



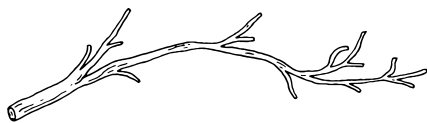
**WEEK 5**

# LAMENTATIONS

**FALL READING GUIDE**

# LAMENTATIONS

**GOD MEETS US IN OUR SUFFERING**



**WEEK 5**  
**OCTOBER 3, 2022**



**CHURCH** IN THE **SQUARE**

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**EVERY DAY ...**

**... A PASSAGE TO READ,**

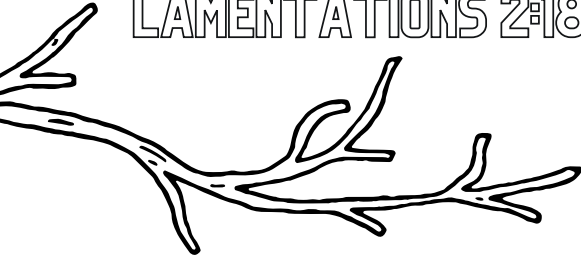
**... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,**

**... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,**

**... A PRAYER TO PRAY.**

WEEK 5

LAMENTATIONS 2:18-22



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THE PRAYER OF SORROW

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DAY 1

THE PRAYER OF SORROW



First read **Lamentations 2:18**

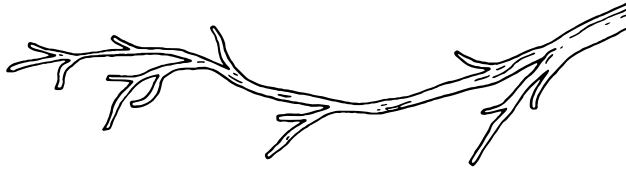
Jeremiah calls God’s people to pray. The rest of the chapter is about the nature and purpose of this prayer. It starts with ceaseless sorrow, **“let tears stream down like a torrent day and night!”** (v.18b). Anguish takes God’s people deep into the night, beyond their need for rest. Nothing is more fundamental than sleep. It’s like water and food. Rest nourishes the body, providing healing and energy necessary for life. What is being suggested then is that the need for lament is greater than the people’s need for rest. But this is not just emotional. “A torrent of tears is to be matched by a flood of words” (Allen, 80). While their eyes flooded, **“their heart cried”** (v.18a). In lament, a prayer of sorrow is meant to be offered to God which is both an overflow of contrition and a clear articulation of guilt or shame. Lament isn’t simply feeling sorrow. It’s about confessing sin. It’s not just saying the right words or feeling the right emotions. It’s about our hearts and minds being realigned with the heart and mind of God.

DAY 1

THE PRAYER OF SORROW



1. Why do you think God wants your heart and mind to be aligned with his?
2. Does your sin cause you sorrow? Do you clearly articulate your guilt when you sin? Why or why not?
3. How does the cross ultimately realign your heart and mind with God's?



Heavenly Father ...

*Forgive my sin. Give me a heart that grieves sin. Please forgive me for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . I know these thoughts, actions, and dispositions are in opposition to your heart and mind. Comfort, restore, and empower me to honor you today.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## DAY 2

# THE PRAYER OF EXHAUSTION



First read **Lamentations 2:19**.

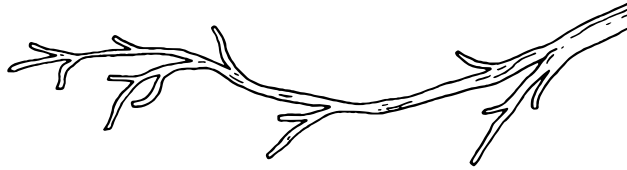
Sin is exhausting. While righteousness nourishes, empowers, and restores our souls (Psalm 23:1-3), sin overburdens, isolates, and destabilizes us (John 10:10). Carrying the theme of sleepless sorrow, the poet now instructs his tired readers to pray specifically for ***“the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street”*** (v.19b). When we’re tired we’re not precise. Our thoughts are hazy. Sinful exhaustion causes us to speak in generalities and avoid the discomfort of specifics. But the prophet “does not sugarcoat his struggles” (Rah, 98). When sin makes us spiritually lazy, someone like Jeremiah is really helpful. He’s honest and clear. And the only way to alleviate our weariness is to be really clear about our sin, to be really clear about what is causing us grief so that we can receive true rest from the Lord. You see, though sin is exhausting, Jesus yoke is easy and his burden is light (see Matthew 11:28-30).

DAY 2

THE PRAYER OF EXHAUSTION



1. Why does God's righteousness give us rest?
2. What sin is weighing you down and causing restlessness?
3. How does the cross invite you to be clear about sin? How does it enable you to enjoy true rest?



Heavenly Father ...

*Sin makes me tired. Sin makes me unclear. Help me to find rest in you. Help me to speak honestly to you. Forgive my sin. Thank you for Jesus, his yoke is easy and his burden is light.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



DAY 3

THE PRAYER OF CONFUSION



First read **Lamentations 2:20**.

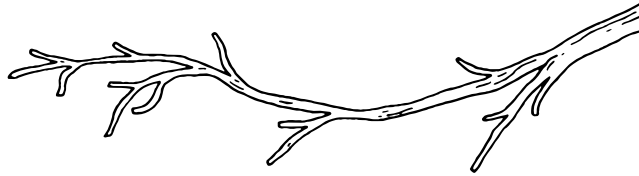
As Jeremiah guides people in prayer, he moves from sorrow to exhaustion, and now to confusion. Sin has turned Israel's world upside down. In particular, sources of life have become places of death. The womb--where physical life begins--is now a place of death. **"Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care?"** (v.20b). The sanctuary--where spiritual life happens--is now a place of death. **"Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?"** (v.20c). God is the God of light and order. Through his character and word we discover what is true and how things should be. When we see our hearts and the world through his eyes, it's clear we are confused. Prayer is the place where this confusion is acknowledged. And it's the place where the upside-down can be made right-side up. You see, sin confuses but lament clarifies and repentance restores. God brings truth to the darkness (John 1:5). God brings peace to the chaos (1 Corinthians 14:33).

DAY 3

THE PRAYER OF CONFUSION



1. Why is it encouraging to remember God is the God of light and order?
2. What is upside down in your life or community right now?
3. How does the gospel address this confusion?



*Heavenly Father ...*

*My heart and this world are not as they should be. Bring all things into alignment with your loving will.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## DAY 4

# THE PRAYER OF MOURNING



First read **Lamentations 2:21**.

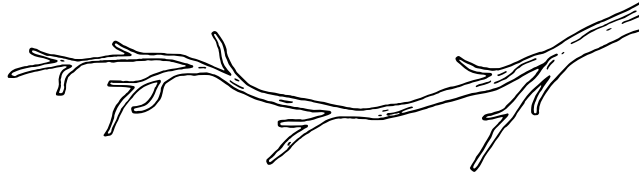
The prayer remains honest. It's specific and unflinching. People are dead, **"the young and the old; my young women and my young men have fallen by the sword"** (v.21a). Their death is not happenstance. God has **"killed them in the day of [his] anger, slaughtering without pity"** (v.21b). Mourning is a process of coming to terms with hard truth, especially death. We detach ourselves from comfortable fantasies and habits of avoidance. Mourning is unsettling. That's why prayer amidst mourning is often a spiritual wrestling match; a frustrating consideration of God's character and action, our sin, the consequences or losses we're experiencing ... it's a fight to trust. The wages of sin have always been death (see Romans 6:23). And part of the redemptive struggle of prayer is to mourn that reality. We mourn that, **"sin when it is fully grown brings forth death"** (James 1:15b). Yet on this side of the cross, by faith in Jesus' substitutionary death, we never mourn without hope (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Our real and specific laments will become real and specific praises.

DAY 4

THE PRAYER OF MOURNING



1. What does this passage teach us about God?
2. What are you mourning this week? Personally?  
Communally? Globally?
3. How does the gospel help you understand mourning?



Heavenly Father ...

*In my grief and frustration and mourning, help me to keep coming to you because you care for me and all your creation. Help me to be honest about my emotions and experiences. Help me to remain grounded in hope of the gospel and trust in you.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## DAY 5

## THE PRAYER OF FEAR



First read **Lamentations 2:22**.

Writer Flannery O'Connor once wrote, "I do not know You God because I am in the way" (A Prayer Journal, 3). Prayer, she observed, was the only way to regularly decenter herself and see the Lord rightly. That's what prayer does-- personally and cosmically. Prayer sets things to rights. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "**Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**" (Matthew 6:10). Prayer is the invitation and participation in the *shalom* of heaven becoming the *shalom* on earth. In Lamentations the people of God are unsettled by consequence and suffering. And through their prayers of lament they are learning to see God--righteous, angry, and justified--and not just their pain or their "**terrors on every side**" (v.22a). Professor Douglas Groothuis once said, fear is seeing a future without God and faith is seeing a future where God is present and victorious. Amidst tragedy fear can take over; especially when God seems angry and enemies seem triumphant (v.22c). Prayers of lament contend with our fears, helping us to cultivate genuine faith.

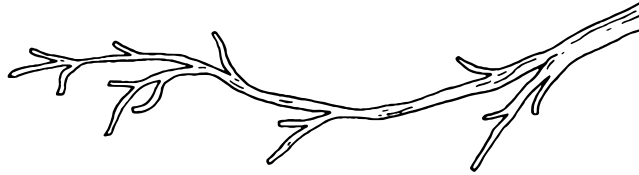
DAY 5

THE PRAYER OF FEAR



1. How does this verse portray God?
2. What's causing you fear right now?
3. How does the resurrection of Jesus help us contend with our fear and cultivate faith?

Heavenly Father ...



*I often live in fear. My fears tell me to only see myself and not trust you. Forgive me. Open my eyes. Set me right again by your righteousness and love. Empower me to live by faith today.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

GOD IS WITH US  
IN SUFFERING.

