

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Icebreaker

What is your favorite thing about the Autumn season?

Worship: Lamentations 3:55-58

(Read the poem or a Scripture passage to meditate on)

Practice lectio divina (sacred reading) by attentively reading Lamentation 3:55-58 aloud several times. Enter into a time of worship through prayer by using a word or a phrase from the passage.

Text for Discussion: Lamentations 3:19-26

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

We all will deal with pain and loss – more than we'd like, and for many of us, more than we feel we can bear. As believers in Christ, what are we to do when we experience such loss, when our life hasn't gone the way we expected? In the midst of dark and trying times, Lamentations asks two questions of us, then offers three promises in return:

When our soul laments, will we worship?

"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope" (v21). During times when the ground beneath our feet begins to roll, we are called to worship our way through it – keeping our eyes on the face of God and His glorious love for us.

When our soul laments, will we wait?

"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" (v25-26). Worship is an act of putting God as the King of our thoughts and lives. Waiting is therefore an expression of our trust in God's character. So when we have cause to lament, waiting is an expression of trust in His goodness, love and presence.

When we wait and we worship, we will find Him loving.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases" (v22). As John Piper wrote: "God's first great design in all our trouble is that we might let go of self-confidence. When we do that, there is a temporary sense of falling. But by faith in God's mercy, we land – infinitely more secure – in the arms of our Father, who is at the brink and utterly in control." Our Father has always been in control, has known every moment of our lives, and has never stopped loving us more fully than we ever dared hope.

When we wait and we worship, we will find Him faithful.

"His mercies never come to an end" (v22, see also James 1:17). Our God is not static, but He is stable. He is active and dynamic but always in ways that are consistent with His nature. Our Lord is dependable. His ways are not our ways but He will be the same tomorrow as He is today.

When we wait and we worship, we will find Him good.

“The Lord is my portion” (v24). All that we have comes from God. All aspects of our lives where we seek healing will find redemption in Him. Therefore, the willful commitment of our hearts should be to root our hope in Him. Because *“The Lord is good to those who wait for Him – to the soul who seeks Him”* (v25, see also Job 23:8-10). All that our heart longs for has been given to us in the Gospel. But all that our heart ultimately longs for is yet ahead. So we worship... and we wait... and we trust. This is faith in the goodness of God.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How does this passage help you to lament before God concerning the pain, suffering, and hurt you have experienced and/or seen in the world?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- The New Oxford American Dictionary defines the word lamentation as, “the passionate expression of grief or sorrow; weeping”. Discuss the meaning of the word lament together.
 - Did Jesus lament? When and why? What do we learn about God from His lamentations?
 - How does it make you feel to know that Jesus grieves with you? See Hebrews 4:14-16.
- How does this passage help you to lament before God concerning the pain, suffering, and hurt you have experienced and/or seen in the world?
 - What challenges do you personally face when it comes to expressing your laments to God? Is anything holding you back?
 - How are prayers of lament also an expression of faith?
 - How are they a form of worship?
 - What is the cure to hopelessness?
- How does the practice of lament contribute to a healthy relationship to God?
- In your own words describe the person that verses 25-26 is speaking about.
 - What is taking place when our lament turns into a prayer of worship and waiting?
 - What has kept you from lamenting before God? What is your default "go to" with your sorrows? Is there anything you want to repent of?
- Which promises in this passage give you peace and why? Memorize Lamentations 3:22-23.

Prayer

Use the following questions to pray prayers of lament together. What is the yearning of your heart right now? What has God done that you want to “call to mind” right now?

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Spiritual Formation Experience:

Since the role of lament is a crucial part of the journey of faith in a broken world, write in a journal some prayers of lament for the concerns you have for the world, country, city, home, job, church, family or personal life. Experience freedom before God and offer Him everything in your heart as worship and submission before Him. Ask God’s Spirit to show you anything that may need to be put before Him to receive His healing. You will find that prayers of lament often include prayers of repentance and gratitude and always turn into worship and waiting. Turn toward Him with all your heart. (If you need help with this read Job, Jeremiah or Psalms 5, 12, 22, 28, 31, 51, 52, 55, 88 and so many others.)

Missional Experiment:

Sometimes sharing our faith simply involves having lunch with neighbors or co-workers. Through conversation and good listening, you will discover their felt needs and hopefully one day explore with them their deepest need, their need for Christ. This doesn’t just happen. You will have to intentionally make time for others in your calendar. Begin praying for at least three people and plan some opportunities to get to know them better through shared lunches. As a group, continue to pray for one another and the people you are sharing with. Celebrate any answers to prayer.