

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR – OCTOBER 2024

Learning to Lament: A Guide to Praying in Our Hardest Moments

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“God, I pray Mitch never feels sad about his sister again.”

My eyes flew open. I didn’t hear another word that was prayed.

Instantly, my friend’s words grated against me.

Just a moment earlier, I’d asked for prayer—not long after the sudden death of my sister, aged just 13.

But this wasn’t what I meant. I was heartbroken—but that was okay, wasn’t it?

Honestly, I was no longer sure. Perhaps my pain was meant to dissipate in the presence of prayer, but it certainly seemed to be lingering as strong as ever.

This experience pushed me down a path of earnestly seeking to understand how to pray in hard times. How am I meant to pray faithfully, I wondered, when hardship feels thick and when hope seems desperately thin?

This is a question that afflicts each of us. The doctor confirms your fears: the cancer has returned. Or your hope is crushed by the news of a miscarriage. For some of us, it's rising to a new day only to be met by the dark and familiar clouds of depression. You mourn the disclosure from a friend that they've been abused. Or perhaps it's arriving home to tell your family that you've lost your job: hopes dim, and anxiety rises. Maybe it's the toll of wars beginning, flood waters raging and constant destruction that fills your newsfeed.

In moments like these, how would God have us pray?

Learning to Lament

You may be as surprised as I was to learn that God has given us a model of prayer for these exact situations—the ones that hurt the most. In fact, this kind of prayer saturates large portions of the Scriptures. It's more than forty per cent of Psalms; the central theme of the book of Lamentations; and is modelled for us by Jesus when he cries out from the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

This form of prayer is called *lament*: the honest expression of our sorrows to God. And tragically, lament has been lost from the vocabulary of many followers of Jesus today.

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It was absent from my prayer life, and the lives of most Christians I knew. But lament has long been the practice of the people of God when they're at the end of themselves. It's also how God himself grieved the injustices of this world when he walked among us in the person of Jesus.

Lament, then, is a practice that we must recover—and one that I'd like to introduce you to by briefly exploring four common movements that we find in many psalms of lament. While lament psalms resist being rigidly defined by these four movements, my hope is to trace their common contours through [Psalm 13, 22](#) and 88. In doing so, I pray you'll be able to learn to lament for yourself by modelling your prayers on God's word.

1. Turn to God

The first feature of lament is an address to God. The direction of the prayer matters here; it's not grumbling to others—it's intentionally coming before God in prayer. Anyone can cry, grumble and complain—but only the righteous offer their cries, grumbles and complaints as prayers to the Living God. The difference between the two is the *direction*. Notice how this is expressed in the opening verses of these three psalms;

“How long, *LORD*?” ([Psalm 13:1](#))

“My *God*, my *God*, why have you forsaken me?” ([Psalm 22:1](#))

“*LORD*, you are the *God* who saves me; day and night I cry out to you.” ([Psalm 88:1](#))

[Psalm 13](#) and 22 begin by bringing a question before God, [Psalm 88](#) with an acknowledgement of the salvation God offers. But did you catch the common thread?

They all turn to God first.

2. Cry Out Your Complaint

After turning to God, each of these psalms cries out with a complaint—a defining characteristic of lament. This involves naming the problem being seen or experienced and expressing it vividly before God. That might sound untrusting, perhaps even ungodly. But this is far from unbelief or ungodliness—this is a righteous response to the wrongfulness of life's circumstances. It's a refusal to wish away suffering, stiffen our upper lip or “be strong” in the face of sin and suffering.

We see this in [Psalm 13](#) when David cries out to God when he seems absent in his life:

How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? ([Psalm 13:1-2](#)).

Again, David feels distance from God in [Psalm 22](#) and questions why he is forsaken ([Ps 22:1-2](#))—words which Jesus himself takes up as his own on the cross

(Mt 27:46). In [Psalm 88](#), the psalmist expresses a sense of grief that is evidently unbearable:

You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths ... my eyes are dim with grief. (Ps 88:6-9).

Crying out our complaints with heart-wrenching honesty is not only okay—but godly.

Psalms of lament show us that crying out our complaints with heart-wrenching honesty is not only okay—but godly. Even in the depths of the pit, the loss of a loved one, or a moment of despair—God anticipates and hears each of our cries.

3. Appeal for God to Hear and Respond

Laments don't end with complaints. Their third movement is an appeal for God to hear and respond.

The grounds for this appeal is God's word; his character and his promises. Even in the darkness of [Psalm 88](#), the psalmist appeals to a God who hears—"May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry" ([Ps 88:2](#)).

David similarly appeals to God: "Look on me and answer, Lord my God" ([Ps 13:3](#)). As we lament, we not only express our difficulties to God, but we call upon him to hear us in our moment of need—knowing that he alone is our source of comfort, hope and help.

As people living after Jesus' death and resurrection, our prayers of lament are now anchored in what we believe and know to be true about the character and promises of God revealed in Christ. We can know of God's faithfulness to save us and meet us in the depths of our cries even more than the psalmists.

4. Confess Your Trust

Finally, a confession of trust in God acknowledges that, even if the answer to our prayer is unknown, God is trustworthy, whatever the circumstances. I say 'often' because of the three lament psalms, only two make it this far. David declares, "I will declare your name to my people" ([Ps 22:22](#)) and "I trust in your unfailing

love” ([Ps 13:5](#)) as he brings his psalms to a close, even when an immediate resolution is not found. And yet [Psalm 88](#) doesn’t conclude this way. While the psalmist cannot bring himself to declare praise as the climax of his song, he has already acknowledged “the God who saves” (v1).

As I look back, a prayer that took its lead from lament was what I craved as I grieved my sister’s death. I needed a form of prayer that would help me turn to God, honestly name my suffering while appealing for God to hear and respond with comfort and help, and counsel me to confess my trust in God too. And perhaps you do as well.

May the psalms of lament be a guide for your prayers in the difficult moments you face.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: WHAT’S HAPPENING AT LBC

Ladies Breakfast – All ladies are invited to our next breakfast taking place at LBC on Saturday October 5th at 9am. Hannah Brown, the sister in law of Pastor Eric and Jennifer will be speaking. Hannah is a Christian counsellor, who recently opened her own practice in Ottawa and is also a student in the Timothy Trust. To learn more about Hannah you can <http://www.beaconchristiancounselling.com>

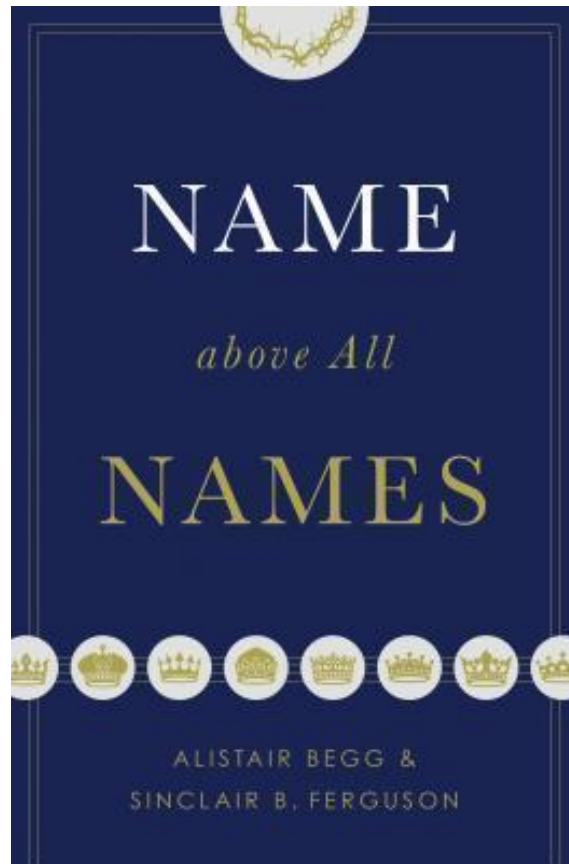


Ladies' Community Drop In – The next Ladies Drop in will take place Tuesday, October 15th at 9:30-10:30am. It continues to be held at the church. This is an opportunity to have a coffee and get to know ladies from the community, as well as the congregation.

Men's Breakfast – All men are invited to join us on October 19th at 8:30 am. Kennedy Foster, who recently preached at LBC, will be speaking. Kennedy is a recent grad of Heritage Bible College. Don't miss out on this time of food, fellowship and growing in faith!

SMALL GROUPS – Our five small groups continue to meet on a weekly basis. Please continue to pray that the Lord would use them to bring about deeper discipleship and authentically living the Gospel life together.

Book of the Month – This month we are featuring the short book 'Name Above All Names.' This book is the work of both Alistair Begg and Sinclair Ferguson.



Jesus Christ has been given the name above all names, the highest seat of honor, the right to reign and rule. Yet the busyness of our lives and the diversions of this world often distract us from knowing the most important person we could ever know. Perhaps we need some help to see Jesus afresh. In this thoughtful study and worshipful reflection, two influential pastors draw on decades of pastoral experience in order to guide us through the whole sweep of Scripture and examine seven key qualities of Jesus's identity and Name above All Names helps us to see and meditate on the incomparable character of Christ—a spiritual exercise that enables us to readily respond to the exhortations of Scripture, to focus our gaze upon the King of kings, and to better understand just how great Jesus really is.

Food Bank Sunday – We encourage everyone to bring something for the Food bank on October 27th. A list of items needed are posted on the food bank box in the Chatback room. Cash donations and cheques are also gladly accepted.

MISSIONS SUNDAY – On Sunday October 20th, a brief video update from our missionaries will be given during our service. We will also be discussing our Christmas Card project for the missionaries as well as an opportunity to continue to bless them financially.



PRAYER WALK/DRIVE– In lieu of our normal evening service, a prayer walk/drive will be taking place on Sunday October 27th. The event will take place in the later afternoon and will be followed by a pizza dinner at the church. Come join us as we seek to go through the village praying for God’s kingdom to come, and may He grant us opportunities to share the Gospel with those that we come across. More details to follow!



Prayer Walk

LBC Church Directories – The directories have been created, are being printed and will be released within the month. One hard copy will be distributed to each family. An electronic copy will be sent out as well. Thanks to Julie Fraser for taking the lead in this important project. The family tree of LBC is also found at the back of the Sanctuary!