

GOD'S WORLD: *Our responsibility?*

FIVE ASPECTS OF LAMENT

From 'A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament', Michael Card, 2014

Presence: we have one deep, central need – the presence of God. When God's presence is impossibly absent, we experience desolation and hopelessness as the psalmist laments: 'Do not cast me from your presence' Ps 51:11; 'Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?' Ps 10:11; 'Why, O lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?' Ps 88:14. What torments Job most is not his losses, not even the physical pain he experiences, but the fact that God's presence seems to be absent. In the end Job's troubles are solved not by getting his possessions back, nor the children he lost, but by getting God back. The deepest experience of this absence of presence was felt by Jesus when he took upon himself the sin of the whole world. Jesus lamented, 'Why have you forsaken me?'. It is the theme of all lament – the complaint, the confused cry of all who struggle to live in a fallen world.

Hesed is a Hebrew word that describes God's 'loving-kindness' and in the New Testament we might describe it as grace. The root of every biblical lament involves an apparent violation of this defining characteristic of God. You and I lament because we cannot understand how a God of hesed could possibly allow us to experience pain. The cause for all lament is an inconsistency between the perceived action of God and the revealed character of God as defined by the word hesed. It is the source of the complaint as well as the solution.

Authentic Relationship: biblical lament displays a brutal honesty that is born out of a desire for a deep and genuine relationship with God. The act of lamenting, protesting and even accusing God through the prayer of protest is still an act of faith.

Remembering can be a powerful path to worship in the midst of disappointment and pain. To look back on those times when God was faithful gives us hope, when in the present he seems absent. Ask the question: 'What has God done in my life that's worth remembering?' This can be the turning point to lead us back to worship.

From 'I' to 'Thou' – the psalmist dramatically shifts focus from himself and his pain to God and his glory. It's the movement of exhausting the self against God and then turning back to him in praise.

- 1. Address:** How can you best address God in the particular circumstances that cause you to lament?
- 2. Complaint:** Tell God what you're feeling; don't hold anything back for fear of hurting or shocking him. He can take it.
- 3. Remember:** Something that God has done in your life.
- 4. Request:** Ask God what you want him to do. Tell him plainly and clearly.
- 5. Expression of trust:** Name what you believe about God's qualities, even if you don't feel your beliefs at the moment. Surrender the situation in trust or praise.

This content was compiled and adapted from a retreat day led by Pauline Wilson growthrest.home.blog/