching we watched

for a nation which could not save.

18 They dogged our steps

so that we could not walk in our streets;

our end drew near; our days were numbered,

for our end had come.

19 Our pursuers were swifter

than the eagles in the heavens;

they chased us on the mountains;

they lay in wait for us in the wilderness.

20 The breath of our nostrils, the Lord's anointed,

was captured in their pits,

of whom we said, "Under his shadow

we shall live among the nations."

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,

you who dwell in the land of Uz;

but to you also the cup shall pass;

you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.

22 The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished;

he will keep you in exile no longer;

but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish;

he will uncover your sins

Justice Will Be Served

Lament is profoundly personal. Often, when sorrow strikes, we instinctively turn inward, consumed by our own concerns. Suffering can make us so fixate on our own troubles, we become oblivious to the struggles of others. And yet...Biblical lament must always be a COMMUNAL experience, where others join into our sorrow and we in turn join into theirs.

As Philippians reminds us, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." In 2 Corinthians, we learn that God comforts us in all our afflictions so that we can, in turn, offer comfort to others. Galatians urges us to "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

This Sunday, we will discuss into the vital importance of lamenting WITH others. True Biblical Lament only emerges when we transition from asking, "Why is this happening to me?" to "Why is this happening to my neighbor?" To lament effectively means we have learned not only to acknowledge our own sorrows but to be acutely aware of our neighbor's anguish. It means stepping into their world and becoming one with them in their suffering.

Each Sunday you hear mention that City Church is a church, "for the city." This MUST be true in our lament! The church, in living intentionally within this city, must seek out opportunities to lament alongside our neighbors, addressing the many injustices that plague our world.

For the city,
Pastor TJ



He Will Uncover Your Sins

Discussion Questions

1. Give some examples where individuals, groups, and societies have asked for justice. How did this make you feel?
2. Read Lamentations 1:22, 3:59-66, and 4:21-22 (see also Psalm 7:6-9, 35:1-3, Psalm 69:22-28, Psalm 109:6-20). How are we to understand these types of prayer that are calling on God to judge those who have wronged us? How does it make you feel?
3. Read Lamentations 4:1-10 (see also Zechariah 7:9-10). Why are these four groups often highlighted in the Old Testament and who might we include in this group in our world today?
4. Where in this book does the poet lament over economic disaster brought on by Babylon? As best as you can, try to describe the poverty the Israelites would have experienced.
5. Have you seen poverty in our world today? If so, share (where, when, what, how you felt, etc).
6. Is there anything we can do to help the poor?
7. Read Lamentations 1:18, 2:21, and 5:11. In what ways were women vulnerable then and now?
8. What can the church do to honor and protect women?



He Will Uncover Your Sins

Discussion Questions

9. Read Lamentations 2:19; 4:4, 10. In what ways were children vulnerable then and now?
10. The sermon this week makes a hard stand against abortion. There are other Christians that see abortion as a woman's reproductive rights. Do you see this issue as a primary or secondary issue? Explain Biblically.
11. Read Lamentations 4:7-8 (see also Matt. 5:10, 1 Pet. 3:14, Phil. 3:8, Rev. 6:10). What does Lamentations teach us about the righteous suffering along with the unrighteous? (Note: The Hebrew *nāzîr* can be translated Nazarite. At the very least, we can say the righteous prophet Jeremiah suffered along with the unrighteous king).
12. Take some time to discuss and lament Christian persecution in the world today. Have you known anyone personally who was persecuted for their faith?
13. Read Lamentations 4:13-16 (See also Eze 34:1-4). Note in the text the irony of the role of these leaders and how the exact opposite was true of them.
14. In what ways were the religious leaders during Jeremiah's time corrupt?
15. What are some modern scandals of Christians leaders today and how does that make you feel?



He Will Uncover Your Sins

Discussion Questions

16. What can the church do to heal the wounds church leaders have inflicted on others?
17. Read Lamentations 4:17 (see also Lamentations 1:2, 7, 17, 19, etc). What countries does Jeremiah describe as “not so innocent” bystanders? Why does the Lord hold them accountable for their silence? (see also Jer. 49, Eze 25:12-24)
18. Read Prov. 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:17 and Psalm 82:3-4. Why does God call us to speak up against injustice done to others?
19. What are some injustices done in the world where you felt people remained silent?
20. Read Lamentations 4:20 & Psalm 72. According to God, what is the role of government and how did Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar fail to fulfill that role?
21. What are some injustices you have seen from governments in our world today and how should the church respond to those injustices?
22. How can Christians lovingly navigate the complexities of politics when we have differing opinions on how government should function?



He Will Uncover Your Sins

Discussion Questions

23. Read Lamentations 4:22 (see also Isaiah 9:1-11; 11; Revelation 18-21). How does the future promise of a world made right help us to live in an unjust world today?
24. Where is Jesus found in this chapter and how does He help us make sense of this type of lament?



He Will Uncover Your Sins

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



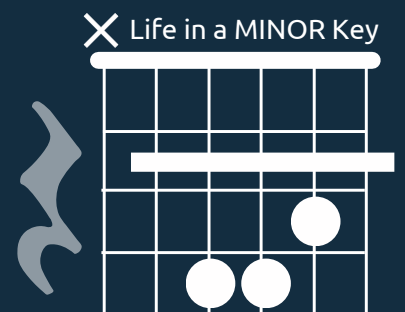
STUDY GUIDE

September
24

A series in *Lamentations*

HOW TO PRAY IN YOUR SUFFERING

LAMENTATIONS FIVE



How to Pray in Your Suffering

Lamentations 5

Restore Us to Yourself, O Lord

- 1 Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!
- 2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.
- 3 We have become orphans, fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.
- 4 We must pay for the water we drink;
the wood we get must be bought.
- 5 Our pursuers are at our necks;
we are weary; we are given no rest.
- 6 We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria,
to get bread enough.
- 7 Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
and we bear their iniquities.
- 8 Slaves rule over us;
there is none to deliver us from their hand.
- 9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives,
because of the sword in the wilderness.
- 10 Our skin is hot as an oven
with the burning heat of famine.
- 11 Women are raped in Zion,
young women in the towns of Judah.
- 12 Princes are hung up by their hands;
no respect is shown to the elders.
- 13 Young men are compelled to grind at the mill,
and boys stagger under loads of wood.

How to Pray in Your Suffering

Lamentations 5

- 14 The old men have left the city gate,
the young men their music.
- 15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;
our dancing has been turned to mourning.
- 16 The crown has fallen from our head;
woe to us, for we have sinned!
- 17 For this our heart has become sick,
for these things our eyes have grown dim,
- 18 for Mount Zion which lies desolate;
jackals prowl over it.
- 19 But you, O Lord, reign forever;
your throne endures to all generations.
- 20 Why do you forget us forever,
why do you forsake us for so many days?
- 21 Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored!
Renew our days as of old—
- 22 unless you have utterly rejected us,
and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

How to Pray in Your Suffering

In 1997, when Princess Diana tragically lost her life in a car accident, a wave of collective grief swept over the nation, and citizens instinctively gathered, forming a sea of remembrance. Tens of thousands of bouquets filled Kensington Palace's entrance, stretching an astonishing 30 feet from the gates. Over a million people converged on the streets to honor her memory, a powerful testament to the human need to find solace and strength in one another during moments of profound sorrow.

Whether it's a candlelight vigil following a mass shooting or an impromptu assembly in the wake of a natural disaster, we understand that in times of great anguish, grief is not meant to be experienced ALONE. The book of Lamentations concludes with just such a gathering, Lamentations 5 serves as a communal prayer, a heartfelt plea to God for His mercy upon His people.

Too often view prayer as an individual act. While it is true that Jesus teaches solitude in prayer (closets), it is equally true that He teaches community in prayer (our father). This Sunday, we invite you to join us as we explore the beauty of praying together in the midst of suffering to discover the strength that comes from lifting our voices collectively in faith.

Praying WITH you,

Pastor TJ



Restore Us to Yourself

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think chapter five is the **ONLY** chapter that does not use the Hebrew Alphabet as its structure?
2. Lamentations 5 is communal prayer during a time of tragedy. Can you give examples in modern times of communal prayer during tragedy?
3. In what ways has community prayer helped you in times of need?
4. Read Lamentations 5:1. Why does the poet (and Psalmists) ask God to look and see, as if God does not see or is not aware?
5. When the poet asks God to “remember,” what does that mean Biblically? (see: Genesis 8:1, Exodus 2:24, 1 Samuel 1:19, Psalm 105:8, Psalm 136:23, Luke 23:42-43). Give some examples of how we can pray this for our church today.
6. Read Lamentations 5:2-4. Discuss the Old Testament importance of the inheritance referenced in v. 2? What promises/gifts from God have you sometimes felt has been taken away?
7. Read Lamentations 5:5. What are some things that make you weary or steals your rest and how can we bring those things to God in prayer?
8. Read Lamentations 5:7. Have you ever felt as if you are living out the consequences of another person’s/generation’s sin? If so, how might you pray to God about that?



Restore Us to Yourself

Discussion Questions

9. Read Lamentations 5:8. Who or what do people often look to for deliverance? How does this passage foreshadow the coming of Jesus and the work He will do to deliver us?

10. Read Lamentations 5:9-14. Give examples from the text how the poet is thinking through society's loss (not just his own). What groups of people might a communal prayer of lament include today?

11. Read Lamentations 5:14-18. Share of a time when you felt this way? Why is communal prayer important in these times?

12. Read Lamentations 5:19. Discuss the important of meditating on the sovereign rule of God, particularly when we are enduring great suffering. How does communal prayer help us to do this in ways that solitude might not?

13. Read Lamentations 5:20-21. Have you ever felt forgotten and forsaken by God? How does Jesus speak to those emotions?

14. Did God answer this prayer? If so, how? In what ways can this give you hope as you pray for God to restore and renew?

15. Read Lamentations 5:22. Why do you think the book ends with doubt rather than faith? What does that teach you about lament?



Restore Us to Yourself

Discussion Questions

16. How does the rest of the Bible help speak into the ending of Lamentations?
17. What is one big take away from this series on Lament that you hope to continue to practice in the future?



Restore Us to Yourself

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports