



*A resource for personal prayer
and reflection in the time of
Coronavirus*

Lament is the expression of deep sorrow for our pain and travails, individually or collectively. It is asking for God's blessing or intervention. It is a prayer for help coming out of our pain.

Lament is different from simply crying, and far, far more. Lament is our prayer language in a sorrowful world, because it is how we talk to God about our pain and sorrows as we renew our hope in his sovereign care.

Lament is talking to God, bringing **all** our feelings to God instead of allowing ourselves to get angry or embittered.

Lament is laying out the messy struggles of our souls and then asking for God to help us.

It may help to think of it as having four elements, or faces:

- ◆ We are invited to turn to God – choose to talk to God about what is happening.
- ◆ We are invited to pour out our own pain before God: to humbly and honestly identify whatever pain and sorrow, anger, questions and frustrations we feel.
- ◆ We are invited to ask God boldly for help – dare to hope in his promises.
- ◆ And finally we are invited to choose to trust him: 'I trust in your steadfast love', and 'My heart shall rejoice in your salvation.'



Many Psalms speak eloquently and passionately of Lament: in Psalm 13, described as A Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies, those four elements can be traced.

¹ How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

² How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

³ Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

⁴ and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

⁵ But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

This is less a liturgy than a journey, from Lament to Hope, using words of prayer, poetry and scripture, to be used in any way that you wish.

The Invitation to turn to God.

How long, O LORD?

Like the Psalmist, chose to turn to God and to tell him exactly how unhappy you feel, and the pain you feel. Choose to talk to God about what is happening.

Opening responses

How long, O LORD?

If you come

in certainty of confusion

in anger or anguish

This time is for us.

How long, O LORD?

If you come
in silent suffering or hidden sorrow
in pain or promise

This time is for us.

How long, O LORD?

If you come
for your own or another's need
for a private wound or the wound of the world

This time is for us.

How long, O LORD?

If you come
and do not know why,
to be here is enough

This time is for us all.

Come now, Christ of the forgiving warmth
Come now, Christ of the yearning tears
Come now, Christ of the transforming touch

This time is for you.

The Pattern of our Days, The Iona Community

Laying our struggles before God

Before God, who loves us with great compassion,

We come with our sorrows.

For those dying alone and grieving,
For the anxious, isolated, scared or terrified,

We come with our sorrows.

For those overcome with anguish,
Struggling with separation from their loved ones,

We come with our sorrows.

For workers exposed to unknown dangers,
For the exhausted and the drained,

We come with our sorrows.

For the resentful and the envious,
For those feeling redundant and disempowered,
We come with our sorrows.

When we struggle to find God:
Lord, in our doubt and pain, anger and hurt,
Hear our sorrows,
Meet with us now.

Adapted from 'We will tread the earth lightly', Chris Polhill

Come to God, knowing that he is able to take our lament, our devastation, our overwhelming sadness, and that he intervenes and responds, and will bring hope and resolution. Remember that at Coventry Cathedral we look out over the ruins of the old cathedral: at the time it was utterly devastating. But over the years we saw how God built up something new and tremendous from those ruins, far more than we could ever expect.



Prayer

God you are present here,
whether we recognise you or not,
whether we acknowledge you or not.
You are present,
within us, between us and around us.
Your Holy Spirit is holding us in being
and the energy of your love suffuses the universe.
May we become aware of your presence in this space and
time,
aware of your heartbeat of love,
aware of your longing for us.
Speak to us through stillness and silence,
through music and word.
Give us grace to listen and hear you
in the depths of our selves. Amen.
Apprentices and Eyewitnesses, Chris Thorpe.

Pour out your pain before God.

Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

*²How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?*

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

The Psalmist is telling God exactly what he feels; he is pouring out his pain before him. He is questioning him, and in his questioning, he is pleading with him.



Opening cry

My God,
why have you let this happen?
why did you forsake us?
Creator – why uncreate?
Redeemer – why destroy wholeness?
Source of love – why rip away
the one I loved so utterly?
Why? Why, O God?

In this pit of darkness,
hollowed out by grief and screaming,
I reach out to the one I loved
and cannot touch.

Where are you, God?
Where are you,
except here
in my wounds
which are also yours?

God,
as I hurl at you
my aching rage and bitterness,
hold me
and stay here
until this hacked-off stump of my life
discovers greenness again.

Angela Ashwin.

A Litany of Lament

The weight of this pandemic bears heavily on us
but it is a load we need not bear alone.
Let us offer our burden to Jesus,
Lord of life and of death, of the present and of the future.

We bring before you, Lord,
the confusion and despair,
the fearfulness or despondency of this present time,
the uncertainty of work or loss of income,
Lift us from our burden,
and in your power, renew us.

We bring before you, Lord,
the tears of sorrow,
the cries for help,
the vulnerability of pain.
Lift us from our burden,
and in your power, renew us.

We bring before you, Lord,
our sense of frustration,
our feeling of helplessness,
our fears for the future.
Lift us from our burden,
and in your power, renew us.

We bring before you, Lord,
the moments of self-doubt in our lives,
unsure of our own worth,
unsure of your presence.
Lift us from our burden,
and in your power, renew us.



Prayer: When you're struggling to know what to pray for

Lord, what can I pray for?
What should I say?
I'm frightened,
troubled,
confused,
everything in life having been turned inside out
and upside down.
And whatever words I use in prayer seem inadequate,
hollow,
even trite.
Help me,
hold me,
hear me,
and at this troubled time, encircle all -
myself,
my loved ones,
the wider world-
in the warm embrace of your love.
Amen.

Nick Fawcett, For such a time as this.

Tenebrae

Oblivious to the outside world,
we drop our lamentations
into utter darkness,
chant cries to Jerusalem,
calls to return,
sing haunted antiphons,
then kneel in silence.
Outside the church,
out beyond humanity's
long night watch,
a lone bird warbles.
Regardless of us,
in the selfless east,
the sun slowly rises.

From Darkness to Eastering, in The sun slowly rises: Neil Paynter

Reassurance

God's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning.

Lamentations 3:22-23, The Message

Sometimes we will walk blindly, unable to understand why we are going through a certain situation – our only comfort being the knowledge that God himself is not walking blindly, but instead is wisely, kindly and firmly in control. Indeed, so often our Father in heaven will take our broken moments and weave them into a powerful tapestry to the glory of His name.

Blessed be your name: Matt and Beth Redman

Ask boldly for God's help: Dare to hope in his promises.

³ *Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!*

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

⁴ *and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.*

Our need for God's strength and help

Lord, we need your help at such a time as this,

or we will flounder,

We need your strength,

or we will crumble.

We need your encouragement,

or we will despair.

We need your support,

or we will go to pieces.

We need your comfort,

or we will break.

We need your reassurance,

or we will panic.

We need your peace,
or we will grow distraught.
We need your guidance
or we will be lost.
Lord, quite simply we need you.
Be there for us.
Amen.

Nick Fawcett, For such a time as this.

Seeking and knowing God's presence

Lord, beloved, we lose our way;
again and again we let you down,
with our words, our lies, our fear.
We betray your love,
and stain your image in us.

Lord, beloved, often we find ourselves
out in the dark night,
where deep shadows overwhelm us,
whispers taunt our minds,
where we feel far from your love for us.

Lord, beloved, we get afraid,
and we betray you;
we feel shamed,
and we reject you;
we despair,
and we shun you.

Lord, beloved, when we are lost, come to us;
when we are afraid, strengthen us;
when we despair, reach out to us with your love,
and your words, which say,
*'Do not be afraid: you are mine.
You are my friend
and I love you.
Forgive yourself
as I forgive you.'*

From 'The Sun slowly rises', Neil Paynter

A plea for God to reach out and help us

Show us that you're listening,
prove to us you care,
come and bring us healing,
Father, hear our prayer.
Show us that you're with us,
help us know you're there.
Offer strength and comfort.
Father, hear our prayer.
Show us that we matter;
in these trials we bear,
give us help and wisdom.
Father, hear our prayer.
Show us there's a future,
save us from despair.
Grant us hope and courage.
Father, hear our prayer.

Nick Fawcett, For such a time as this.



Faith in God's help and support

In our fear, Lord,
be our confidence.
In our weakness,
be our strength.
In our panic,
be our calm.
In our sickness
be our healing.
In our confusion,
be our anchor.
In our insecurity,
be our rock.
In our darkness,
be our light.
In our grief,
be our solace.
In our despair,
be our hope.
In our storm,
be our sunshine.
In our night,
be our day.
Amen.

Nick Fawcett, For such a time as this.

Trust in God's Promises

- ⁵ *But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.*
- ⁶ *I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

In the dark with Jesus

In the dark with Jesus,
held in tenderness,
silent, simply waiting,
deepest rest.

In the dark with Jesus,
quiet, hidden growing,
inner rubbish sorting,
frenzy stilled.

God's glory wrapped in shadows;
brightness hid for love's sake.
Contentedly beside us
when life's light is blinding.
For in the dark with Jesus,
healing comes.

Chris Polhill, from Candles and Conifers.

Easter Dawn

He blesses every love that weeps and grieves
And now he blesses her who stood and wept
And would not be consoled, or leave her love's
Last touching place, but watched as low light crept
Up from the east. A sound behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong through the air.
She turns, but cannot focus through her tears,
Or recognise the Gardener standing there.
She hardly hears his gentle question, 'Why,
Why are you weeping?', or sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes out her reply,
'They took my love away, my day is night.'
And then she hears her name, she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night, and ours, to Day.

Malcom Guite, in Love, Remember

Lament with Children

Father God,
Everything feels topsy turvey at the moment,
and it's hard to know how to feel.
Some days I'm happy,
happy to rest and spend time at home,
to play with my toys and games,
to go for walks with my family.
Other days I feel sad.
I feel lost and confused,
I feel bored and lonely,
I miss seeing my friends,
I miss the family who can't visit me,
I miss the hugs I used to get.
Sometimes I worry about everything in the world.
I want everything to go back to normal,
but that also sounds really scary to me.
Help me to trust you when I feel scared and confused.
Wrap me up in your love,
like a big blanket,
like the hugs that I miss.
Help me to know that you are with me.
Amen

Lisa Holt



Lament with School Leavers

I didn't get to say goodbye

Where does that leave me?

I had no celebration with my friends

Where does that leave me?

I didn't get to take the exams I worked hard for,
or prove to myself that I could do it

Where does that leave me?

I don't know the classes I'm joining in September,
or even if there will be a class to join by then

Where does that leave me?

I don't know how I'm going to get my grades or qualifications,
or what to put on job applications in years to come

Where does that leave me?

I don't really know anything right now.

Apart from one thing

I know that you see my worries

I can trust in you

You know my worth and value without taking any exams

I can trust in you

You have good plans for my life, full of hope and promise

I can trust in you

You are in control

You will bring me through this

I can trust in you.

and all will be well.

Amen

Lisa Holt



A Cry from the Heart

When everything on the news makes me want to cry,
sit next to me.

When I lie awake at night worrying about the people I love,
and those who I've never even met,
lie there with me.

When the little problems feel like big ones,
and I can't think what I should do,
calm my thoughts.

When the walls of my home feel too close,
and the world outside feels like a dream,

Help me find your presence,

And know your peace,

Amen

Lisa Holt



Final Affirmation

Among the poor,
among the proud,
among the persecuted,
among the privileged,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

Among the fearful,
among the broken,
among the grieving,
among the lonely,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

In our hospitals,
in our care homes,
in our communities,
in our churches,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

With a gentle touch,
with an angry word,
with a clear conscience,
with burning love,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

That the kingdom might come,
that the world might believe,
that the powerful might stumble,
that the hidden might be seen,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

Within us, without us,
behind us, before us,
in this place, in every place,
for this time, for all time,
Christ is coming to make all things new.

Adapted from A Wee Worship Book, WGWG

And Finally....

Awake in the morning and the first thing you do,
thank God for it,
even if you don't feel particularly happy about the day which is to
come.

'This day which the Lord has made,
let us rejoice and be grateful in it'.

Come to God again with two convictions.

The one is that you are God's own,
and the other is that this day is also God's own,
it is absolutely new, absolutely fresh.

It has never existed before.

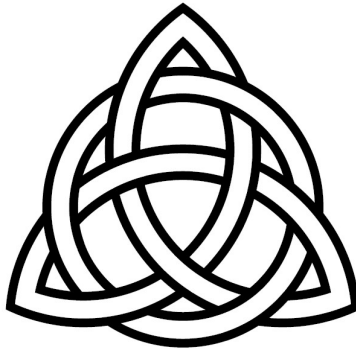
What comes next is that you should ask God to bless this day,
that everything in it should be blessed and ruled by Him.

This day is blessed by God, it is God's own
and now let us go into it.

You walk in this day as God's own messenger;
whoever you meet,
you meet in God's own way.

You are there to be the presence of the Lord God,
the presence of Christ,
the presence of the Spirit,
the presence of the Gospel –
this is your function on this particular day.

School for Prayer, Metropolitan Anthony (Anthony Bloom)



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Inspiring Worship