



"The Death Chamber" by Edvard Munch

Comfort and Hope for the Journey of Grief

Faith & Grief Ministries, Inc.
Comfort and Hope for the Journey of Grief
Grief Workshop & Course, Participant Workbook

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Grief

Gwen Flowers

*I had my own notion of grief
I thought it was the sad time
That followed the death of someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I'm learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through.
But rather,
There is absorption.
Adjustment.
Acceptance.
And grief is not something you complete.
But rather, you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish
And move on,
But an element of yourself-
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing.
A new definition of self.*

The Gift of Lament

Lament is a recurring form of complaints found in Psalms that gives voice to grief and anguish. It speaks of the pain and suffering and seeks relief from God in confidence that God hears and will respond. As we grieve, we, too, can cry out in lament to God for relief, for justice, for presence in our despair. Lament is an honest conversation with God, perhaps the most meaningful and honest conversation we may have. It is a time for telling our story to God and seeking God's comfort.

At the urging of her friend, Dr. Walter Brueggemann, beloved poet Ann Weems wrote Psalms of Lament in her time of grief after the loss of her son in 1982 on his twenty-first birthday. The collection is a rendering of her own deeply moving psalms of lament. The psalm below is one of her early offerings.

Lament Psalm Six

O God, why do you leave me
face down in my memories?
Eyes wide open...
every nerve exposed...?
Why do you leave me all alone
in the house of memories?

Open the door, O God!
Burst in and seize me
from the hell
of remembering!
Remembering the smile
the voice
the whistle
the love.

Take me from here, O God!
Please be merciful!
Blot out the memories!
Pick me up from the mire of pain!
Lead me away to the place of peace,
for you are my God,
and you will not
you will not
abandon me!

~Ann Weems, Psalms of Lament

SESSION SIX – GIFT OF LAMENT

No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn.

Hal Borland

OPENING SENTENCES (read responsively)

Oh, only for so short a while you have loaned us to each other, because we take form in your act of drawing us and we take life in your painting us, and we breathe in your singing us.

But only for so short a while have you loaned us to each other. Because even a drawing cut in obsidian fades, and the green feathers, the crown feathers, of the bird lose their color, and even the sounds of the waterfall die out in the dry season.

So, we too, because only for a short while have you loaned us to each other.
--Aztec Indian Prayer

PRAYER (unison)

Merciful God, you heal the broken in heart and bind up the wounds of the afflicted. Strengthen us in our weakness, calm our troubled spirits, and dispel our doubts and fears. Renew our trust in you that by the power of your love we shall one day be brought together again with our loved ones. Amen.

Discussion – LAMENT

- Part 1: Gift of Lament Reading
- Part 2: Story for Grief and Mourning - Psalm 13
- Part 3: What is Lament?
- Spiritual Practice: Lament Prayer

Story for Grief and Mourning - *Psalms 13*

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?

Look on me and answer, LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

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.

What is Lament?

Lament is a conversation with God – an honest, raw and meaningful conversation.

Lament is **US** telling our story (our side of the story!) to God honestly and sincerely seeking God's comfort.

Relationship with God is based on honesty.

Lament gives us a language to tell our stories to God.

Lament is larger than feeling sorry for ourselves and what has befallen us.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE LAMENT PRAYER

Write your loss at the top of the page provided. Using the “process” described below, write your own personal psalm of lament relating to your loss. You may use it exactly or you may write freeform. It is your prayer. Be honest, be courageous, and don’t hold back, for in those feelings and their expression you can find healing and hope in knowing that God is listening with unconditional love and abundant compassion for you. Imagine God saying to you, “I know you’re disappointed/hurt/angry/sad...tell me about it.”

Address God – How do you address God? What do you call God?

Complaint – What is your complaint? What sadness, fear, pain or anger do you have that needs to be brought to God?

Affirm your trust of God – Has God been there for you in the past? What has been your experience of God’s presence with you and what did you experience in that time?

Ask for your deepest desire – What do you most deeply desire from God in this time? Express your need and tell God why you want God’s intervention? Are there people or situations in your life that feel threatening to you? How would you bring them to God? Psalmists in the past have reminded God of past situations when God came through for them. You may want to do that as well.

Assurance that you are heard – What do you need from God to feel that you have been heard in this prayer?

Gratitude and praise – Express your gratitude for God’s presence in your life and all that you have experienced that has blessed you and for which you are thankful. Perhaps you can see in this situation of loss the blessing that God brought to your life through the person, the job, the role, etc.

These questions may guide you:

Who has helped you? Where have you been able to find help?

What has given you hope?

What role has your faith played? How and when have I experienced God’s presence?

For whom or what are you grateful?

What qualities in yourself have you discovered that have helped you? What strengths have you found?

CLOSING PRAYER (unison)

For those we miss. For things long gone. For those who or what we last held in our arms, in our hand and in our hearts, we pray.

We pray for memories to stay strong, Memories of words and warmth, of actions and stillness.

We pray for Love shared and lived, Love to remain with us and with them, for that to become enough.

We pray for courage to put our feet on the floor when we wake. To move through the day as if we cared.

Oh, Love, that holds us all: hold on to me while I hold on to what I have lost.

Amen For All Our Losses Prayer by Patricia

Shelden (UUA)

Blessing

**May the sweet light of change shine in your darkness,
May the first breath of each morning help you begin life
again, May the memories unfold as prayers for life,
May the love continue to fill the silence.**

- Zenju

For Next Time

- Work on *Answering the Question of "What Now?"*
- Listen to the [Faith & Grief Guided Meditation Playlist](#) on Spotify

A Symbol of Hope

A butterfly lights beside us like a sunbeam
And for a brief moment its glory
and beauty belong to our world
But then it flies again
And though we wish it could have stayed...
We feel lucky to have seen it.

-Unknown

