

HOW TO WRITE A LAMENT PSALM

Lament Psalms are front and centre in the book of Psalms, which is a prayer book written by King David and used by the people of Israel through centuries. Jesus himself used the Psalms to express his own feelings to God. (Matthew 27:46)

When we pray our own feelings of chaos and loss, we let God into the places where we need recreation. We let him hover over our dark places like He did at creation and as we wait on Him, honestly expressing what our real life experience is, he uses the chaos to bring life.

You can find examples of Lament in Psalm 6, Psalm 22, Psalm 44, and Psalm 80.

When you read them, you'll find that they contain 4 parts, sometimes in order but now always.

1. Invocation - an address to God which indicates that these words are not just an outpouring of emotion, but a prayer. These words belong in the context of a relationship with the One who can actually do something about them.
2. Complaint- this is the heart of the Psalm, the reason for the prayer. It may be the feeling of abandonment that comes from suffering, or the loss of a sense of security. It can be the expression of betrayal, or loneliness, or failure, or loss.
3. Petition- the Psalmist asks for God to DO something about the complaint. Deliver, rescue, restore, fulfill are all demands that the Psalmist makes of God in the petition.
4. Praise- almost every Psalm of lament ends with praise. Even while the Psalmist is in the middle of chaos and loss, he recognizes that God is the one in charge.

So, here's how to write a lament. First, choose a Psalm of lament and read it. Get a feel for how to lament.

Then write it down:

1. Address God. This isn't just a diary entry. This is prayer. You are placing your thoughts and feelings before God.
2. Name your losses. Tell God how you feel. Be honest. Use metaphor!
3. Tell God what you need from Him.
4. Praise- find a way to place your lament in the larger framework of God's love and care. You could use a characteristic of God that speaks specifically to your complaint. For instance, if you have lost your job perhaps you will recognize that God is the provider and praise him for that.