

# Lament

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[ 0 : 00 ] Once, there was a moth. That's right, a moth. And he went to see a podiatrist. The podiatrist said, moth, what seems to be the trouble? How can I help?

The moth said to the podiatrist, doc, I'm in a bad way. My life has fallen completely apart. My friends have all deserted me. Even my family won't talk to me. I can't find work. My marriage is falling apart. Nothing makes me happy. I just don't know what to do, doc. What do I do?

The podiatrist paused and then replied, moth, I can see you're in bad shape. But with everything that you have going on in your life, you should be seeing a psychiatrist, not a podiatrist.

Why did you come to see me? And the moth replied, the light was on. Where do we turn when our life gets out of control?

Where have you flown when overrun by anxiety or fear? Unlike that moth, we need to turn toward the light that can help us with our troubles. In seasons of trouble and darkness, God is near to us.

[ 1 : 33 ] And for those seasons, he has provided a pattern of prayer that is a path into his light called lament. Lament is a uniquely Christian response to suffering and tragedy. When we lament, we take our emotions and turn to God with them. We tell him what is happening. We ask him to intervene. We challenge his promises.

And there we can rediscover the hope we have in a relationship with him. When we lament God, he is our weeping. He listens to our cries and he accepts our prayer.

So in your season of despair, come lament in the light of your hope in Jesus Christ. Lament is a neglected response to tragedy and suffering in our churches.

Christians rarely lament together or privately. But lament is worth rediscovering and practicing. Because the Bible is filled with the language of lament.

In public and private prayers and songs. We'll discover in the weeks to come the book of Lamentations, which in its entirety is one lament.

[ 3 : 10 ] There are also more than 40 psalms of lament that are written to be sung all together. If this biblical pattern of lament is here for us, why aren't we lamenting?

Local Christian author Peter Davis says that Christians in Sydney, and churches generally in Sydney, are afraid of lament.

Is that true? In our multi-ethnic church, most of us only reveal negative emotions from grief and pain in private.

Could it be that there's some sort of unspoken rule amongst us that any overflow of emotion is wrong? For many, it's just not done or improper.

But perhaps we would rather appear respectable than openly upset. At an online funeral I attended recently, this was on full display.

[ 4 : 17 ] It was on Zoom, and there might have been, you know, 80 to 100 faces on screens. And every single person who had an opportunity to speak, before or while they cried, apologized, at a funeral, the most appropriate place I can think of, for shedding tears together.

In some families, emotions are seen as weakness. They prove a person is out of control, has lost their self-reliance, or lost their capacity to contribute to the family.

But who of us has not felt out of control completely in our lives? Too weak to fix a situation, or just not knowing the answer of how to solve what's going on in our family.

Locally, hiding our hurting is not working. Mental health issues are a major concern in our suburb of Chatswood and at our local government area of Willoughby.

But we rarely talk about our struggles, especially together. In some families, and in some churches, sadly too, positive emotions are so obsessively sought that any negative emotions are rejected or stifled.

[ 5 : 47 ] Look out for those live your best life now messages. Pain and grief cannot be kept from our lives.

In our hiding of these emotions, we need to take them somewhere and we often go, like the moth, to the wrong light.

It might be something on a screen. It might be a destructive relationship or an unsafe relationship. It might end up in an addiction.

Or if you turn completely inward, you'll find yourself breaking inside. We naturally react to suffering and tragedy as our culture says that we should.

What would it take for us to look at God's Word as His followers? To look at God's Word as our guide to reacting to all that is hard and horrifying in our lives?

[ 6 : 57 ] It would take a deep, a deep, deep, deep trust that the God who created us, who knows us and is in control, understands and can act.

A deeper faith to react to hardship God's way. The Bible provides us a way to not be okay and to come to God safely, never hiding or hurting, never hiding our hurting from our Father.

So that's why lamenting is crucial for Christians in Sydney and across the world. It's okay to lament and it's needed.

But James mentioned before that people have been calling tomorrow Freedom Day. Why are we talking about lament right now? Why hope in despair now?

The worst is over, right? Life has been hard for all in lockdown in our city but life is often hard and for some people it's always hard.

[ 8 : 12 ] Across the world near and far life is full of griefs and pains. All of us flick on our devices past articles whether it be in the news or from other organisations of horrors all across the world let alone in your own life.

It's so hard to see all of this grief and pain and know what to do about it. If we are seeing tragedy everywhere and it is such a heavy burden where do we turn to hand it over?

We're here in this series to learn rather than reject lament we need to embrace it so that we are ready. Discovering lament starts when we open our Bibles and read along with laments like Psalm 6 as Flora just read to us.

Thank you Flora. As we read and preach along with the laments of Scripture they can become our prayers to lament or shape our lament prayers for right now for some of us and certainly soon for the rest of us.

In lament we approach God directly and that might feel unusual for some of you. It may be that you rarely approach God one-to-one in prayer.

[ 9 : 52 ] But even though it is uncomfortable the good news is that you won't be learning it alone. As I said before Psalms and lament Psalms specifically are written so that God's people can sing them all together.

Open to Psalm 6. Make sure you've got that in front of you. Think about what it felt like to hear those words of David in that Psalm when Flora read them out.

Imagine showing up to church and that's Psalm 1. We stand up in our homes or gathering soon and we sing Psalm 6.

That would be a cultural rarity. It would be incredibly uncomfortable. But that's what this Psalm is for. It's not for singing to feel ourselves into some kind of depression and follow those emotions down the path to be where David is.

No. We can't even sing ourselves into understanding where David was at. But we learn to lament like David when we sing psalms like this or songs like this together to prepare ourselves for the dark seasons of life to come.

[ 11 : 24 ] We could wait to learn lament and pick up lament scripture when our lives have completely fallen apart. life. But if you've been through a really difficult season of life or a time of high anxiety where your mind is spinning out of control, it's hard to tell where to turn.

It's hard to tell light from light from light from the light. So we need words ready. Words ready to bring to God in patterns of lament learnt together through scripture and through song.

Because we break. And life is not easy. There are griefs near to us, outside of us, and inside of us. In this series, we'll learn to lament a path to the light. So that when darkness comes, we know our way back to hope.

Psalm 6 is a song of David. It's for God's people to sing, to learn, to turn to God and to find hope in Him.

[12:47] But turn with me there to verse 8 of Psalm 6. David boldly laments because of this. Because of these three wonderful truths.

We're going to shape the rest of our time around these three. The Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for help. The Lord accepts my prayer.

First, the Lord has heard my weeping. This psalm is very personal. personal. It doesn't have the personal details you might expect.

Say, if a friend was telling a friend, hey, this happened. I felt like this. Then I ran out of tissues, etc., etc.

No. David, he was horribly sick in body and soul and somehow also at the same time in imminent danger from his enemies.

[13:44] enemies and a situation has arisen that takes a massive toll on him, inside and out, and he expects to die by sickness or sword in physical and mental agony.

David's sickness gave him immense physical pain, down to his bones, to the point where he was weak and faint, as it says in verse 2. We don't know what it is.

Till he was worn out and hoarse of voice from all his groaning, as it says in verse 6. His eyes went blind and failed him, as it says in verse 7, and when he closes them to rest, he cannot sleep, as it says in verse 5.

He's also hurting in his soul. Verse 3 says, my soul is in deep anguish. His soul blurs his perception of the world.

His pain of soul blurs his perception of the world, as it says in verse 7. But the most worrying sign of David's situation, even though we don't know what it is, is how it looks.

[15:01] It's so bad that David's bed is swimming in his tears. Verse 6 describes every place where David has sat as soaked.

Every spot is soaked with weeping. This is long-term depression or anxiety. It's at least a night, but it's probably more, and it's weeping and crying and rehydrating and weeping and crying more. And only after at least one night of this dark situation does David open his mouth. It takes him breaking physically and emotionally.

This once mighty warrior now cries out. His fear of death from sickness or from man overtakes his ability to process life in an orderly way.

And stricken and panicked, he decided to cry out, possibly the most common lament in Scripture in verse 3, where he cries out, how long, oh Lord, how long?

[16:19] we should be ready to lament before we are completely broken, but we can't predict the speed that darkness will rush upon us.

While lament is always a right response, let me say that clinical depression or anxiety or any other valid and treatable mental health issue, they can arise in dark seasons like David is describing now, even before.

You could argue that Psalm 6 shows some level of treatable clinical depression, for sure, in David. Lament cannot replace needed medical and professional help, which for most of us, we will need to engage with either in our own lives or in the lives of our family in our lifetime.

lament is always there for every dark day, even before we see the cracks forming in our soul or in our circumstance. That is when we take up our lament to God.

The Lord hears our cry. As David cries out to God, we see four characteristics of lament that together guide David back to his hope.

[17:47] David has been groaning and weeping aimlessly as a reflex to his pain and fear, but now his words become lament as he brings them to his Lord who can do something to help him.

Verse 1, turn there with me. It says, Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Seems a strange place to start.

David seems to be confessing something, but unlike many other Psalms that begin with a confession of a specific sin, David instead pleads with God and confesses his sinfulness. forgiveness. He makes a claim of need for God's grace toward him. David doesn't deserve his relationship with God, but he claims the relationship anyway.

And he does not claim a right to his change of circumstances. He instead knows God's character is to save and to heal as he is gracious and loving.

[ 19 : 02 ] So he trusts God by grace. He trusts God's grace that he would hear him and heal him as he cries out in prayer.

David then tells God of his situation, even though he knows God already sees it. all the tears and groans.

God can already see all of it. We just went through how David describes his situation to God. That's how we know what David was going through.

David tells God all of it. Think of how a little child reacts to falling down. the parent might be there and usually is there.

If they're not on their phone, they're probably watching their child and their child knows it. And their child is running and playing and then their child falls down. They might skin their knees, hurt their hands and they run to their parent or their carer.

[ 20 : 16 ] And they say to them, what happened? Even though they just saw it. And the child says, I fell down. I got an owie. You see, part of lamenting is blurting out in our own words what God already sees.

Doing this affirms our close relationship where we can share our hurting words with our loving Father. It's safe with Him because He hears what we say and we're near to His ear.

God. Then David asks God to do something. He wants God to have mercy and deliver him out of his situation, verses 2 and 4.

He asks specifically for healing in verse 2 and that it would come quickly as he cries out, how long? He trusts in God to deliver him, even in verse 10 to bring justice into his situation.

In verse 4 it says, save me because of your unfailing love. Because of the love that he sees in God, he trusts that he's going to be saved, or at least he claims that promise.

[ 21 : 44 ] In a relationship of grace and love with God, David can safely plead for help, but that verse 4 save me because of your unfailing love, could also be in part a challenge to God.

Does David feel loved by God right now? I suggest he probably doesn't feel it. It doesn't mean it's not true. And then in verse 5, David continues to challenge.

He says, among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave? At death's door, David is challenging God.

Surely God would keep his king alive to lead his people to follow him as God has promised. Will God save for his own name's sake?

How often do you challenge God out loud to his face? Is that a safe thing to do? Challenging God in lament means remembering God's promises and seeing if they are contradicted by our negative circumstances.

[ 23 : 04 ] It's a brave thing, yet it's a safe thing for David to do because of the close relationship that he has with God. and it's a wise thing because when we challenge God's promises, they always stand true and sure, no matter the scrutiny they are put under.

And so after David cries out, what happens? we see no evidence of deliverance or healing from illness or enemy.

But the lament changes tone in verses 9 and 10. David's prayers become determined and even more certain. In verse 9 it says he turns away from evil toward God.

There's a purposefulness about whatever he will do next. As he tells God, asks God and challenges God, David finds his way to truth in God's promises.

He finds God listening to his weeping, hearing his cries and accepting his prayer. This is what gives David hope. These verses here.

[ 24 : 27 ] The Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord accepts my prayer. As if from nowhere David has this sudden strength, he rejects the allure of all the other bright lights that a king of a country could run towards in a dark time like this.

Whether it be a treaty with the evil nations around David, or whether it be a lust after some other distraction to run away from his internal problems and struggles.

Instead, David embraces the ability of God to comfort him in the promise of God's acceptance of his prayer before God heals or saves.

David finds his trust in a relationship with God that cannot be broken by any circumstances but can be relied on in every circumstance, even this circumstance.

So here I imagine David's tear-stained face becoming peaceful, maybe a deep breath. death. And the backing music turns from minor to major.

[ 25 : 52 ] Maybe there's a key change, or maybe a peaceful ending. And then we have verse 10. All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish.

They will turn back and suddenly be put to shame. This sounds out of the blue. It sounds a bit bold for our tongues. Will David's enemies be turned back?

Will they take on David's anguish of soul that we read about in verse 3? Will they take that on as their own somehow? But no matter the outcome, David is confident in God's ability to do verse 10. He's confident in God's ability to work justice as David sees it. and he's comforted in the acceptance that God has given him in relationship as he is lamenting in prayer.

Lamenting changed David from verses 1 to verse 10. But his situation didn't change, not at all.

Lamenting led David to hope, to dismiss his doubts, because God heard him weep.

[ 27 : 11 ] He listened to his cry, and he accepted his prayer, which confirmed the relationship that David had by God's grace and unfailing love for him.

For David, that was enough. Today, you might not be in a place like David was, desperate and despondent or even dying, but if you don't lament today, you certainly will soon.

We have seen in Psalm 6 that God is the light that Scripture would have us turn to for help in our darkest hour.

So don't wait until your soul and body have recovered to begin to pray. But come to God in lament while our tears are flowing.

We have found here that lamenting, turning to God, telling God, asking God, even challenging God, is a pattern of prayer and lament that God will hear and accept.

[ 28 : 25 ] And when we come to him to test our relationship and compare our broken body, soul, and circumstances to his promises for now, and for the future, we find him trustworthy and reliable.

In lament, we can find hope, and as we hope, our faith grows. Faith does not always resolve life. But with faith, there is forever, forever hope in Jesus. God's God's love, and he was loving, so that he would be a saving God.

So he came to him and lamented. He found hope in God's light, the light of his promises, that one day, justice and peace would be done.

In his life, but in the world, once for all, justice would be done. But David didn't live to see the fullest display of God's grace, how gracious God would be, but we get to.

[ 29 : 43 ] Today, we have the brightest view of God's guiding light in the darkness. We have the light of the world, Jesus Christ. God's grace is on dazzling display, and it sears our sight when we see Jesus at the cross.

It is there where Jesus took the sin of all who believe in him upon himself, dying in agony in our place, so that we could know God's grace, see God's grace, and discover full forgiveness.

How can you know, how can you trust right now, 2021, in Sydney or wherever you are in the world, how can you know that lamenting, you're turning to God, you're telling God, you're asking God, you're challenging God, and hoping in him, how can you know that is worth it?

How can we know that our tears and our prayers are not for nothing? We can know because Jesus became God's enemy and died in our sorrows.

Jesus bore the pain and wrath that in verse 10 of this psalm, David imagined should be poured out on his worst enemy.

[ 31 : 21 ] That's what David saw justice to be. But instead, God took our pains of death upon himself. Jesus is the light of our hope.

He did all that so that God our Father could promise us so assuredly that when we come to him as believers in his son's sacrifice, forgiven our sinfulness, that we have a father and a family to run to with our sorrows.

So find comfort somehow, but surely in lament, in the accepting gaze of your father because you have unlimited grace from God to lament.

And we can claim that grace like David did in verse 1 of this psalm, if we trust in Jesus. Jesus. If you do not know Jesus yet, I encourage you to get in contact with us by email or phone in the comments right now or hang around on Zoom and ask, how can I know Jesus?

The light of the world is your only hope. But if you do know Jesus and you can, with him you will find by grace that you are safe.

[ 33 : 05 ] In him you'll find hope through lament. So church, when you go through hard and horrifying times, fly to God. Come to his light.

Don't be found at the podiatrist like the moth. Don't be drawn towards any other light that cannot deliver you from death.

Run by the way of lament to the light of God's promises that shine so brightly at the cross and lament to the God who hears your weeping, who listens to your cries, who accepts your prayer, who accepts you.

Lament in the light of your hope. Jesus Christ.