

# The Spiritual Practice of Lament

What do you do with grief that won't go away? Below is a 5-step guide to the simple and ancient practice of bringing your grief into the presence of God.

## 1) In prayer, honestly acknowledge your pain to God

The key word is "honestly." Don't deny your pain.

### Why is this step important?

In Psalm 62:8, the Bible says that we should honestly acknowledge our feelings to God: *O my people, trust in Him at all times. Pour out your heart to Him, for God is our refuge.*

## 2) Acknowledge that you are angry or disappointed with God (or with yourself or another person)

### Why is this step important?

In 1 Peter 5:7, the Bible says that God wants us to tell Him about our anger and disappointments: *Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you.*

In Psalm 10:1, we see an example of someone expressing anger at God: *O LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?*

## 3) Write a letter to God, where you express your feelings

Tell it like it is; raw language is acceptable (God has already heard it)

### Why is this step important?

It is important for us to lay our accusations and complaints before God, and writing a letter is an effective way to do this.

This struggle – this act of battling with God – is what provides the context for surrender and healing.

## 4) Read your letter out loud to God

It is especially helpful (but not essential) to read your letter in front of a Christian friend who won't judge you or offer advice.

### Why is this step important?

The act of reading out loud to God (or a Christian friend) helps you to get your feelings out, relieving the pressure of what has been bottled up.

## 5) Praise God for graciously listening to you

### Why is this step important?

Even in our loneliest moments of sorrow, pain, and confusion, God is present with us. This step of thanksgiving focuses our heart on God's kindness and faithfulness and keeps us from believing the lie that we are alone and unseen in our grief.

*Psalm 34:17-18: The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*

### Further Study

#### Consider these words from LAMENTATIONS 3

**19** The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. **20** I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. **21** Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: **22** The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. **23** Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. **24** I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!" **25** The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. **26** So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD. **27** And it is good for people to submit at an early age to the yoke of his discipline: **28** Let them sit alone in silence beneath the LORD's demands. **29** Let them lie face down in the dust, for there may be hope at last. **30** Let them turn the other cheek to those who strike them and accept the insults of their enemies. **31** For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever. **32** Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion because of the greatness of his unfailing love. **33** For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow.

**49** My tears flow endlessly; they will not stop **50** until the LORD looks down from heaven and sees.