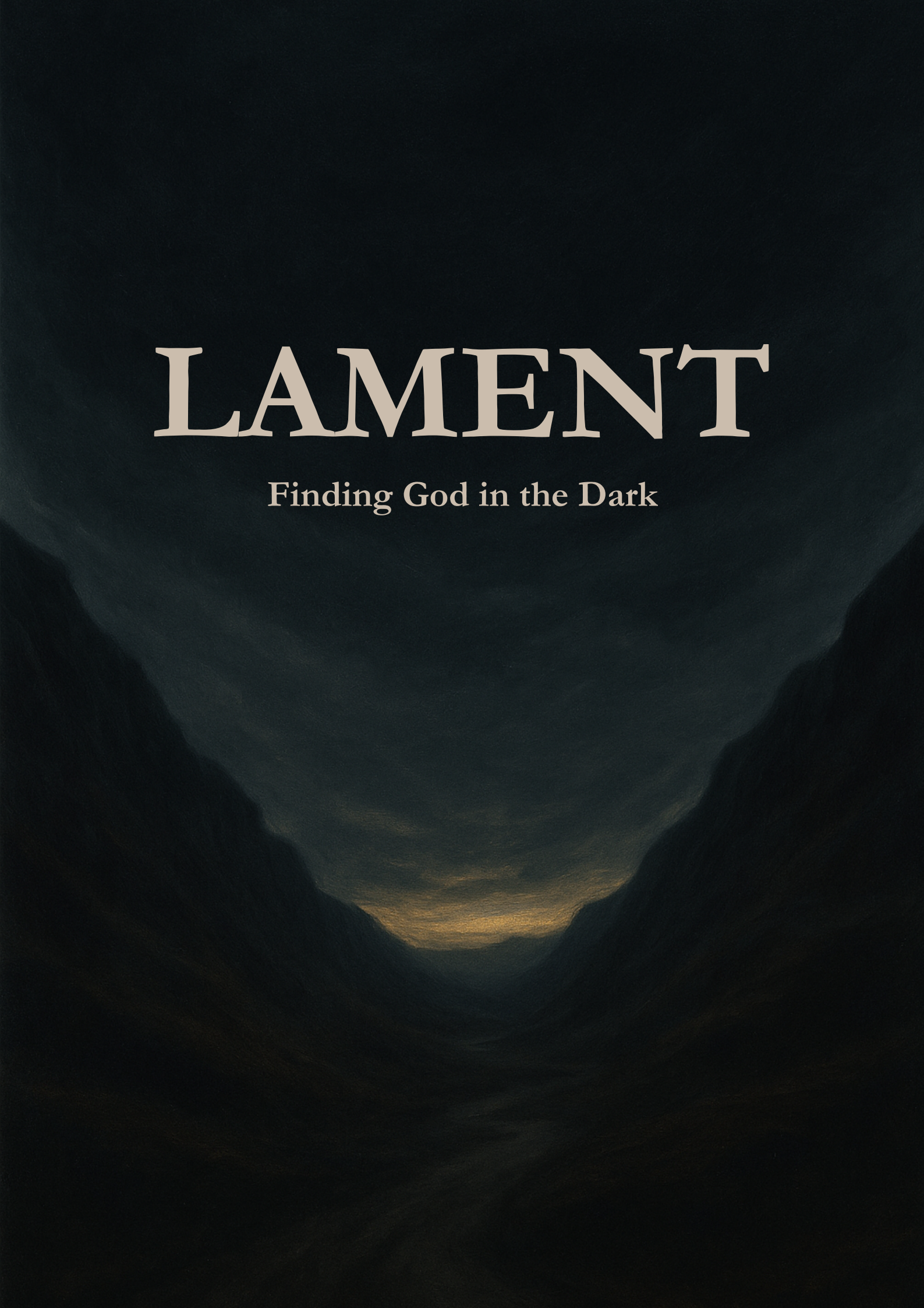


LAMENT

Finding God in the Dark



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Lament: A Gospel-Centred Way Through Confusion, Pain, and Doubt

Life brings with it deep struggle. At times, the weight of confusion, sorrow, doubt, or pain can feel suffocating. As believers, we are not immune. But we are not alone either.

The Bible doesn't call us to pretend everything is fine or to keep up appearances. Nor does it leave us without a voice in the storm. God gives us the language of lament. A way to process pain that is honest, raw, and deeply anchored in faith. This booklet offers a gospel-shaped path for those moments when life breaks down, when your soul is troubled, and when silence from heaven seems deafening.

We'll begin by looking at some common human, but ultimately unhealthy, ways we try to cope. Then we'll explore the biblical alternative: lamenting before God. Finally, we'll walk through examples in Scripture that show us how to bring our hearts honestly before Him.

1. Wallowing (When Despair Becomes a Dwelling)

Wallowing is the act of sinking into sorrow and staying there. It is sitting in grief, confusion, or depression without movement, perspective, or help. Wallowing turns inward and isolates. It quietly decides, “This is all there is.”

Some sadness is inevitable, even biblical. There is a kind of silence that is holy and necessary. A moment to feel the weight of what’s been lost. But wallowing becomes dangerous when it replaces lament, cutting us off from hope, truth, and the presence of God.

My tears have been my food day and night...
Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God...

Psalm 42:3, 5

Why it’s harmful:

- It isolates us from community. We withdraw from people who could speak truth and love.
- It lies about God’s character. Wallowing says, God has forgotten me or He won’t act.
- It stops spiritual movement. There’s no prayer, no hope, no reaching upward, only sinking.

Even in his darkest moments, David turned his despair into a conversation with God. The psalmist questions, pleads, remembers, and hopes. Wallowing, on the other hand, is grief without direction, mourning that never looks up.

I pour out my complaint before Him;
I tell my trouble before Him.

Psalm 142:2

Jesus Himself entered our sorrow (Isaiah 53:3). He knows grief. But He did not stay in the grave. His resurrection means despair is never the final word for God’s people.

Lament turns Godward. It speaks from the pit but to God, not just about the pain.

2. Suppressing (When You Pretend You're Fine)

Suppressing is the choice to bury your struggle, to act like nothing is wrong, and to keep up appearances. It's numbing your soul with busyness, distractions, or even religious activity to avoid facing what's truly going on inside.

At times, suppression feels necessary. We may need to keep functioning for our family, for work, for survival. But when it becomes a lifestyle, it erodes the soul from the inside out.

When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

Psalm 32:3

Why it's harmful:

- It disconnects us from our emotions and from God.
- It leads to spiritual shallowness and exhaustion. Outwardly busy, inwardly broken.
- It blocks confession, repentance, and intimacy. We never bring our real selves to God.

Biblical characters like Job, David, Jeremiah, and even Jesus Himself openly expressed sorrow, fear, and weariness. Suppression creates a thin, polished version of spirituality that denies the heart its full encounter with God.

The Lord is near to the broken-hearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18

Suppressing pain is a form of self-reliance. It assumes I can hold this together myself. But the gospel invites us to come as we are, not once we've cleaned ourselves up, but in our mess.

Cast all your anxiety on Him
because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

Jesus didn't come for the "fine." He came for the sick (Luke 5:31). He doesn't require strength to draw near. He offers Himself as your strength.

God isn't asking for performance. He wants your real self, including the mess.

3. Venting (When You Offload but Never Unburden)

Venting is the uncontrolled spilling of your inner turmoil onto others. It's often raw, emotional, frequent, and horizontal in nature. Seeking relief by expressing pain to people rather than processing it with God.

At its best, venting looks like honesty with trusted friends. We need safe spaces for tears and questions. But venting becomes unhealthy when it replaces prayer, dominates relationships, or focuses more on release than redemption.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths,
but only such as is good for building up...
that it may give grace to those who hear.

Ephesians 4:29

Why it's harmful:

- It can wear out relationships. People aren't equipped to carry the full weight of your soul.
- It may never move toward hope. Just cycling through complaints without resolution.
- It can become a form of grumbling against God. Rehearsing pain without turning to Him.

Consider Israel in the wilderness. Their venting became grumbling, and their grumbling became rebellion.

In the desert they gave in to their craving;
in the wilderness they put God to the test.

Psalms 106:14

Biblical lament still complains, but directly to God. It brings pain upward, not just outward.

Trust in Him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us.

Psalms 62:8

We are meant to share burdens, but not shift them entirely onto others. Gospel community helps us carry pain, but it's always meant to lead us back to Christ. Trusted community helps, but they can't carry what only God can.

Jesus invites us to pour out our hearts to Him first. He is the only one who can fully absorb your sorrow and respond with unending mercy.

Come to me,
all who labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

4. Escaping (When Distraction Becomes a Default)

Escaping is the act of turning away from sorrow instead of facing it. It's choosing distraction over engagement, comfort over confrontation. We don't want to feel the weight, so we run from the pain, from the questions, from God.

This kind of avoidance can take many forms. Some seem harmless, even healthy: diving into school, sports, cleaning, music, or gaming. Others are clearly destructive: binge eating, alcohol, pornography, self-harm. Whether good or bad on the surface, the goal is the same; not to feel.

Distraction isn't always sinful. Rest, recreation, and hobbies have their place. But when we use them to numb instead of process, escape instead of pray, they become substitutes for God rather than gifts from Him.

You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on You,
because he trusts in You.

Isaiah 26:3

Why it's harmful:

- It delays healing. What we avoid doesn't disappear. Pain pushed aside is pain prolonged.
- It clouds intimacy with God. We seek relief in lesser things instead of the Comforter.
- It forms avoidance habits. We train ourselves to flee discomfort rather than going to God.

David, too, knew sorrow. But instead of running from it, he ran with it to God. His laments are raw and unfiltered, but they are directed. He doesn't mask his grief with noise or numbness. He turns it into prayer.

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my eye is wasted from grief;
my soul and my body also.

Psalms 31:9

Jesus doesn't shame us for trying to cope. He understands human frailty. But He calls us to something deeper:

Come to Me,
all who are weary and burdened...
and I will give you rest

Matthew 11:28

Real rest. Not escape, not numbing, but peace.

Lament offers us more than distraction ever could. It doesn't erase the pain, but it draws us near to the God who heals it.

5. Lamenting (The Way Through the Valley)

We've seen how wallowing, suppressing, and venting are natural responses to suffering, but ultimately limited and unhealthy. They are primarily horizontal, grounded in either self or others. Scripture, however, calls us to lift our eyes, to go vertical. The Bible's answer to pain is not avoidance or performance; it's lament.

- **What is Lament?**

Lament is the honest cry of a heart that believes God cares, even when it can't see His hand. It's not grumbling or doubting God's goodness. It's not silent stoicism or blind optimism. Lament is the sacred, messy, vulnerable act of turning to God in your pain.

It's saying:

“God, I don't understand. This hurts. It feels like You're absent.
But I still choose to speak to You, not away from You.
I still believe You are who You say You are, even if I don't feel it right now.”

- **Why Lament is Healthy and Biblical**

Lament is not just allowed, it is invited. The Bible is full of it. Over a third of the Psalms are laments. Job, Lamentations, Jeremiah, even Jesus on the cross “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” show us that lament is not weakness, but worship.

Lament gives you permission to:

- Feel deeply : God doesn't shame you for grief or confusion.
- Speak honestly: You don't need to filter your prayers.
- Ask boldly: You can plead with confidence, knowing He listens.
- Hold on to hope: You can trust, even in the dark.

The Christian life is not a constant climb upward. Sometimes it's a walk through the valley. And lament is how we walk through that valley with God, rather than away from Him.

- **The Pattern of Lament in Scripture**

Most biblical laments follow a basic structure:

- Turn to God: not inward or outward, upward.
- Bring your complaint: Name the pain. Tell God exactly what you feel.
- Ask boldly: Ask for healing, justice, understanding, mercy.
- Choose to trust: Anchor yourself in who God is, even if nothing has changed yet.

This is what makes lament distinct: It holds sorrow and trust together. It is not hopeless grief. It is not forced cheerfulness. It is sorrow spoken in the direction of God.

- **Lament Changes You, Even if Nothing Else Changes**

Lament doesn't always change your circumstances. It may not remove the pain. But it changes you. Lament:

- Keeps your heart tender rather than bitter.
- Builds intimacy with God.
- Strengthens your spiritual endurance.
- Anchors your soul in truth rather than emotion.
- Prepares you to walk with others in their pain.

When you lament, you invite God into your confusion. You surrender control. You ask Him to be who He says He is. Your refuge, your shepherd, your healer. And He always responds, not always in the way we want, but always with presence, compassion, and sustaining grace.

- **Jesus: The Man of Sorrows**

Jesus Himself was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He wept over Lazarus, lamented over Jerusalem, groaned in Gethsemane, and cried out the Psalmist's lament from the cross.

He knows your sorrow. He has felt abandonment, betrayal, loss, and physical pain. But He also conquered death. Because of Him, we do not grieve as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Your lament can rest on a deeper truth:

You are heard. You are held. You are not alone.

You don't need to wallow in despair.
You don't need to suppress your grief.
You don't need to endlessly vent.

You can lament. Honestly, biblically, and with hope.

Lament is the gift of grace for those in the valley. It is not a detour from the Christian life; it is part of it. And God meets you there, not with shame, but with His presence.

How to Start Lamenting (A Guide Into Honest Prayer)

If you've never lamented before, it can feel strange or even wrong. Many of us were taught to either hide our struggles or rush through them with a smile. But lament is not about being dramatic or faithless, it's about being real before God.

You don't have to be eloquent. You don't have to have all the right words. You just have to begin.

Here's how.

1. Turn to God. Don't Go Silent

The first step of lament is simply turning. That might mean whispering a prayer, cracking open your Bible, or just acknowledging: God, I need You. Even that one sentence is a turning point. Lament begins when you choose to bring your sorrow into God's presence, rather than deal with it alone.

"God, I'm here. I don't even know what to say. But I want to start with You."

2. Name What Hurts. Be Specific and Honest

Don't sanitize your pain. God already knows it. He isn't shocked by your honesty. Biblical lament includes real complaints. "How long, O Lord?", "Why have You forgotten me?", "Why do You hide Your face?" Your complaint isn't a sign of weak faith. It's proof that you believe God is real and near enough to hear. Write out what is actually bothering you. Don't worry if it feels messy.

"God, I feel _____. I don't understand _____. It hurts that _____."

3. Ask for Help. Boldly and Specifically

Once you've named your sorrow, ask boldly. God invites you to cry out, not just with what is, but with what you long for Him to do. Don't worry about asking "the right way." Just ask. Lament gives you permission to plead.

"Restore me." "Heal this relationship." "Comfort me in the night." "Speak to me, I feel alone."

4. Remind Yourself of Truth. Even If You Don't Feel It Yet

This is often the hardest part. It's where faith clings to what's still true, even in the dark. This isn't denying the pain. It's anchoring yourself to God's promises in the pain. You may need to borrow truth from Scripture until your heart remembers how to sing it again. That's okay.

"You are faithful." "You hear me." "You are near to the broken-hearted."

A Simple Prayer of Lament (Template)

Here's a short structure you can write or pray through anytime:

1. Turn

"God, I come to You. I don't want to carry this alone."

2. Complain Honestly

"I feel ____."

"I don't understand why ____."

"It hurts that ____."

3. Ask Boldly

"Please help me with ____."

"Give me peace in ____."

"Show me Your love today."

4. Choose to Trust

"I believe You are still good."

"You are with me, even now."

"I will wait for You."

Tips as You Begin

- Start small. You can write one sentence a day to God.
- Use Scripture as a guide. Psalms 13, 42, 77, and Lamentations 3 are great starting points.
- You're not failing if you cry. That's not weakness, it's worship.
- God already knows. You're not informing Him, you're inviting Him in.

God Welcomes Your Weakness

You don't need to fix your sorrow before bringing it to God. The gospel says you can come as you are. And when you do, you'll find that He doesn't push you away, He holds you closer.

"The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

Psalm 34:18

Worksheet: Learning to Lament with Psalm 13

*1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
2 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?
3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.
5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
6 I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

1. Turn to God (v1)

David doesn't speak about God, he speaks to God. He directs his voice upward.

- Where do you tend to turn first in hardship: yourself, others, distractions, or God?
- What might it look like to turn your attention toward God today?

Write your prayer of turning:

"God, I come to You because..."

2. Bring Your Complaint (v1-2)

David asks "How long?" four times. His words are raw, emotional, and honest. He feels forgotten. Alone. Attacked.

- What's the "How long?" in your life right now?
- What situation feels unresolved, painful, or unfair?

Write your complaint honestly:

"How long, O Lord...?"

3. Ask Boldly (v3-4)

David doesn't hold back. He pleads: "Answer me... light up my eyes... rescue me!" His faith leads him to ask, even in the darkness.

- What do you want to ask God for right now? Be specific and bold.
- Where do you need light, healing, or hope?

Write your requests to God:

"Lord, please..."

4. Choose to Trust

David's circumstances haven't changed, but his prayer ends with trust: "I have trusted... I will sing... He has dealt bountifully with me."

- What truths about God do you need to cling to today?
- What might trust look like in your situation, even if the pain remains?

Write your declaration of trust:

"Even though I feel ____, I choose to believe ____."

Worksheet: A Deeper Example in Lamentations 3

Lamentations 3 is a turning point in a book full of raw grief. The author (likely Jeremiah) speaks of suffering so intense that it borders on despair. And yet, in the middle of the darkest pain, a bright gospel hope breaks through. This worksheet walks you through that journey. Read Lamentations 3:1–24 slowly.

1. Name the Darkness Honestly

The writer doesn't downplay his suffering. He describes it with vivid imagery: darkness, chains, bitterness, loneliness. "He has made my teeth grind on gravel."

- What's weighing heavily on you right now?
- Where do you feel lost, broken, or overwhelmed?

Write your honest expression of pain or confusion:

"God, it feels like..."

(Use verses 1–18 as inspiration for language that doesn't hold back.)

2. Call to Mind What Is True

The turning point in this lament comes with remembering:

"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope..." (v. 21)

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end..." (v. 22)

Even when he doesn't feel it, the writer clings to what he knows.

- What truths about God do you need to "call to mind"?
- What do you know is true, even if you can't feel it today?

Write your own "But this I call to mind..." statement:

"Even in this, I remember..."

(Maybe: God's mercy, His nearness, His faithfulness, His understanding of suffering.)

3. Rest in Who God Is

In verse 24, the writer shifts from inner turmoil to quiet surrender:

“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in Him.”

He doesn’t say the pain is gone. But he has recentred his heart on God's character. This is the fruit of lament: not escape from sorrow, but rest within it.

- What does it mean to say “The Lord is my portion”?
- Where can you lean into God’s sufficiency today?

Write a quiet prayer of trust:

“Lord, even though ____, I say: You are my portion.”

4. Sit in the Stillness of Hope

“The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” Lamentations 3:25–26

Biblical hope is not wishful thinking. It’s waiting with confidence in the character of God. After lament, there is quietness. Not because everything is fixed, but because everything has been entrusted.

- What are you still waiting for?
- What does it look like to wait quietly, in trust?

Write your waiting prayer:

“God, I will wait for You in...”

Final Encouragement

Lament doesn’t skip the pain. It brings it to God and finds Him still faithful. As Lamentations shows, even the deepest wounds can be woven with hope, not because the sorrow disappears, but because God enters it with you.

Though He brings grief, He will show compassion,
so great is His unfailing love.

Lamentations 3:32

Group Discussion Guide

These questions are designed to help small groups or discipleship circles reflect together on the themes of the booklet. Allow time for silence, honesty, and encouragement. It's okay if not every question gets answered, use this as a flexible guide.

Opening Reflection

- When you're facing difficulty or doubt, what's your default response: wallowing, suppressing, venting, escaping, or something else? Why do you think that is?
- Can you identify ways these horizontal responses have left you spiritually dry, distant, or discouraged?

Processing Lament Together

- What has been your experience with lament? Did you grow up seeing this modelled in your family, church, or Christian culture?
- Why do you think we often avoid lament? What fears or misunderstandings might be at work?
- What might it look like for you to start a rhythm of lament in your personal prayer life?

Personal Application

- What is one sorrow, struggle, or area of confusion you've been carrying alone? What would it look like to "take it vertical" this week?
- Is there a truth about God that you need to "call to mind" right now (Lamentations 3:21)?
- How can we encourage one another to go to God first, even when it feels easier to vent or suppress?

Prayer Together

Close your time by inviting each person to pray honestly, using Psalm 13 or Lamentations 3 as a framework if needed:

- Turn to God
- Voice your complaint
- Ask for help
- Declare trust

You may even write a group lament together as an expression of shared burdens and hope in Christ.



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