

Lamenting in Sorrow and Grief

Lord, why do you stand so far away?
Why do you hide in times of trouble?
2 In arrogance the wicked relentlessly pursue their victims;
let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.
3 For the wicked one boasts about his own cravings;
the one who is greedy curses and despises the Lord.
4 In all his scheming,
the wicked person arrogantly thinks,
“There’s no accountability,
since there’s no God.”
5 His ways are always secure;
your lofty judgments have no effect on him;
he scoffs at all his adversaries.
6 He says to himself, “I will never be moved —
from generation to generation I will be without calamity.”
7 Cursing, deceit, and violence fill his mouth;
trouble and malice are under his tongue.
8 He waits in ambush near settlements;
he kills the innocent in secret places.
His eyes are on the lookout for the helpless;
9 he lurks in secret like a lion in a thicket.
He lurks in order to seize a victim;
he seizes a victim and drags him in his net.
10 So he is oppressed and beaten down;
helpless people fall because of the wicked one’s strength.
11 He says to himself, “God has forgotten;
he hides his face and will never see.”
12 Rise up, Lord God! Lift up your hand.
Do not forget the oppressed.
13 Why has the wicked person despised God?
He says to himself, “You will not demand an account.”
14 But you yourself have seen trouble and grief,
observing it in order to take the matter into your hands.
The helpless one entrusts himself to you;
you are a helper of the fatherless.
15 Break the arm of the wicked, evil person,
until you look for his wickedness,
but it can’t be found.

16 The Lord is King forever and ever;
the nations will perish from his land.

17 Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble;
you will strengthen their hearts.

You will listen carefully,

18 doing justice for the fatherless and the oppressed

so that mere humans from the earth may terrify them no more. -- Psalms 10:1-18 (CSB)

Have you ever wondered if you can take your sorrow to God? Have you wondered if what you're feeling is too much or that the words you would use would be too truthful, raw, and unfiltered? The Psalms give us comfort in so many ways, but they also show us that we can be completely truthful with God and they give us a helpful process to do that called Lament.

Lament is a biblical way of grieving and being honest with God.

Lament can be done many different ways and you will see some different patterns or a call for no pattern at all and that is wonderful - just pouring out your heart to God is important in every circumstance. However, we are going to discuss one pattern of lament that we can find here in Psalm 10 that is a very useful template for dealing with sorrow.

Let's look at verses 1-11 in our Psalm. During this passage, the psalmist pours out his heart to God. He asks questions that we might consider too harsh or too disrespectful - "Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide in times of trouble?" He talks frankly about his enemy and says exactly what he's feeling. He is bold and honest and God records that as a song for the nation of Israel to sing together. Honesty is a trait that is treasured by the psalmists and is the foundation of a great relationship with God.

This is the first phase of lament we will work on together. Choose one situation in your life where you are grieving or suffering. On the following lines, write out some honest conversation with God. Tell him exactly how you are feeling and what questions you have. We will call this section honesty.

Next, take a look at verses 12-15. In this section, the psalmist gets specific with God on what he really wants, especially what he wants from God. Again, the psalmist holds nothing back. He is open, honest, and blunt. He has thoughts and ideas about what should be done and he expresses those aloud.

We might not agree with the psalmist that this is the best way to deal with his situation, and God might not either. Just because the psalmist expresses it, doesn't mean God's going to do it. But he is sure that God will hear and is interested in what he has to say.

So often we are afraid to ask God for what we really want. Whether it's healing, restoring a relationship, truth to come to light, for someone to not die, or other requests, we often leave these things unspoken. Sometimes we are afraid to be honest with ourselves, with God, or with others. We may feel like we need to hold back for some reason, but the psalms show us that is not the case.

We will call this next section petition. Think through your situation and what you would like to happen. Be specific and honest.

Let's look at the last section, verses 16-18. In this section, the psalmist praises God for who he is. Not only is he praising God, but he's reminding himself of God's true nature. He knows his current situation might make him doubt who God is, he even wonders at the beginning of the psalm why God seems so far away. You see, just because the psalm is over doesn't mean the situation is resolved, in fact, in this particular psalm, the psalmist is looking towards the future to a time when God will make everything right. The last part of this psalm is in the future tense. He is not reiterating things that have already happened, but instead, trusting God with his future. He is able to praise without resolution.

It's as though the psalmist is saying, "even if my requests aren't granted, and despite the fact that you feel far away, I know who you are and I know what is true and I know you can be trusted."

The psalmist makes sure he ends with the truth. Even when he has trouble believing it, even when he feels otherwise, even when circumstances might pull him away, he tells himself the truth about God and praises God for it. It is so important to end lament in this way. Whether you can do it the same day as the other two sections, or whether it takes longer to believe, we must tell ourselves the truth so we do not despair. If suffering and grief are all there were, we would be devastated. But they are not all there is. We have a God who cares and loves us and is working all things for our good. We have our salvation and the hope of heaven. We have the promise of a perfected body and eternity with God. What amazing things we have to remind ourselves of! So take some time to really think through what you need to remember and how to praise God for that even in the midst of your suffering.

