Praying the **Lament Psalms**

As you learned in chapter four of *Help! I Lost Someone I Love*, some psalms are called "laments." In these psalms, the writer pours out his heart to the Lord in deep mourning and grief. Lament is a form of worship. Through prayer, the believer talks to God about his pain. And when a believer prays, God listens—especially when that prayer comes from a hurting heart (Psalm 116:1–2). Because we live in a broken world, we will continue to sorrow over much that happens in this life. But God has not left us to suffer through all this pain alone. He has given us a language we can borrow to talk to Him about our pain. [1]

How to do this study:

- Choose a Lament Psalm from the list below:
    - Psalms 3, 13, 22, 25, 27, 28, 31, 42-43, 55, 56, 57

- Use the worksheet on the next page, following the acrostic *H.O.L.Y.* to journal through your chosen lament psalm. If you need help knowing how to do this, the author, R.J. Lago, has given you an example at the end of this study.

- Pray the actual words of the psalm back to God.

- You can also pray the ideas in the psalm back to God *in your own words*. Talking to God regularly about your sorrow, fear, and overwhelming feelings can provide significant help as you grieve. God invites you to talk to Him honestly, confessing that your grief has overwhelmed you and expressing your desperate need for Him to help you in your pain. Remember, truly biblical lament "complains *to* God, but not *about* God."[2]
- When you pray, even in your weakest moment, God listens.

After working through several psalms of lament, consider studying how Christ Himself faced sorrow and suffering by accessing the growth study, *The Darkness Jesus Endured*, at the LifeLine for Teens website.[3] Following the example of Christ, we can turn to God and trust Him in our darkest times with our deepest pain. And like Christ, we can be confident that lament is not the end of the story. One day, God will fix everything that is broken, removing everything there is to cry about (Revelation 21:4).

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[1]To learn more about biblical lament, see Mark Vroegop, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), Appendix 1: "Psalms of Lament."

[2] Paul Tautges, *Bitterness: When You Can't Move On*, (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2023), 21.

[3] You can find this study under the resource section at https://lifelineforteens.com/book/help-im-in-darkness/.

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Healing through Lament

Honestly Call Out to God

Read through your chosen lament psalm. As you read, write out any struggles, fears, temptations, and trials you share with the psalmist:

Admit You are **O**verwhelmed

Like the psalmist, write out how you have responded (either rightly or wrongly) in your trial. Describe all the emotions associated with your experience. Talk to the Lord about how you feel: "Lord, I am overwhelmed and cannot do anything to fix this situation."

Linger on God: Recall Who He Is and What He Has Done

What does the writer mention about who God has shown Himself to be or what God has done for him in the past? Follow the psalmist's example. List all of the ways you have seen God care for you in this dark time in your life. It may help to think of some promises that are in God's Word if you are having trouble remembering what God has done for you.

Yield to God's Will

List at least three specific ways you want to seek to trust the Lord in this trial. Ask God to give you His strength to put your desire into action:

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Example of Lament from Psalm 42

Use the acrostic, H.O.L.Y to lament your grief to God:

- Honestly call out to God.
- Admit you are Overwhelmed.
- Linger on who God is and what He has done.
- Yield to God's will.

To practice, let's consider Psalm 42.

- Read Psalm 42:1-5. As you read, notice that the psalmist is brutally honest about his situation. God wants us to be honest with Him about our trials and grief. It's often helpful to pray the actual words of a psalm back to God. Like the psalmist, you can *honestly* call out to God.
- Read verse 5 again. Do you need to join the psalmist in honestly confessing to the Lord that you are *overwhelmed* by the grief you are experiencing? God is much bigger than any trial. He will never be overwhelmed by your grief. Admitting that you are not God is a vitally important step to clearly seeing the true and living God in your trial. Being overwhelmed is not wrong or sinful, but we should not stay in this state.
- Read Psalm 42:6-10. Do you see how the psalmist *lingers* on God, recalling all that God has done for him? He speaks truth to himself, reminding himself of this reality: "My soul may be cast down, but my God is working in my trial." Even when the psalmist goes back to the pain of the situation (in verses 9-10), he puts the problem in the right context: *God is with me even when nothing else seems to be going right.* Remember how Christian and Hopeful found the way out of their prison of despair in Doubting Castle? They chose to rehearse the promises and works of God. In John Bunyan's allegory, rehearsing truth about God, rather than hopeless thoughts, proved to be the key that set them free.
- Even if our situations remain unchanged, we can always choose to express our trust in God by *yielding* to God's will. At the end of our lamenting prayers, we should conclude by surrendering our lives to God and trusting in His will and goodness.

Here is an example of how I wish I would have borrowed the language of this psalm to talk to God about my pain after the death of my mother:

> "Dear Heavenly Father, I desperately want to be satisfied in you. I've tried everything I can think of, but none of it's working. God, I cried to You every day before my mom died, but she still died. To be *honest*, sometimes I'm tempted to think, "Where was God when my mom died? Lord, I'm struggling to trust you. I'm *overwhelmed*. I'm sad, and I just can't see how any good can come out of my mom's death. Help me, God, to *linger* on Your promises, to remember who You are and how You have helped me in the past. I want to stay close to You, but You feel far away. Please remind me of Your steadfast love for me and my mother. Thank You that she knew You and loved You and is safe with You. Thank You for the ways You are providing for my family through so many people from our church who love us. Lord, I feel so broken, but I chose to *yield* myself to You. Please heal me. Please help me hope in You again. Please, God, comfort my heart. In Jesus' name, Amen."

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