

Tell Your Father the Truth

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[0 : 00] Well, it's good to see you all here this morning. We're looking forward to bringing God's Word to you this morning once again. It's a joy and a pleasure to be here and to be preaching God's Word.

I've told folks often that if you are allowing me to get up here and just share with you the wisdom that I've accumulated over the course of my lifetime, then you're wasting your time.

Right? I'm not really that wise. I haven't really gathered that much for myself. What I do have, what we do have is God's Word. And what we do have is the model, the pattern set forth for us in God's Word, and one that as we learn to live it out, as we live it out faithfully, we find that His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

So we're going to be relying on His Word. Let me begin with prayer because we not only need God's Word, but we need God's help to hear His Word. Father, I thank You that knowing that we have Your Spirit-inspired words of truth without error, thank You for the confidence that gives me to speak.

And I pray, Lord, that Your Spirit, the work that He did to inspire Scripture, that You may do a work in our own hearts to receive it.

[1 : 30] Lord, we know that the greatest words in the world do not help any of us if we do not have eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand.

So give that to us, we pray. Hold me back from speaking with any sort of error. Lord, let us learn how to live lives that honor and worship You.

Help us to understand, Lord. Amen. Okay. I'm going to list off a bunch of words here. We're going to start with a word list. Good old trusty thesaurus helped me out here.

So I'm going to list a bunch of activities, and I want you to think, which do you enjoy doing the most? Complaining. Whining. Fussing.

Murmuring. Moaning and groaning. Grumbling. Gripping. Grousing. Grouching.

[2 : 37] Belly aching. Bleeding. Carping. Sighing. Got a lot of words that more or less cover the same sort of ground.

It's almost like English needs a lot of words to capture all little ways we do the same thing, right? Which of those do you enjoy doing the most? Which of those do you enjoy hearing the most? Anyone have a good time being on the receiving end of that? Did you ever grow up hearing something like this said? Nobody likes a whiner. Nobody likes a whiner.

Why are we so uncomfortable with hearing complaints? What makes it so difficult for us? Well, I know sometimes it's because we're tired of hearing self-centered hearts that are grumbling about how things aren't going their way.

But then sometimes it's because we're the self-centered ones and we don't want to hear about the troubles of others. Maybe it's a little bit of both.

[3 : 50] And here's the problem. Some of us think God is that way too. That he doesn't want to hear about our troubles. Don't bother God. Don't be a whiner.

Don't bother him with your problems. You're just going to irritate him with all your complaints. The Lord does not love a whiner. And after all, aren't we given the negative example of the people of Israel in the wilderness?

Consider how the people of Israel responded to just really significant severe threats to their livelihood. In Exodus chapter 16, we read, Oh, very hungry.

If there were any cause for grumbling, I suppose fear of starvation would be it. Yet this is a negative example. There's something going on here that's wrong.

From this, perhaps you can conclude that a real Christian, when in distress, when responding to distressing events and circumstances and relationships, that here's what a real Christian does. [5 : 23] They follow this classic line of propaganda from the London Blitz. Keep calm and carry on. Keep calm and carry on. That's what a good Christian does. Do the best you can.

Keep that stiff upper lip. And you keep pushing that and you keep doing that and you keep doing that. But eventually, at some point, for most of us, we reach a breaking point.

Life gets too much. Life gets too distressing. You can't put your distress in a little compartment in your mind and close the door anymore. You spiral inward into a pattern of anxious thinking. Thoughts running and running and running around inside of you. You can't even sleep at night because your mind is racing. You can't stay focused on conversations or tasks because of all the anxious thoughts in your head.

You start doing what the Israelites did. You go to a friend. You find a friend to complain to. Maybe the issue seems so big that you're in distress, so you're like, I need to find something to grumble about.

[6 : 27] Right? The people of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, grumbled against them. And all of this trouble, all of this distress, because you've never learned what a Christian actually is meant to do with anger and disgust, with grief and despair, with fear and anxiety, even with happiness and joy.

Anyway, maybe you have never learned how to handle these things God's way as he sets out in his word. You've never learned how to tell your father the truth.

It's amazing how many Christians read the Psalms, sometimes for decades, and never really notice some very basic, obvious things. For example, King David and his fellow authors, when they are writing these Psalms, do you notice they handle their distress so much differently than you and I do?

Do you ever notice the way that they handle their distress? These guys don't keep calm and carry on. They don't keep their feelings locked up inside of them.

And then, on the other hand, when they're overwhelmed, they don't first just go grumbling to any friend who will listen to them and will put up with their complaining.

[7 : 57] They don't burn out friendship after friendship with endless grumbling. Here's what they do. They go to God first in their distress.

They go to God first with their complaints. They go to God before they let those thoughts and complaints circle inside of them, before they try to lock them up in a room in their minds.

They go to God before they run to other people and complain and grumble to them. They go to God first because they understand the art of lament.

There is an art to something called lament. What is that? What's a lament? A lament is a way in the Bible, modeled in Scripture, it's a way of speaking to God.

Lament is bringing your distress and your complaints, all the things that overwhelm you, and pouring it out before the Lord.

[9 : 05] Lament is an act of worship. The Bible is filled with lament. Songs of sorrow, almost like songs sung in a minor key.

About one-third of the psalms are psalms of lament. Think about that proportion. Imagine that you are visiting a church for the first time, and you sit down, and it's maybe a more traditional church. There's pews, and there's like little hymnals in the pews, and you're there early, so you open up a hymnal, and you start looking through, and you notice that one-third of these songs are really sad. They're real downers. They're filled with complaints. Filled with expressions of frustration, and sorrow, and anxiety, and fear. What's your reaction?

What do you think about this church? Do you think, this isn't the kind of church I want to go to? This sounds like a depressing place to be.

[10 : 11] Welcome to the psalms. The psalms are where God's people are honest with the Lord. They model how to be honest with our Father. The Bible expects that lament ought to be one of the most prominent and frequent ways that we sing and we pray to the living God, both individually and corporately.

One of the most prominent ways that we sing and we pray to the living God. If the psalms are any indication, about one-third of the time. In most cases, when I'm counseling someone with a difficult life, and believe me, nobody comes into my counseling room unless they've got a difficult life.

If people whose lives seem to be working well for them, they don't come and get counseling. They don't come and get help. They should, but they don't. Usually, people come when they've been continuing too long on a difficult life.

They come long after they should. And about half the time, I have to, really most of the time, I have to introduce them to this practice of lament because for most of them, they've never done this before.

They've never done something that is so normal, so ordinary to the Christian life, that huge chunks of the Bible model it for us. I have to show them how to tell the truth to God, their Father, and walk them through it.

[11 : 42] So, you guys are going to get a little bit of a brief crash course in lament. We're going to use Psalm 22 because that's what I use, to teach the art of lament.

And the reason I use the psalm is not because, quite frankly, there are loads and loads and loads of psalms of lament we could use. I like this one because it is one of the most thorough psalms of lament.

It's one of the most thorough. It shows you how to tell your father the truth, and you're going to learn how to tell your father the truth in ways that may not be familiar to you, ways that actually may feel very uncomfortable to you, especially if you're a real manly man, and you're afraid of talking about your feelings.

You're about to get a crash course in actually how you worship the Lord. Here's how Psalm 22 teaches you to pray when you are downcast or dejected, when you are burdened and overwhelmed by life.

It gives you six things to tell your father in heaven. So, here are six ways that you can speak to your father in heaven. And so, as we're going through this, I want you to think about this. Which of these ways have been present in my prayers and which have not?

[12 : 51] What's been missing? First, tell your father the truth about what has happened to you. Tell your father the truth about what has happened to you.

Now, if you look at Psalm 22, you'll notice that David, the psalms are wonderful. They're almost always written just specific enough that they can tell you about life, but not so detailed that it's disconnected from your life.

Right? Like, you look at this and you're like, what exactly was David going through? It's not 100% clear the exact situation, but he's in distress. That much you can tell. And he tells the truth about what has happened to him.

And he goes into detail. Look at verses 6 to 8 to start with. Then in verses 11 through 13. Verses 16 through 18.

[14 : 24] Lest you think that there's no point in telling God about what's happened because he already knows, David does, because David knows how to be honest with his father.

And being honest with his father means he tells the truth. He tells him about what's happening to him. What about you? When you're talking with God, do you tell him what has happened to you? Think about your past, your present, and your future. What's happened to you in the past? What in your life has led up to this point of distress? What's your story?

Whether it's the last few weeks or months, maybe a lifetime. Maybe you have to go back decades all the way to the childhood to tell the story. But you tell your father about your past.

You ever done that? What's happening to you in the present? What's your situation right now? What are your life circumstances at this present moment?

[15 : 50] What's pressing in on you? What's overwhelming you? Tell your father about your present. How about the future? What do you anticipate will happen to you in the future?

How do you think things will go? What's coming around the bend that maybe you're feeling anxious about? Both the good and the bad.

Tell your father about the future that you expect. What are some things you can tell your father about the past, present, and future? Well, here's some things you can tell him.

What's happened to you physically? What's going on in your body? We're going to talk a bit more about that. In a little while. What's happened in your relationships? That's what David is talking about for sure.

How he's surrounded by threatening people who shame him and ridicule him and mock him and mistreat him. What's happening with your spouse, your family, your friends, maybe your enemies?

[16:57] Tell God about the good you see around you and thank him for it. But also tell him about the aloneness you feel, the victimization, the rejection, the betrayal. What's happening in your work?

If you have a job that you're working, what's happening there? If you don't have a job and you want one, what's going on there?

What's distressing about that? How about the money you earn? What's happening to you? What's happening to you spiritually? Do you feel that you are under the spiritual assaults of the evil one? Are there lies and half-truths that just keep entering your mind that seem so impressive, that seem so overwhelming, so easy to believe?

Are there temptations that seem overpowering, discouragements that seem to suck the life out of you? In all these things, tell your father the truth about what has happened to you.

Second, tell your father the truth about what your heart feels. Tell your father the truth about what your heart feels. What are the emotions, the feelings, and the dominating thoughts and beliefs that are running through your soul and seem so compelling?

[18:13] Notice that David does exactly this, verses 1 and 2. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? Oh, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

Consider how honest David is being here. Did you know that you can be this honest with God? David tells God the truth about how he is really feeling at this moment, abandoned.

You be honest, too. How are you feeling about all the circumstances of your life? How are you feeling about your relationship with God, your relationship with other people?

What's going on in here? What are the things you're thinking, the things you're tending to believe? If you think that you are not supposed to be this honest, consider that Jesus Christ himself spoke these same words of lament from the cross.

[19:26] He quoted this very psalm. In fact, he even took it and quoted it in the language that he grew up with, in Aramaic. He said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He was being honest with his father.

Anyone who belongs to Jesus can do the same. Would you be like him? Would you follow in his footsteps? Would you be a Christian?

If you wish to be his disciple, then you will need to tell your father the truth about how your heart feels. Third, tell your father the truth about what your body feels.

This is a funny one. This is one that I've found that not many Christians do. Tell your father the truth about what your body feels. Because your body is a part of who you are. To be a Christian means that you believe that you are soul and body.

You're not a soul who just kind of floats above and you've got this, oh, worthless body. Wish I could get rid of that thing. That's the way the Greeks at the time thought. But you are body and soul.

[20:30] If you want to make yourself, the real you, all of who you are, known to God. If you want to make yourself fully known to God the Father, then you need to tell him what's happening in your body. Notice that David does exactly this in verses 14 and 15.

David gets specific here, doesn't he?

You know which parts of his body are just feeling out of place, feeling awful. David doesn't just say, yeah, I feel pretty lousy today. He speaks to God. He tells him, here's what's hurting.

Here's what it feels like. Be thorough. Be specific. Now, if you're suffering from disease or injury or the perils of aging, then you already know, right?

And you can be honest with your father about that. But do you know, you can also do what David is doing here. He's honest about how the stress and the anxiety is making his body feel. How is stress showing up in your body?

[21:46] Tell your father exactly what's going on. How are the cares and anxieties of your heart affecting you? If you're carrying a lot of tension, a lot of anxiety, you'll notice it will show up in your body.

A stress headache, a clenched jaw, a racing heart, butterflies in your stomach. Tell your father about that. Jesus didn't stay silent about how his body felt when he was on the cross.

The Gospel of John records him crying out, I thirst. Fulfilling scripture. Patterning himself on the Psalms.

Speaking of the thirst of the righteous sufferer. Jesus was not silent about this during his own lament. Would you be like him? Would you follow in his footsteps?

Then you too ought to tell your father the truth about what your body feels. Fourth, tell your father the truth about him and you.

[22 : 49] Tell your father the truth about him and about you. What's your relationship with God? And do you have one? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Are you in a covenant relationship with God where your faith is in Christ? The crucified and risen Jesus Christ to save you from the power of sin and the presence of sin and the penalty of sin. Can you speak to God the way that Jesus spoke to him when Jesus prayed in Gethsemane? Abba, Father. Can you talk to God like that?

Jesus' relationship that he paved the way for. The kind of relationship we can have with God where we call him Father.

This is all prefigured. The pattern set out by David. Even in Psalm 22. Look at how he speaks of the covenant relationship that his people, the people of Israel have had with God.

[24 : 02] Look at verses 3 through 5. He says to God, And then David takes this covenant relationship between God and his chosen people.

And David says, This applies to me too. Verses 9 and 10 he says, Yet you are he who took me from the womb. You made me trust you at my mother's breasts.

On you I was cast from birth. And from my mother's womb you have been my God. This is a relationship of faith.

This is a relationship of trust. Trust. David isn't just trusting any God who happens to be out there. Anyone who's powerful. Anyone who's a creator. He is trusting in the God who is holy.

The God who is set apart. Undeified by sin and shame. He's trusting the God who listens to his people. Who saves them. And David had the scriptures of his day.

[25 : 15] He knew the history of God's salvation of his people. David is trusting the God who restores him to a place of honor. In his own lament, Jesus did the same.

He entrusted himself to the God of whom he said, All things are possible for you. All things are possible for you. And like Jesus, David tells the truth about who this God is.

And he calls him not only God, but my God. He is my God. Are you able to do that? Can you speak of the supreme creator of all the universe?

The God who made and is responsible for everything that you see around you. And can you call him my God? Can you call him your father?

Father, follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Tell your father the truth about him and you. Fifth, tell your father the truth about what you are wanting.

[26 : 27] Tell your father the truth about what you are wanting. This is another one where people get tripped up. Because they think, oh, I shouldn't do that. I shouldn't do that. Perhaps you're afraid to do this. Afraid to say to God what you're actually wanting.

Maybe you found in the past that when you're honest with someone in authority, maybe a parent about what you're wanting, you get shut down. And eventually you stop asking for what you're wanting.

You stop being honest. Maybe you're afraid that what you're wanting may be selfish. Well, you must not be afraid to be honest with God about what you're really wanting.

Otherwise, what's happening then is that the real God is not hearing from the real you. On the one hand, we don't let our desires become demands.

James warns against that. That you are asking with selfish, unrighteous motives. Your desires, things you want, all of a sudden become demands.

[27 : 30] Even good desires become demands. Needs that we say, God, you have to give this to me. You must. On the other hand, we don't let our desires go unspoken either.

Because we want to be honest and pour out our whole hearts before God. Even if the desire you know is sinful, you can at least tell God, God, I actually have this desire. I know it's wrong. But it's in my heart.

Be honest about what's actually going on inside of you. Tell him the truth. If the desire is sinful, then you can confess it as sin. If the desire is not, you can be honest that I want this, Lord.

Notice that David is not afraid to say what he's wanting in verses 19 through 21. But you, O Lord, do not be far off. O you, my help, come quickly to my aid.

Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save me from the mouth of the lion. You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen.

[28 : 39] David is asking for rescue from all of these enemies who are shaming him, who are gloating over him, who are making his life miserable.

Jesus was just as honest with God. Jesus told the father what he wanted the night before he was crucified. In Mark chapter 14, we're told that Jesus prayed, remove this cup from me, the cup of wrath that was in store for him the next morning when he would be crucified.

Remove this cup from me. He asked to be spared the agonies of crucifixion, the agonies of suffering the wrath of God for all of our sin.

Jesus, in his lament, was honest about his desires before God. Walk in his footsteps.

Tell your father the truth about what you are wanting. Finally, tell your father the truth about what would reveal his glory. Tell your father the truth about what would reveal his glory.

[29 : 54] Now, when we're in distress, this might require some creative thinking. Perhaps why this doesn't come until the end of the psalm, when David has poured out everything else.

And he has voiced everything else to his father. And now he can take a step back and start thinking, how might God's glory be put on display?

And what happens to me next? How might God's glory be put on display? By what I choose to do next. By the help of the Spirit. Look at how David talks about this in verses 22 to 31.

I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him.

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel. For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.

[31 : 05] From you comes my praise in the great congregation. My vows I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied.

Those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship. Before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.

Posterity shall serve him. It shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn that he has done it.

David anticipates that when God rescues him, this will give David the opportunity to praise God, to do it publicly, to tell others what a wonderful thing that the Lord has done for him, so that all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord.

[32 : 26] It is so interesting that in the middle of this misery, as David pours out his heart and lament to God, all of a sudden he starts to see something new. Opportunity.

Opportunity. He saw opportunity for the glory of God to be put on display. And likewise, even in his own lament, Jesus does the same.

He did the same. He submitted his own human will to the will of God the Father. Yet not what I will, he said, but what you will.

Not what I will, but what you will. He placed his Father's glory first. Jesus' prayer. Lament is not a therapeutic prayer, just to feel better about yourself, just to get stuff off your chest.

It is fundamentally an act of worship, pouring out your heart before the living God, relating to him rightly. It places the Father's glory first.

[33 : 34] A few days earlier, here's what Jesus says. He actually speaks this very prayer to his Father in John chapter 12. He says, Now is my soul troubled.

So honest about how he's feeling. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose, I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. Walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Tell your Father the truth about what would reveal his glory. So in summary, we have here six ways. It's you honor your God the Father through a prayer of lament.

You tell your Father the truth about what has happened to you. You tell your Father the truth about what your heart feels. You tell your body the truth. You tell your Father the truth about what your

body feels.

[34 : 36] You tell your Father the truth about him and you. You tell your Father the truth about what you are wanting. And you tell your Father the truth about what would reveal his glory. Now you don't have to do it in just that order.

This is not a linear process at all. You may have noticed Psalm 22 is not exactly the most linear, you know, psalm that travels neatly from beginning to end.

It's sort of all jumbled together. These things tend to be jumbled together in our hearts, don't they? That's okay. Come with your messy, disorganized lament.

Bring it to God the Father who listens with an understanding heart. Now, not every prayer of lament has to do all six of those things. Most of the psalms of lament don't include all of these things. But this gives you an idea of how it's possible to speak to your Father and in fact, how we exalt Jesus as King even in the middle of our misery and suffering. How we turn away from reliance on self to keep calm and carry on.

[35 : 39] How we turn away from reliance on other people to be God for us. To be the place we pour out our complaints and our grumbling.

And instead, an act of worship, faith, trust, reliance first on God. What matters is who you go to first. Once you have lamented, once you have poured out your heart before God, then you can start mulling things over in your mind.

Then you can start talking with other people about the grievous situation. You take this to God first. That's what the psalmists do. It's the priority that matters because the priority shows who you worship.

One final piece of advice. What I just described sounds like a bit of a process, doesn't it? Sometimes we're in distress and we don't exactly have time to kind of get away into a quiet room for a moment and sit down and speak out loud or journal all of this.

We just don't always have time. Life comes at you fast, doesn't it? Sometimes in your distress, you only have time for a quick prayer under your breath.

[37 : 00] Here's what I have people do. You need a crisis prayer. You need an emergency prayer for these moments of need. When you're in fight-or-flight brain mode, you kind of pretty much only have mental space to remember one thing and pray one simple thing.

You need to have a prayer memorized and you need to know it like you know the numbers 9-1-1. That well. So, look through the book of Psalms.

Find a single verse. Maybe it's in this very psalm or maybe it's in another one. Find a single verse that just jumps out at you. It resonates with you. It matches the natural cry of your heart for help from God.

Wherever you find it, take that verse or that line from that verse and memorize it. Practice it day after day. Start praying it over and over and over until it becomes a part of you.

Pray it in severe situations of severe distress. Pray it when you're just a little bit worried. Heck, pray it when you can't find a parking spot. Just get in the habit of crying out to the living God at all times.

[38 : 14] Always be ready to seek Him first. Whatever you do, don't let your distress go unspoken before God. Pour out your heart before Him.

That is a commandment. That is not optional for the Christian life. That is not a cultural thing. You pour out your heart before God. Speak to Him first before you speak to anyone else, even before you speak to yourself.

Bring Him your worship. Bring Him your lament. Tell your Father the truth. Our God and our Father, you know that for each of us this is a journey.

I thank you, Father, that you've moved me from doing this never to doing this sometimes and I pray that you may move me to doing this all the time. And that this may be something that is present in our church that we know how to take all of these things before God our Father both individually and collectively.

That we know how to cry to you for help. We know how to reveal all of who we are and bring it all before the living God and to hold nothing back. Teach us to be honest to people, Lord God.

[39 : 35] To be honest with you. To speak the truth to our Father. And I pray if there is anyone here who has not been speaking honestly to you. Who has been holding some things back from you.

Lord, may they begin, may they repent of that, may they turn. and start relating to you as God. If they have never trusted in you as Lord and as Savior.

May they turn to you in faith because you sent your own son, Jesus Christ, to be the one who stood in our place, took the wrath of our sins deserved, modeled how to live a faithful life, and overcame the power of Satan, hell, and death itself by rising from the dead.

It is him that we worship, him we put first, we exalt him as king, and we pour out our hearts before you, Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.