

# Commentary: Five steps in the lost practice of lament

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“Lament helps us rewrite the narrative,” Jordan Davis, assistant professor of counseling at Dallas Baptist University and a licensed professional counselor, said during a recent symposium.

“It gives us a framework for how to express the pain we are going through while also experiencing the hope that can only be given to us by a loving God,” he added.

Lament is described by Mark Vroegop, lead pastor of College Park Church in Indianapolis, as a minor key language: beautiful, but different from the melodic, upbeat sounds we may be used to.

Jordan was joined by Joan Davis, DBU professor of counseling and psychology. Together, they discussed the process and importance of biblical lament.

They offered five key steps to practice biblical lament, based on a framework outlined by Vroegop, using Psalm 13 as a template. By choosing to turn to God, lifting our complaints to him, asking questions, shifting our mindset to trust in God, and giving thanks for all he has done, we are able to process our grief and lament in a healthy way that puts us on the path to healing.

## Turning

They noted C.S. Lewis wrote: “Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in

our pain. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

Lament negates silence. It is far better to be openly communicative with the Lord about our pain through prayer than to be silent and to cut off our communication with God.

It is easy to praise God when our lives are going well, but it is when we walk through the valleys that we must actively choose to turn to our Savior.

## **Submitting our complaints**

“It is through lament that we vocalize our pain,” Joan Davis said.

Throughout the Psalms, we see David cry out to the Lord, crushed by his circumstances, his relationships and his own sin. The Lord was faithful to bend a listening ear to David every time.

In Ecclesiastes, we learn “the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure” (Ecclesiastes 7:4).

The person who sweeps his or her troubles under the rug and naively enjoys the empty fulfillment offered by the world is a fool. The one who cries out to God in doubt, anguish or pain is wise.

## **Asking questions**

“We have been pulled into the belief at church that it is not ‘come as you are,’ but ‘come as you’re supposed to be,’” Jordan Davis said.

“And so we get trapped in this belief that if we show any weakness, our lament may show a lack of faith, and we label that as sinful. We are to engage with God about our grief, our anger, our sadness and our doubt, but we have mislabeled those things as sins,” he continued.

We serve a Father who wants to hear his children's questions and doubts.

"God can handle our messy thoughts and questions. They are no surprise to him," Joan Davis said. "So have faith to ask hard questions."

## **Trusting**

"Yet, in our pain, we remember who Christ is and what he has done. This is the pivot," she said. "This is when we choose to trust."

Unlike feelings of doubt, uncertainty, anger and sadness, trust is not a feeling. Trust is a choice.

Choosing to trust in the Lord, even in our hardest trials, isn't always easy. Like all spiritual disciplines, lament is a learned behavior. It takes great faith to lift up a prayer of lament, trusting God will listen.

There is no one more worth trusting than God, who stepped down from heaven to save us, the "man of sorrows" described in Isaiah 53, the one who can empathize with each and every one of our sufferings.

## **Giving thanks**

When we remember who God is and all he has done for us, the pains of this world begin to grow dim. While the heartache may still linger, we find hope in the promises mentioned all throughout Scripture. We give thanks because we don't have to go through this life alone.

"We find healing through community and allowing others to lament with us," Jordan Davis said.

Developing a fluency in the language of loss puts us into the habit of openly expressing our feelings with our Savior.

Joan Davis concluding saying: “We can rest knowing that our mourning, our crying, our pain will one day pass away. We are not alone in our suffering. We do not lament to a God who is detached from our pain.

“Participation in the biblical practice of lament offers all individuals an effective tool for processing their suffering by placing their pain at the foot of the cross,” Joan added. “The practice of biblical lament encourages living in honest relationship with God and others with renewed hope for life going forward.

“Suffering does not have the final word. As it is told to us in Romans: ‘I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us,’” (Romans 8:18).

“Lament is not forever.”

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