

## WHERE IS GOD? LAMENTING DURING THE PANDEMIC

SVCC Sunday Morning Online Bible Study

April 26, 2020

*This lesson picks up where we left off on April 19, with a focus on using lament to express our grief—or help others express their grief—to God.*

*For more on biblical lament, listen to Kevin’s 2015 sermon series on lament at <http://www.summitviewchurch.net/featured-lessons-archive.html>.*

- What parts of this pandemic and our response to it frustrate you? What parts of it do you grieve over or wish were already past? These are the things that we lift before God in prayer and, perhaps, in lament.

**Structure of Lament** — The exact structure varies. The example below, from Psalm 13, is typical.

*address* — ***How long, Lord?***

- The address acknowledges God and introduces the lament as a prayer.

*complaint* — ***How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? 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? How long will my enemy triumph over me?***

- The complaint expresses the problem to God honestly, without sugar-coating or diminishing it. This is the most painful part of the lament. Other parts of a lament may be removed, but the complaint is vital. In it, the anguish of the speaker is laid before the throne of God.

*request* — ***Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes...***

- The request calls on God to address the situation. The request expresses what the speaker needs God to do.

*motivation* — ***...or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,” and my foes will rejoice when I fall.***

- The motivation portion of lament gives reasons why God should do what the speaker asks. It tries to persuade God to act.

*confidence* — ***But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord’s praise, for he has been good to me.***

- The confidence portion of lament expresses trust in God and assurance that God will act. It typically comes at the end of the lament, after the speaker has worked through the pain of the situation and pleaded with God to act.

### Sample Lament Prayers in Scripture

- **Psalm 12** — The whole second half of this brief lament is an expression of confidence in God.
- **Psalm 17** — A lament calling on God to deal with enemies—and the source for one of our songs.
- **Psalm 22** — A lament that later became a surprisingly specific prophecy of Jesus’ suffering.
- **Psalm 44** — A psalm of lament complaining that God is not doing what it seems he should.
- **Psalm 51** — A lament over one’s own sin.
- **Psalm 69** — A heart-rending lament that includes prophecy of the suffering of Jesus.
- **Psalm 77** — Notice the long, positive address (verses 1-8) followed by a long, agonized, recurring complaint (9-16; also 19, 22, 25).
- **Psalm 88** — This lament psalm doesn’t end with confidence. Is any confidence expressed in it?
- **Lamentations** — The whole book is an intense, poetic lament after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.