

# THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF LAMENT



## Activity: Writing a Psalm of Lament

Include your children in as much of this activity as possible. Younger children may not be able to contribute, but they can listen as you discuss.

During Lent, we fast, pray, and admit that we have sinned and need Jesus to forgive us. We practice sorrow as we think about Christ's death. There is much sadness in God's Story leading up to Easter morning. Discuss the last week of Jesus' life and look for times of sadness.

## Some hints:

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, Judas' betrayal, the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter's denial, Jesus abandoned by his disciples, Jesus' death on the cross, and his burial.

Spend a moment of silence considering this list.

Now think about the things in your life that cause sadness. When you were a baby, you cried a lot. Do you still cry? There is a word we don't use much anymore, Lament. It means someone is grieving a great loss. When we are overwhelmed with sadness, we cry.

Did you know that in the book of Psalms, there are around 42 Psalms of Lament? These are songs to God about sadness. The Israelites weren't afraid to tell God how sad they were. They would even repeat these psalms at their worship services in large groups. It is OK to be sad, angry, or worried and to tell God about it. It is also good to talk about sadness or lament as a family and then to talk to God together.

Your objective is to read Psalm 13, a lament Psalm in the Bible, then write a family Lament, and make a craft together. You can do this in two parts or all at once. Each part is approximately 10 minutes.

As we go through each section of the psalm, you will see a To Do prompt in bold font to help you write your family psalm. Before you start, think of something that makes your family sad.

**Psalm 13** starts by asking the same question 4 times! "How long?"

**1** *How long will you forget me, Lord?*

*How long will you hide from me? Forever?*

**2** *How long must I worry and feel sad in my heart?*

*How long will my enemy win over me?"*

**To Do:** Think about what makes you sad. Ask God four 'How long' questions like in the psalm, and write them down. Older children and youth may want to write their own Lament Psalm.

Next, David doesn't just tell God how he feels; he asks God to do something about his problem.

**3** *"Lord, look at me.  
Answer me, my God.  
Tell me, or I will die.*

**4** *Otherwise, my enemy will say, "I have won!"  
Those against me will rejoice that I've been defeated."*

**To Do:** In your Lament Psalm, write something you are asking God to do about your situation.

Next, David begins to tell God and anyone else who will listen what he believes about God. This is an important step in Lament. What good things do we believe about God? Does God answer our prayers?

**5** *"I trust in your love.  
My heart is happy because you saved me."*

**To Do:** Write down something you believe about God and how this makes you feel.

In the last part of the psalm, David worships God, even though he is still sad. Sometimes Lament lasts a long time. David worships God even though his problem isn't fixed. David finishes his Psalm by reminding himself that he wants to worship the Lord. He ends his prayer of Lament with hope and belief that God answers prayer and takes care of him while he waits for the answer.

**6** *"I sing to the Lord  
because he has taken care of me."*

**To Do:** Write down something God has done for you and your response.

Read your Lament Psalm out loud together or put this psalm to music. You could also display this psalm somewhere in your house. You could also send us a picture of your family Psalm.

During Lent, we think about our sadness, but we know Easter is coming. Jesus was raised from the dead! He has gone to be with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Someday he will come back, and we will be with him forever. While we wait, we know he hears our prayers. He knows when we are sad. He cares about everyone in our family. We can trust him.

**Parents:** For your further study on Lament, watch this YouTube video by N.T. Wright, What Role Does Lament Play in the Christian Life?



# A LAMENT ACTIVITY FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY: TEARS IN A BOTTLE

**Did you know that in the Psalms, King David imagines God keeping all his tears in a bottle?**

*Psalm 56:8 New Living Translation (NLT)*

*"You keep track of all my sorrows.*

*You have collected all my tears in your bottle.*

*You have recorded each one in your book."*



Do you ever wonder what your tear bottle might look like in heaven?

Have you ever cried so hard that the tears fell into your mouth and tasted like salt? That's because there is salt in our tears. Your family will fill a bottle with your tears (actually colored salt) to help you remember that God knows every tear you have ever cried. The psalmist says your tears are so important to him that he has kept each one that falls.

## **To Do:**

- Open your blue Lament bag carefully
- Everyone will unwrap a small piece of paper. Write down something that made you sad
- Roll the paper back up tightly and place the ring on it. Put all papers inside the bottle.
- Take the 6 colors of salt out of your bag. Don't eat it.
- Use the plastic funnel and pour a small amount of each color from your bags slowly, one at a time, in layers until you fill up your bottle.
- **Don't shake the bottle** or all of the colors will mix.
- Place the cork on the bottle once it is full.

Keep this as a reminder that we all cry and experience lament. We all ask God questions like the Psalmist, "How long will I be sad?" We all ask God to do something about things that worry us or make us sad. It is good to share sorrows as a family.

**To Do:** Moms and Dads, share with your family about a time of lament in your life and use Psalm 13 as a model.

1. What did you say to God when you were sad?
2. How did you talk to God about your sorrow?
3. What did you remember about the times he took care of you in the past? Share one of the ways he cared for you.
4. How do you worship God when you remember and are grateful?
5. Your children may want to answer these questions also. Close this time with a prayer and an amen. When we say "amen" it means "let it be so" or "it will happen."

**To Do:** Take a picture of your bottle of tears and your family and email the Growing Families team at [growing.families@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:growing.families@asburyseminary.edu) so we can see the beauty in your family bottle.