



On Praying

5 Days On “Learning to Lament”

Day 1: The Complete Journey of Psalm 13

Reading: *Psalm 13 (entire psalm)*

Devotional

Psalm 13 takes us on a complete journey from raw pain to triumphant trust—all in just six verses. David begins with brutal honesty: "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?" He doesn't sugarcoat his anguish or try to sound spiritually mature. Yet by the end, he's declaring trust in God's unfailing love and singing of His goodness. This isn't because his circumstances changed, but because lament itself transformed his heart.

Notice the progression: complaint (v.1-2), petition (v.3-4), and praise (v.5-6). David moves from describing his pain to actively seeking God's help, and finally to anchoring himself in God's character despite unchanged circumstances. This is the transformative power of honest prayer—it reorients our hearts from our problems to God's faithfulness.

David's psalm teaches us that authentic faith doesn't require us to pretend everything is fine when it's not. In fact, the very act of crying out to God demonstrates our belief that He is present, listening, and able to respond. The psalmist models for us what it looks like to wrestle with God while still maintaining relationship with Him. Raw honesty isn't a lack of faith; it's an act of profound trust.

Reflection Question

What would change in your prayer life if you followed David's example of moving from honest complaint through petition to declarations of trust?

Action Step

Begin practicing the three movements of lament prayer. Set aside 15 minutes today to write your own lament following David's pattern: Start with brutally honest complaint ("How long, Lord..."), move to specific petition ("Look and answer me..."), and end with declarations of trust ("But I trust in your unfailing love"). Don't rush through the complaint—let yourself feel and express the full weight of your struggles before moving to petition and praise.

Quote

"Lament is not a lack of faith—it is faith looking for a place to land. It is the believer's desperate attempt to reconcile the goodness of God with the harsh realities of life." - **Mark Vroegop, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy**

Day 2: Jesus and Lament

Reading: *Mark 15:33-34*

Devotional

Even Jesus experienced the depths of lament on the cross. His cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" shows us that bringing our pain to God is not a lack of faith—it's an expression of deep trust. Jesus, quoting Psalm 22, demonstrates that lament has always been part of the believer's vocabulary. When we struggle with doubt, pain, or feeling abandoned, we're not failing spiritually—we're following in the footsteps of Christ Himself.

Jesus' lament on the cross validates every honest prayer we've ever prayed in the darkness. He understands what it feels like when God seems silent, when hope feels distant, when circumstances overwhelm us. Yet even in His deepest anguish, Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father. This echoes the movement we see in David's psalms—from cry to trust, from despair to surrendered hope.

Like Hagar in the wilderness, who declared God "the God who sees" (El Roi), we can trust that God sees us completely in our suffering. He doesn't just see our circumstances; He sees our hearts. Jesus' experience on the cross proves that God doesn't abandon us in our darkest moments—He enters into them with us.

Reflection Question

How does knowing that Jesus Himself lamented change your perspective on your own struggles and honest prayers?

Action Step

Practice "incarnational prayer" this week by following Christ's example of honest lament. When facing difficulty, resist the urge to immediately spiritualize your pain or find the lesson. Instead, first bring your raw emotions directly to God as Jesus did. Spend time in prayer simply naming your struggles without trying to fix them or find meaning in them yet—let lament do its work of connecting your heart to God's heart.

Quote

"Jesus shows us that it is possible to hold onto God even when we cannot feel him, even when it seems like he isn't there." - **Tish Harrison Warren, Prayer in the Night**

Day 3: When God Seems Silent

Reading: *Psalm 88*

Devotional

Psalm 88 is perhaps the darkest psalm in the entire Bible—and it ends without resolution. The psalmist cries out from deep despair: "darkness is my closest friend." Unlike other lament psalms that move toward hope, this one remains in the valley. Yet remarkably, it's still a prayer. Even in his deepest darkness, the psalmist continues to address God.

This psalm teaches us that sometimes lament doesn't lead to immediate comfort or answers. Sometimes we must sit in the darkness and continue to cry out to a God who seems silent. The very act of continuing to pray, even when we feel unheard, is itself an act of faith. Psalm 88 gives us permission to have seasons where hope feels impossible, yet we still turn toward God rather than away from Him.

This connects powerfully to the truth we find in Lamentations 3:22-23: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end." Even when we can't feel God's presence or see His activity, His unfailing love remains. Like David in Psalm 13, we learn to anchor ourselves not in our emotions or circumstances, but in God's unchanging character.

Reflection Question

How does knowing that Scripture includes such raw, unresolved lament change your expectations about your own difficult seasons?

Action Step

Develop a discipline of "dark night" prayer for seasons when God feels absent. Set a regular time each day to pray even when you don't feel like it or sense God's presence. Follow the psalmist's example by addressing God directly in your darkness rather than withdrawing from Him. Keep a prayer journal during this season, recording your honest cries to God even when He seems silent—this practice itself becomes a form of faith.

Quote

"Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is to persist in crying out to a God who seems absent." - **Dane Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly**

Day 4: Finding God in Unexpected Places

Reading: *Psalm 139:7-12*

Devotional

After sitting with the darkness of Psalm 88, we turn to one of the most comforting truths in Scripture: there is nowhere we can go that God is not already there. Even in our deepest valleys, even when we feel completely alone, God's presence surrounds us. David declares, "If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn... even there your hand will guide me."

This psalm doesn't minimize our pain or rush us past our struggles. Instead, it reveals that God meets us in the very places we thought He had abandoned us. The darkness that feels

overwhelming to us is as light to Him. When we can't sense His presence, He is still intimately acquainted with our ways, still holding us in His hand.

This truth echoes Paul's declaration in Romans 8:35-39 that nothing can separate us from God's love. Not trouble, hardship, persecution, or even our own feelings of abandonment. God's unfailing love (*chesed*)—His loyal, covenant faithfulness—remains constant even when our emotions fluctuate. Like Habakkuk, we can learn to rejoice in God even when the fig trees don't blossom and the fields produce no food, because our joy is rooted in His unchanging presence.

Reflection Question

How might your current struggle or season of difficulty actually be a place where you can encounter God's presence in a new way?

Action Step

Practice "contemplative lament" by spending time in prayer asking God to reveal His presence in your current struggles. Instead of praying for circumstances to change first, pray for eyes to see where God is already at work in your difficulty. Take 10 minutes each day this week to sit quietly and ask, "Lord, how are you present with me right now in this struggle?" Let this become a regular discipline of seeking God's nearness rather than His solutions.

Quote

"God's presence is not dependent on your ability to sense it. He is Emmanuel—God with us—even in our darkest moments." - **Henri Nouwen, The Return of the Prodigal Son**

Day 5: Community in Lament

Reading: *Romans 12:15*

Devotional

While lament often feels deeply personal, it's also meant to be shared in community. Paul's instruction to "mourn with those who mourn" reminds us that we're not meant to suffer alone. When we create space for honest pain in our relationships and church communities, we reflect God's heart for the hurting.

Too often, we try to fix people's problems or offer quick solutions when what they really need is someone to sit with them in their pain. Creating space for lament—both giving and receiving it—builds deeper connections and points people to God's faithfulness in ways that superficial encouragement cannot.

This completes our journey from individual lament to communal hope. We've learned that honest pain can be brought to God (Day 1), that even Jesus modeled this for us (Day 2), that sometimes we must persist in darkness (Day 3), and that God is present even when we can't feel Him (Day 4). Now we discover that lament finds its fullest expression in community, where we can move from isolation to connection, from bearing our burdens alone to sharing them with others who point us back to God's faithfulness.

Like David's progression from lament to praise in Psalm 13, our individual journey of faith is enriched and sustained when we allow others to witness our struggles and celebrate God's goodness with us. This is how we learn to sing the Lord's praise together, declaring that He has been good to us.

Reflection Question

How can you create more space for authentic lament in your relationships, both for yourself and others?

Action Step

Create a "lament circle" practice in your relationships. Identify one trusted friend or family member with whom you can practice mutual lament—taking turns sharing struggles without trying to fix each other. Commit to meeting regularly (weekly or monthly) to practice honest, prayerful listening. This builds the spiritual discipline of holding space for both your own and others' pain, learning to mourn together as a pathway to encountering God's comfort.

Quote

"The gift of presence is more powerful than the gift of answers. Sometimes the most holy thing we can do is to simply show up." - **Kate Bowler, Everything Happens for a Reason**