

## Is Mourning Out Loud Over Our Losses Good for Us?

**Nehemiah 1:4:** *When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*



Everyone experiences loss in their lives in one way or another. How we attempt to cope with these losses depends upon several things. First, the kind of loss we are facing can dictate whether our response to it is mild, strong or severe. Second, our cultural environment offers up expectations as to how our mild, strong or severe responses are to be displayed. In biblical days, grieving over difficult losses was often displayed in a very outward, very public manner. The Bible is full of examples of such public crying, wailing, renting of clothes and despair. For many of us in our present-day mindset, these things may seem to be over-the-top and too dramatic.

Actually, when we seek to understand all of this lamenting, we find very strong lessons of faith, growth and acceptance.

Let's begin by understanding what mourning truly is. Outward mourning, also known as lamenting, appears for many reasons in the Bible.

**First, we need to establish that lamenting is an acceptable part of our human experience:**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-4:** *1 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven— 2 a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. 3 A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build up. 4 A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to **mourn** <5594> and a time to dance.*

**Mourn:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5594 *saphad*; properly, to tear the hair and beat the breasts (in grief); generally to lament; by implication, to wail

**Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon:** to wail, lament, mourn

The deep, emotional grief expressed in this word is painfully obvious. The idea of tearing one's hair or beating one's breast in anguish helps us feel the depth of what is being described. The fact that it is compared with *a time to dance* (meaning to "spring about wildly or for joy") gives us the sense of two dramatically opposed outward and public actions. Lamenting is not just feeling bad and quietly crying, which, by the way, is entirely appropriate. Lamenting is an outward expression of anguish and grief.

Lamenting is appropriate for many reasons.



## Lamenting a spouse:

**The first time this word for lamenting appears in Scripture is when Abraham's wife Sarah died:**

**Genesis 23:1-2:** *1 Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn <5594> for Sarah and to weep for her.*

This is a deep anguish on the part of Abraham. He is personally and outwardly expressing his loss.

He had just lost his wife. Think about all they went through for so many years—having to wait 25 years for the promised child, Isaac, the laughter when they were told he would be born, and all their nomadic adventures together. What an amazing story of drama these two lived. We can imagine his anguish of losing his partner. Lamenting over the loss of a spouse is a legitimate way we outwardly express our anguish.

## Lamenting a child:

The raw emotion of loss is revealed with a different Hebrew word when Jacob's sons led him to believe Joseph was killed by a wild beast, when in fact, they had sold him into slavery.

**Joseph's brothers put him in the pit because of jealousy:**

**Genesis 37:29,34-35:** *29 Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments.*

This was an outward display of grief.

The brothers had sold Joseph into slavery and poured goat blood on his coat of many colors to show their father, Jacob, and trick him into believing Joseph was dead.

**Here was Jacob's reaction:**

*34 So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned <56> for his son many days. 35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, Surely I will go down to sheol in mourning <57> for my son. So his father wept for him.*

**Mourn:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #56 'abal; to bewail

Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: to mourn, lament

Jacob’s grief was outwardly visible. His son wasn’t actually dead, but he believed it to be so. We can’t imagine the kind of grief in the loss of a child unless we go through it ourselves. We have known several individuals who have suffered the loss of young children, and it is overwhelming.

Jacob was so grief-stricken that he could not be comforted by his family. This shows us the outward nature of his anguish. It was such a deep soul-shattering experience that he had to express it outwardly. This is an appropriate response.

## **L**amenting a parent:

**When Jacob died, Joseph asked Pharaoh’s permission to bury him in Canaan:**

**Genesis 50:5-10:** *5 ...Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return. 6 Pharaoh said, Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear. 7 So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen. 9 There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company.*

Pharaoh not only gave his permission, but he sent along many of his own servants and soldiers and officials for support and protection. Joseph and his household, along with his brothers and his father's household, all traveled to Canaan together.

*10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they **lamented** <5594> there with a very great and sorrowful <3515-severe, difficult> lamentation <4553-lamentation/wailing>; and he observed seven days mourning <60-mourning> for his father.*

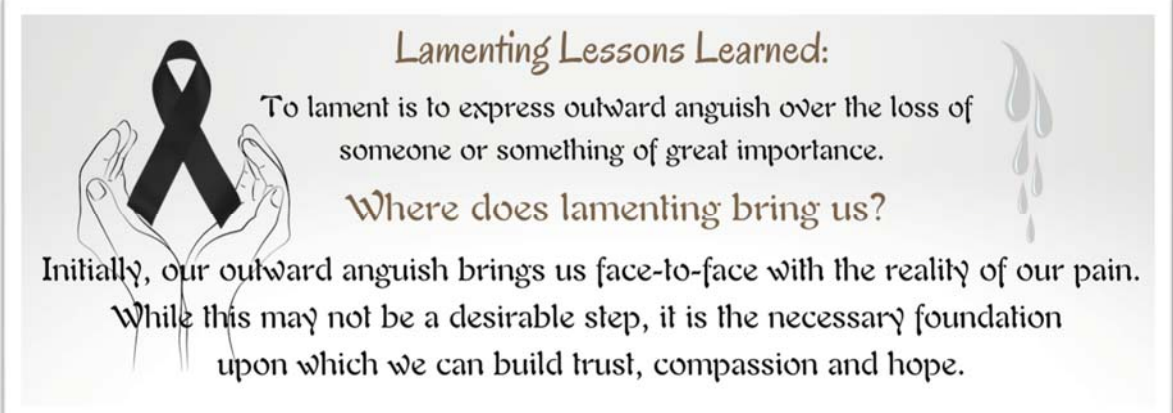
Here we see lamenting not just on a personal level, but on a community level as well. The outward grieving was widespread, as the death of Jacob was a bitter and solemn end. Let’s pause and think about who Jacob was. God renamed him Israel, giving us a hint of his importance. He had 12 sons who became the nation of Israel.



Abraham had only one “son of promise,” Isaac, through Sarah (the rest of his children were by other wives/concubines). Isaac had two sons but only Jacob inherited the promise. Then Jacob had 12 sons who became the foundation of the nation of Israel. When the father of a budding nation—through those 12 sons—dies, it is an event to stop and look back on. He was an example to them in his faith, and they would have certainly missed him.

Dodie Lemley is a friend of ours and a retired Marriage, Family and Child Counseling (MFCC) Therapist, a licensed mental health professional who specialized in providing counseling services to individuals, couples and families. She wrote a booklet called *From Mourning to Morning* available free of charge. It offers many practical suggestions for adults and children to work through their feelings.

<https://resources.christianquestions.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/01135514/Grief-FROM-MOURNING-TO-MORNING.pdf>



*Lamenting Lessons Learned:*

To lament is to express outward anguish over the loss of someone or something of great importance.

*Where does lamenting bring us?*

Initially, our outward anguish brings us face-to-face with the reality of our pain. While this may not be a desirable step, it is the necessary foundation upon which we can build trust, compassion and hope.

How should our lamenting work in this day and age? We don't typically show this deep and dramatic lamenting in the United States as it is described in the Old Testament. Should we? Or are we too reserved?

We may be too reserved. It is important to be able to express grief. We have talked many times on Christian Questions about grief and the importance of going through the steps and process of grief, including the pain and suffering we experience. To be able to express that pain can be helpful. We are not suggesting people start tearing their clothes like they did in the Old Testament, but there are appropriate ways to feel grief and anguish.

**Rick's**  
Experience

I had an experience just three or four weeks ago with a dear sister in Christ who texted me and asked to meet up on Zoom. She is going through a really hard loss that few know about, and we talked about this loss many times. She wrote, "I need somebody to cry to." When I read those words, I was so touched with the sense of blessing that God gave me this opportunity to enter into her suffering with her—to be part of the crying. Sometimes we just have to be part of the lamenting. That is good; it is healthy and cleansing.

As we begin to understand what it means to lament, we can begin to understand the importance of giving our grief a voice.

**Outside of the tragic events of personal loss,  
what other experiences in life can bring us to a point of heartfelt lamenting?**

There are many other circumstances. Our next approach will be to step outside of ourselves and focus on a much bigger picture. This bigger picture has everything to do with God's plans and purposes. As Christians, we realize that according to Scripture, there are troubles and challenges that must occur so the world can eventually see better days.

**L**amenting prophetic fulfillment:

But aren't we supposed to rejoice over God's prophecies coming true? There are times when lamenting over prophetic fulfillment is not only appropriate, it is necessary.

Jeremiah and Nehemiah lived at two different times, and both went through serious lamenting.

*Jeremiah*

First we will consider Jeremiah. In chapter 1 of his prophecy, the Lord tells him that Israel will be judged for their grievous sins against Him.

**In chapter 9, Jeremiah describes his breaking heart:**

**Jeremiah 9:1-3:** *1 Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! 2 Oh that I had in the desert a wayfarers' lodging place; that I might leave my people and go from them! For all of them are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. 3 They bend their tongue like their bow; lies and not truth prevail in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know Me, declares the LORD.*



Jeremiah is lamenting over how far Israel had gone from God:

*Oh that my head were waters and my eyes were a fountain of tears – in other words, where tears could day and night pour out of me without stopping, because I am so heartbroken for what's happened to my people. They have become adulterers and liars.*

We can hear how Jeremiah is broken on the inside. He does a wonderful job of explaining his brokenness to us in this lament.

As tragic as this picture is, Jeremiah's lamenting will go on in the poetic proclamations of the book called, what else, Lamentations!

(Source: Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible) The prophet begins with lamenting the dismal reverse of fortune that befell his country, confessing at the same time that her calamities were the just consequence of her sins, 1-6. Jerusalem herself is then personified and brought forward to continue the sad complaint, and to solicit the mercy of God, 7-22. In all copies of the Septuagint, whether of the Roman or Alexandrian editions, the following words are found as a part of the text: "And it came to pass after Israel had been carried away captive, and Jerusalem was become desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping; and he lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem; and he said..." (continues with verse 1)

The Septuagint is the first ever translation of the Hebrew Bible – from Hebrew into Greek. It was the most available translation of the Old Testament in those days, and was frequently quoted by Paul. [Please see the Bonus Material for more about the Septuagint.](#)

**The Septuagint adds several lines of introduction. Jeremiah is sitting, weeping and lamenting. Here is what he said:**

**Lamentations 1:1,4-6:** *1 How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer!*

He likens the once beautiful Jerusalem to that of a former princess but now a widow...a forced laborer.

*4 The roads of Zion are in mourning because no one comes to the appointed feasts. All her gates are desolate; Her priests are groaning, her virgins are afflicted, and she herself is bitter.  
5 Her adversaries have become her masters, her enemies prosper; for the LORD has caused her grief because of the multitude of her transgressions; her little ones have gone away as captives before the adversary.*

He is even saying that the roads of Zion are in mourning because they are desolate; they are empty with nothing left of value. Jeremiah is pouring out his emotions over the transgressions of the people of Israel.

*6 All her majesty has departed from the daughter of Zion; her princes have become like deer that have found no pasture; and they have fled without strength before the pursuer.*

Jeremiah was distraught over Jerusalem. The situation was hopeless, and he was grief-stricken.

In Episode 1314, we talked about Jonah and Nineveh. Remember what happened in response to Jonah proclaiming God's judgment against the city? The people repented by fasting, and they put on sackcloth and sat in ashes. And they all cried out to the Lord.

What a great example for the people of Israel. The Ninevites were not even followers of God, and they still repented because they believed in Jonah's prophecy.

Mourning was important. What was Jeremiah mourning? The fulfillment of prophecy! He knew it was coming and saw it happen. He didn't rejoice to see the destruction of Jerusalem; he felt the grief and anguish of the power of the Israelites leaving God and their disloyalty.

Like so many prophets before him, Jeremiah preached with great zeal, but to no avail. He then watched the desolation occur and grieved mightily over it.

Why the loss? Because God's words were being ignored by the people. Jeremiah could have been angry or hateful. He could have been like most people in bad circumstances, blaming God or being jealous of others who have it so good. But that's not what he did. He

doesn't point fingers or backlash. He is just broken over the sinfulness of the people that God told him was going to happen.

Jeremiah lamented over God's prophetic words being fulfilled before his very eyes.

This is a great lesson of being engaged in the work we are supposed to be engaged in. These prophets didn't just speak words like robots—*God told me to say this, so I will say this: "Thus sayeth the Lord, this is what is going to happen to you."* They lived the words they spoke, even when those words were devastating.



- Lesson: We see lamenting as being important to help us face our reality, to help us express deep anguish and grief.

**Here Jeremiah gives us a different lesson of lamenting: Even in the throes of such deep lamentation, Jeremiah looked upward with great faith and hope:**

**Lamentations 3:20-24:** *20 Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. 21 This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 24 The LORD is my portion, says my soul, therefore I have hope in Him.*

In the middle of this massive lament over enormous tragedy, hope still lived in Jeremiah's heart. Now that's true faith in the LORD! This is BEING the prophet—not just playing the part of the prophet. Even though Jeremiah knows the negative outcome and watches it occur, he also knows the power, love, mercy and might of God. He will stay with that and look for that because ultimately that is what is important and what gives his soul hope.



- Lesson: Despite the grief and anguish over a negative prophetic fulfillment, the prophet is able to LOOK UP through his lament.

Let's look at another example:

## *Nehemiah*

Nehemiah lived almost two centuries after Jeremiah, after a period of Israel's captivity. He was the cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes.

**We begin with the reason for Nehemiah's lamenting:**

**Nehemiah 1:1-3:** *1...Now it happened in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. 3 They said to me, The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.*

**What a sad and depressing report. What's Nehemiah's response?**

**Nehemiah 1:4:** *When I heard these words, I sat down and wept <1058-weep, bemoan> and mourned <56> for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*

Nehemiah is overwhelmed with grief by this report, as Jerusalem was unprotected.

He goes into deep mourning. How does he do it? He *was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*



- Lesson on lamenting: Do it *before the God of heaven*, like Jeremiah and like Nehemiah.

**The result of his lamenting was to pray and look upward. This prayer recounted the just character of God and the grave sinfulness of His people:**

**Nehemiah 1:5-7:** *5 I said, I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, 6 let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.*

Take note of how many times Nehemiah said *You or Your to God in these verses*

This is all about God. You are *the great and awesome God*. Notice Nehemiah does not say, “my ancestors,” or “those other ones” have sinned. He says, We have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You. **WE** have done all these things wrong. He is lamenting—but he is lamenting to God Himself. This kind of lamenting is powerful.

**This prayer led Nehemiah to grasp hold of God's justice and mercy as it relates to obeying Him:**

**Nehemiah 1:8-11:** *8 Remember the word which You commanded Moses saying, 9 But if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell. 10 They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand. 11 O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man...*

His lament brought him to prayer before he went before the king. He prayed this lament, and then went to the king prepared. When the king said (paraphrasing here), *Hey you are looking kind of down. What's the matter, I never see you like this.* And Nehemiah says, *Well, the walls of Jerusalem are in a shambles.* The king asks, *What can we do?* Nehemiah pulls this document out of his robes that he has written out and says, *Well, now that you mention it, King Artaxerxes, here are the things we need to rebuild the walls. Here is what we need to rebuild the gates and how we are going to do it.*

Nehemiah's grief and anguish, his lament before God, confessed that Israel had sinned greatly against Him, but asked that God let His servants try now to do His will. Nehemiah rallied the people (and the king) to do something remarkable!




We have two examples of lamenting with faith and hope:


1. In Jeremiah's case, there was no evidence of anything changing. He could only watch and lament.
2. In Nehemiah's case, he had the ability to institute change with God's blessing. This is important to note because it doesn't always work in the Nehemiah fashion. Sometimes it works in the Jeremiah fashion!

Either way, what are we supposed to do? Lament before God.

*Lamenting Lessons Learned:*



God's plan to navigate through this present evil world affords us many circumstances in which lamenting the sin and darkness around us is appropriate. *We should feel its pain and suffering.*



Where does lamenting bring us? It initially brought us face-to-face with hard reality and should always bring us to looking up to God in faith and hope.



Look up to God in the midst of our anguish in faith and hope. We have these two marvelous prophets and many others as examples. What are they doing? They are teaching us how to focus our lamenting. It is not just about how we feel, but it is also about how we go beyond that expression of grief to look up to God in faith and hope.

The purpose of our crying out in grief and anguish is to not only face our reality, but to cause us to look up in prayer.

**Facing reality and praying in faith and hope.**

**That sounds like a pretty complete story. What else can lamenting teach us?**

Our next learning experience is focused on growth. Here we will look at the challenges of our own lives and the sometimes tragic impact they could have had on us. Such impact often brings lamenting. Aside from learning to look up in faith and hope, there are other enormous lessons we can learn as well.

Looking up in faith and hope seems like a great finish. But, actually, it is a great start—a great framing for what is able to come next. We lamented personal loss. We looked at

lamenting prophecy being fulfilled. Now we will look at lamenting when we mess up badly—and that happens many times.

## **L**amenting personal sins and experiences:

King David lamented over the consequences of his own sins. After David's sin with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan came to him and told him a story about a rich man's egotistical, unjust and merciless treatment of a poor man. He is telling this story to King David to get his attention before David could become defensive.

### **David's response was to proclaim a judgment of fourfold restitution and death against the rich man, after which Nathan proclaimed judgment against David:**

**2 Samuel 12:7, 9-10:** *7 Nathan then said to David, You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. 9 Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, (and) have taken his wife to be your wife... 10 Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.*

What would be a common response to being accused of a wrong? To blame someone else or somehow to justify our actions? What did David do?

King David is now disarmed. What Nathan had said to him was put before him in such a way he could not deny it because he was honest and truly loyal to God at heart.

### **He knows that he is wrong:**

**2 Samuel 12:13-17:** *13 Then David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said to David, The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. 14 However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die. 15...Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick. 16 David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. 17 The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them.*

David is engaged in a deeply powerful and sorrowful begging—lamenting before God. He is prostrate on the ground, refusing to get up or to move or to eat. He is the king and he refuses to move because he is facing the depth of his own sinfulness, and he is willing to continue this extreme respect until he gets an answer from God.

### **David's fasting, praying and lamenting was a sincere cry to God for mercy. Seven days later the child died:**

**2 Samuel 12:19-20:** *19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20 So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate.*

We can imagine David pleading with God. *I have sinned. It's my fault, not the child's. Please don't take the child's life.*



It wasn't until after the baby was born that Nathan told David of his sins. David had lived with the guilt of this sin for nine months. He has been hiding it for that long, torn apart from the inside out because he knew better. Because of this sin, for those nine months, he had been going through this long, difficult process until Nathan finally brought it to his attention.

When the child dies, what is the first thing he did? He gets up and cleans up to make himself presentable to go to the house of the LORD to worship because worshipping God is the most important thing. Once he has gone before God, he is able to eat and return to his life as king.

David's lament brought him to worship first, and then take care of himself.

Later David was able to write about this experience.

**As we read excerpts from Psalm 51, let's take note of what his terrible mistakes and lamenting before God taught him and what it can teach us:**

**Psalms 51:1-4:** *1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.*

David learned to accept the depth of his sins and put himself unreservedly into God's hands for His JUDGMENT and MERCY to wash over him. Notice he is looking for both. He is saying that while *God is blameless when He judges*, His mercy and *compassion* are also there. In David's lament, he has put himself directly before God. *See me, see what I have done. See where I am, and please let me see You again.* He experiences heartfelt brokenness.

**Where does this bring him?**

**Psalms 51:10-14:** *10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your holy spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. 14 Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.*



David's deep lamenting brought him to write these verses to be sung as tools for others to learn from and to glorify God. He made his deepest, darkest, private sin public to become a teaching tool to honor God. His lamenting brought him there—it made him clean before God. David learned to rejoice in God's judgment and mercy and then was able to share that freedom with others. His experience showed him how to have compassion for and connect with others in their overwhelming trials.

We featured a story many years ago of a Christian man who was driving one evening with his wife and child and were “T-boned” by another car. A drunk driver, a young man, hit the passenger side of the Christian man’s car, and his wife and child were killed instantly.

He tells his story that he gets out of the car and he sees his dead wife and dead child. He said, “I suddenly heard this wailing and realized it was me. I’m kneeling in the road with my hands up, and I am just wailing in my anguish at what had just happened. It was so undeserved.” He felt that tremendous despair.

Several years later, this same man befriended the young man who was the drunk driver and worked with him. Together they would go tell their story to teach others, to teach young people about the dangers of being irresponsible by drinking and driving. And this young man was able to trust in this man because he took his anguish and put it before God. What resulted was a building-up experience for so many. This is the kind of lesson we’re looking at here.



That is being vulnerable just like David was being vulnerable—willing to share and help others. That is exactly what this Christian man did. And the person who was drinking and shouldn't have been was willing to admit it and tried to prevent people from going down the same path.

### The Apostle Peter learned the same thing through his sins of denying the Lord Jesus:

**Matthew 26:69-75:** *69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, You too were with Jesus the Galilean. 70 But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you are talking about. 71 When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied it with an oath, I do not know the man. 73 A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away. 74 Then he began to curse and swear, I do not know the man! And immediately a rooster crowed. 75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and wept <2799> bitterly.*



**Wept:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #2799 *klaio*; of uncertain affinity; to sob, i.e. wail aloud (whereas #1145 is rather to cry silently)

**Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon:** to mourn, weep, lament; weeping as the sign of pain and grief for the thing signified (i.e. for the pain and grief)

We know Jesus told him before it happened that he would deny Jesus three times. Peter says, *No, I will die with you.* But when the opportunity came to stand up for his Lord, he ran. This violent wailing aloud is a result of looking at his own degradation. He denied Jesus and couldn’t comprehend what he had just done.

It broke Peter's heart, realizing he denied our Lord Jesus so abusively with his cursing. This devastated him and taught him how weak the flesh can be.


After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus asked Peter, *Do you love me?* three times. Peter was only able to answer the question by responding he loved Jesus in a "brotherly love" way.

John 21: 15-17: "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love (philéo) you."  
*philéo; to be a friend (fond of) i.e. have affection for.*

**Much later in Peter's life, we see how he grew far beyond that and into living selfless love as well:**

**1 Peter 1:22:** *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren (philadelphia love), fervently love (agape love) one another from the heart.*

He is speaking from experience. It is important to love one another in a brotherly love kind of way. But he tells them that they must grow into selfless (*agape*) love. Peter's lamenting helped him to learn to understand the brokenness of humanity. He learned through his hard experiences to be able to embrace and love others, even though they may not deserve it. When we lament our own failures before God, we learn compassion for those around us.



**Lamenting Lessons Learned:**

While lamenting over our own bad choices can be so deeply emotional, we need to understand we are facing our broken reality by putting it into God's hands.

**Where does lamenting bring us?**

It brings us to a place of preparation. Our lamenting prepares us to be sympathetically compassionate to others in their most difficult trials.

The experiences we have when we make a drastic mistake is not just for our learning from the mistake, but is also that we might have compassion for others who are going through similar circumstances.

If we do our lamenting looking upward in faith and hope to God, looking to learn—not only can we be given peace again, but we can give peace to others with a measure of wisdom that helps us comfort through the sharing of our experiences—with wisdom that says, *I know how you feel; I have felt the same way.* This is one of the most important parts of learning what lamenting is truly about.

To lament our own failures can be scary as we would often rather not think about them. Let's not forget what we can learn by doing this!

**Lamenting connects us with reality, helps us look up in faith and hope and teaches us deep compassion. What else?**

What we have seen thus far is that lamenting is an outward demonstration of the anguish of the brokenness in our world. It is so important to comprehend that God knows about this brokenness, and His plan was long ago put in place the remedy for it. Our final look at lamenting has everything to do with seeing it in the larger context of God's overall plan.

This is different than seeing it from the standpoint of lamenting prophecies being fulfilled that bring us to sorrow.

**Lamenting is a healthy practice. We can enhance our fellowship by sharing in lamenting:**

**Romans 12:14-15:** *14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep <2799> with those who weep <2799>.*

We should enter into the pain of others and feel their sorrow. We can ask, *How are you? What are you going through? Even though I've never gone through this, I can put my arm around you and be with you. I'm here with you.*



By entering into someone else's experience, we can feel their difficulty. It helps us communicate with them to provide encouragement and comfort.

We can show our heartfelt attachment to the brotherhood by lamenting.

**Agabus (a Christian prophet) had just prophesied that Paul would be bound in Jerusalem, so the brethren did not want him to go:**

**Acts 21:12-14:** *12 When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

You can almost hear the brethren pleading, *Paul, don't go. Don't walk into this trap. We need you.*

*13 Then Paul answered, What are you doing, weeping <2799> and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, The will of the Lord be done!*

We must do what the Lord wants us to do. We should not doubt, even though it might be hard.

*What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?* It was hard for Paul, but he was ready to do whatever the Lord needed him to do. When they realized that he was firm in his decision, they fell silent, wanting the Lord's will to be done. Their lamenting showed him their love, compassion and fellowship with him. This is a great example of how powerful lamenting can be in showing our compassion for others.

## Lamenting the sinfulness of sin:



One critical point as we begin this next view of lamenting is that lamenting should in no way be confused with complaining.

Scriptural lamenting is an important step in a larger process, while complaining is usually merely an outburst with no positive direction. Scriptural lamenting helps us work through issues. It helps us stand more firmly in our faith, to honor and please God and encourage others to heal.

### Another scriptural lament:

**Psalms 13:1-6:** *1 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? 3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, 4 And my enemy will say, I have overcome him, and my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.*

Up to this point, this is David's lament. *How long...this? How long...that?* It shows frustration.

### The pouring out before God is so important because this is what it brings:

*5 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. 6 I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me.*

*He has dealt bountifully with me.* Wait! David has just been saying this is bad, that is bad... But he is able to put God's greatness into perspective against his immediate issue.

We need to tell God it hurts. We lament before Him and know He is so much bigger. His providence is so much more far-seeing than our eyes can be. AND He has dealt and will continue to deal bountifully with us. We can see the goodness of God through understanding the sinfulness of sin.



In the New Testament, Jesus lamented over Israel at the end of his ministry in several ways. His seven "woes" to the Pharisees in **Matthew 23** were a form of lamenting, as he cried out to them about the troubles they were bringing upon themselves. Episodes #1318 and #1319 helped us to hear what Jesus said to them and the intensity of how he presented their errors. It was hurting him to have to tell them what they should have known.

### He ended these woes in the following way:

**Matthew 23:37-39:** *37 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 For I say to you, from now on you will not see me until you say, (quoting next from Psalm 118:26) BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!*

(Source: gotquestions.org) This prophecy was a song that was sung for the celebration of the Passover processional. It was one of the last verses sung as the people entered the temple gates to worship the Lord. Originally it depicted Israel's exodus journey from Egypt to Mount Zion.

Jesus says this will depict Israel's journey to reconciliation to Mount Zion. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!* He lamented over the loss—but he also puts the loss into the context of prophecies yet to be fulfilled which show Israel will once again be restored.

**After riding into Jerusalem, Jesus lamented over the city and all that was coming. As he rode in the people shouted:**

**Luke 19:39-42:** *39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, Teacher, rebuke your disciples. 40 But Jesus answered, I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out! 41 When he approached Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept <2799> over it, 42 saying, If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.*

Remember the word *wept* here means “to wail aloud.” (There is a different word for crying, which is done silently.) This isn't Jesus crying to himself; he is crying outwardly over the city. He is in the middle of the moment of victory where everybody is saying for him to save them now, *Hosanna in the highest*. But he is weeping out loud saying to them, *If you only knew where you are heading for because of the attitude of so many of you right here and now*. We can see Jesus lamenting over the loss of the nation of Israel. He felt that loss keenly because that was part of why he came to earth—to go to the lost sheep of Israel.

Let's go back to the story of Nehemiah. We talked about his prayer before he got started with the work on Jerusalem's walls. Through God's grace and Nehemiah's leadership, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, and order was restored to God's people.

It came time to honor God for His providence and the many miracles He worked for them in a very short period of time.

**As the people gathered, they had a strange reaction:**

**Nehemiah 8:9-10:** *9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep. For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law.*

The people were weeping because they realized how far they had fallen away from God.

*10 Then he said to them, Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

They are weeping and lamenting over their past sins. Nehemiah's words to them were that this was not the time to do this because they were now in a position of blessedness. They had done the work and God had blessed them. It was time to praise God and honor Him. It was time to share with those who have less, to be generous, be kind, be loving as God



was to them. It was time to be loyal to the heavenly God who delivered Israel, rebuilt the walls and gates and gave them security once again.

We can see the experiences of Israel here as a picture of God's coming kingdom. What had been broken down would be repaired so the people could have God's blessing and protection. But the blessing and protection doesn't first come without difficulties.

**Such repairing will come through reconciliation, which will, nevertheless, have its fair share of lamenting:**

**Revelation 1:5-7:** *5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood— 6 and he has made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will **mourn** <2875> over him. So it is to be. Amen.*

**Mourn:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2875 *kopto*; to "chop" specially, to beat the breast in grief

In this Revelation picture, we see the response of the people when they realize how they trampled the goodness of the sacrifice of Jesus. Not just the Jews who were responsible for his crucifixion, but also the world's people trampling the principles of righteousness.

They will beat their breasts in grief. This is a powerful reaction to the realization of how far off they were in their judgment. This is one of the necessary things that can bring people to actual righteousness because it shows the reality of the sin so the next step can be taken.



- Look up in faith and hope.
- Realize we can identify with others.
- Give God the glory.

## the bottom line

**Our bottom line as Christians is that we have Jesus. He absolutely understands all we lament about:**


**Hebrews 4:15-16:** *15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Jesus, the faithful one, understands trial, temptation and difficulty because he felt it and went through it himself. He understands having to set our *face like a flint* and move forward. He knows what lamenting is.

He understands what grief is, and he knows how to overcome those things and we can rely on him. And because we can rely on him, we can *draw near with confidence* (come boldly in the King James Version) *to the throne of grace*.

We can lament over our trials and our failures and bring them right before God to lay them before His wisdom, power and the might of His hands so His providence can carry us forward.

*Lamenting Lessons Learned:*



- The Bible teaches us that lamenting is an important tool to help us face reality, while reaching up to God in faith and hope.
- It also teaches us to have compassion for the experiences of others.

*Where does lamenting bring us?*

- Its ultimate purpose is to show us how to raise our focus from the tragedies of our sinful world experiences up towards the glorious future that God so plainly promised in Scripture.

Lamenting brings us face-to-face with reality. It helps us to put things before God so we can look up in faith and hope. It gives us the ability to identify with others around us, to identify with those who have gone through things to say, *I know how you feel*. Finally, it gives us the capacity to put everything in God's hands and let His providence unfold. Not necessarily right now, but forever. Lamenting brings us to loyalty to God if we allow it to do so.

**So, is mourning out loud over our losses good for us?**  
**For Rick and Jonathan and Christian Questions...**  
**...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



## Next episode

Episode 1327: If Jesus' Resurrection Saved the World, Why is it Such a Mess?



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<https://christianquestions.com/character/1314-jonah/>

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**Paul before King Agrippa (in a way), lamented over his past actions:**

**Acts 26:9-11:** *9 ...I had to do many things hostile (antagonistic) to the name of Jesus of Nazareth 10 And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.*

**Habakkuk chapter 1 was a lament to God. Chapter 2 was his determination to see God's direction. Chapter 3 was his decision to live in faith and hope, knowing God has complete control:**

**Habakkuk 1:2-4:** *2 How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, Violence! Yet You do not save. 3 Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted.*

**Habakkuk 2:1-3:** *1 I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved. 2 Then the LORD answered me and said, Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. 3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.*

**Habakkuk 3:17-19:** *17 Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.*

(Source: Wikipedia) The Greek Old Testament, or Septuagint (from the Latin: septuāgintā, lit. 'seventy'; often abbreviated 70; in Roman numerals, LXX), is the earliest extant Koine Greek translation of books from the Hebrew Bible, various biblical apocrypha, and deuterocanonical books. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch, were translated in the mid-3rd century BCE; they did not survive as original translation texts, however, except as rare fragments. The remaining books of the Greek Old Testament are presumably translations from 200 BCE to 50 CE. Greek Scriptures were in wide use by the time of Jesus and Paul of Tarsus (early Christianity) because most Christian proselytes, God-fearers, and other gentile sympathizers of Hellenistic Judaism could not read Hebrew. The text of the Greek Old Testament is quoted more often than the original Hebrew Bible text in the Greek New Testament (particularly the Pauline epistles) by the Apostolic Fathers, and later by the Greek Church Fathers. Modern critical editions of the Greek Old Testament are based on the Codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus. The fourth- and fifth-century Greek Old Testament manuscripts have different lengths, so there is no single Septuagint canon. The Codex Alexandrinus, for example, contains all four books of the Maccabees; the Codex Sinaiticus contains 1 and 4 Maccabees, and the Codex Vaticanus contains none of the four books.

# Study QUESTIONS

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## Ep.1326: Is Mourning Out Loud Over Our Losses Good for Us?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1326-mourning/>

See:



1. In what way is lamenting an acceptable part of expressing deep personal emotional grief? (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4)
  - a. **Lamenting a spouse:** What would have added to Abraham's grief? (Genesis 23:1-2)
  - b. **Lamenting a child:** How did Jacob react to Joseph's "death"? (Genesis 37:29-35)
  - c. **Lamenting a parent:** Why was the mourning for Jacob a "community level mourning"? (Genesis 50:5-10)
2. **Lamenting prophetic fulfillment: *The Prophet Jeremiah***
  - a. Why was Jeremiah's heart breaking? (Jeremiah 9:1-3, Lamentations 1:1-6)
  - b. How was Israel not like Nineveh? What was Jeremiah's message to Israel? In what way did Jeremiah lament prophetic fulfillment? How did Jeremiah's outlook for Israel change in Lamentations 3:20-24?
3. **Lamenting prophetic fulfillment: *The Prophet Nehemiah***
  - a. Why was Nehemiah lamenting? How does Nehemiah lament? (Nehemiah 1:1-7)
  - b. How did Nehemiah prepare before he went to the king? What happened as a result of Nehemiah's lamenting? What does lamenting teach us?
4. **Lamenting personal sins and experiences: *David***
  - a. Why was David lamenting? How did David's grief before the Lord end? (2 Samuel 12:7-20)
  - b. What does Psalm 51 show about David's reasoning? How does he use his deep, private sin for good?
5. **Lamenting personal sins and experiences: *The Apostle Peter***
  - a. Why was Peter lamenting? (Matthew 26:69-75)
  - b. How do we see Peter's maturity has grown in 1 Peter 1:22?
6. How is lamenting a healthy practice for us? (Romans 12)
7. **Lamenting the sinfulness of sin: *Jesus***
  - a. How does scriptural lamenting differ from complaining? What does it help us do? (Psalms 13:1-6)
  - b. When you feel pain and anguish, do you put it before God? Why should we do this?
  - c. How did Jesus lament? How did his lament over the destruction of Jerusalem promise hope? (Matthew 23:37-39)
  - d. Why was the failure of Israel to recognize Jesus as Messiah a particularly poignant loss for Jesus? (Luke 19:39-42)
8. **Lamenting the sinfulness of sin: *The Prophet Nehemiah***
  - a. Why were the people weeping at the dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem? (Nehemiah 8:9-10)
  - b. Why did Nehemiah tell them their lamenting was not appropriate at this time?
  - c. How will man's reconciliation with God include lamentation in the kingdom? (Revelation 1:5-7)
9. How do we know Jesus understands our trials, temptations, difficulties and anguish? (Hebrews 4:15-16)
10. Have you ever expressed deep anguish out loud? How does lamenting affect our relationships with others? How can you lay your grief before God?