

# Songs for the Soul - Lament Teaching & Scripture

[00:00:00] So a step back for just a moment. Um, if we look at the Psalms just really broadly, they are a lot like the pop music of the day, except that their world was very faith-oriented, even down to the government, right? But it did mean these, these hundred and fifty Psalms that we have here are connected to, to a, a, a tune that we don't really know anymore.

We don't know how they sang it exactly, but we can imagine that this was something very important to the people of God long, long ago. So we're gonna spend a little time doing that, looking at that today. But over the next six weeks, how we're going to do it is each week will be a category. Actually, it's not six weeks in a row. Three weeks in a row, three weeks off, three weeks in a row.

But we will spend some time in these categories, today being lament, and kinda look at those types of Psalms, specifically look at one in that category, and then we're gonna look at some songs contemporarily, because [00:01:00] this is less about all the details of the Bibles, the Bible verses, and more about the feelings they evoke inside of us.

So on that topic, let's, let... Here's my, the beginning of this kinda teaching piece. So faith obviously includes vulnerability and honesty. I think we all know that, that faith does have that. Even anger, doubt, and silence are all a part of our faith. Even if we don't like that part of our faith, it's all a part of who we are.

How do we demonstrate that? How do we pass that on to other people? Well, part of it is, like a parent might do, modeling, expressing, parenting in a manner that allows for deep expressions of faith.

And artis- artists look and say, "This is something that needs to be talked about more." In contemporary world, we have people who do that all, all the time, right? You ever have a [00:02:00] piece of art that just stuns you because it hits something that you have not been able to name?

Or perhaps a song that is able to express to you a feeling that you didn't really ever have an opportunity to feel because your own situation has never been there. There are songs out there that allow us to go in that place.

Of course, the other reality is a lot of times you have been there, and for better or for worse, you know those moments are real, and they are connected to the world around us.

Uh, the Hebrew word for Israel, what does it mean? Israel means they who struggle with God. So it's kind of a cool thing to think about that in the Hebrew scriptures, the laments really lift up the struggle with God.

It's an apt, apt thing then that the people of God opened up their [00:03:00] relationship with God with raw feelings. And if you go through all the laments, and you can search each of them up in scripture, uh, you can see some really raw feelings.

Perhaps if somebody else was next to you in worship and started singing some of these words of the Psalms, but kind of in contemporary way where you didn't understand they were just speaking a Psalm, you might be like, "Whoa, you're going through some stuff. Whoa, that's, that's heavy, heavy things."

But Psalms, that's what they've done. They've given permission to countless generations to struggle with God. And so that specifically is the lament's piece. It's definitely struggle. Not all of these are about struggle, but that one definitely is. You know, a lament, "How long, O Lord?"

To celebrate God, to give thanks to God, to cry out to God are all real feelings, and whatever we're feeling, there's a song for that. Which, when I listen to the radio, and people know me, I have 2,000 songs on my Spotify list and [00:04:00] everything else. Yeah, I, I have a lot of songs. Like, you give me a feeling, I can probably give you a song for it, within reason. Come on.

So the other piece of that is music is art, right? Uh, so music is one expression of how we can captivate a feeling, and that's the fun connection that we have with ourselves.

So I'd like you to feel a little bit more in this Bible study. This is inviting you to get beyond just your heady nature. Sometimes with Bible studies, we want to know all the pieces. We'll do a little bit of that, but not as in-depth, because I really want you to express and, and talk about what you feel in these.

But let me take another step in that and talk specifically about the laments, what you see in scripture. Lament is the most common of all the Psalm types. So there's 150 Psalms. There are over 40 songs of lament.

First of all, that's an interesting thing to think about. [00:05:00] Forty that are classified as lament. That means the people of God, almost close to one-third of their songs are about crying to God. That seems like a high number, doesn't it? Mm-hmm. I mean, it's... but I guess it probably is pretty realistic about what we face and what we need songs for.

Uh, it, by the way, depending on your definition, uh, there are many more of the 150 that have an aspect of lament in them. So the lament Psalms are more classified... And by the way, this is like anything. If you were to classify songs in our day and age, it's, it's almost like a group of theologians, right, coming up with the categories, and nothing fits neatly into some categories.

But we're gonna accept that, you know, some of the work of the, of the theologians of the past is real and just accepted. They're saying there are over 40 that are classified as songs of lament, and there are many more that have aspects of lament in them.

So how [00:06:00] they classify this just for what it is, is, and you don't have to remember this, but I think it's helpful to know, they mostly have a complaint, "Why, oh Lord, have you forsaken me? How long, oh Lord?" And then a request, "Help me, God, reach out to me in my despair." And then something, something that lifts up. This, by the way, isn't always there, but it's a trust or hope, uh, what they do trust in. So it's almost like, "God, you led me through this in the past. I know you are there. I just don't know where you are." So that's the type of language that you might have. And then oftentimes they end with, "And God, come and rescue me from this, and you are the God of my past." You know, all these things.

So, so that's the structure that is basically there. But in that basic model, it tells a person that knows nothing about God that we believe in a God that [00:07:00] can handle our emotions. That's actually a pretty big thing to think about.

How many times is it that you know somebody that never, never really thinks they can say anything except really nice thoughts? That's what we do in church. You know, it's, it's all nice things. The laments are kind of almost disturbing to us because they almost sound like something you wouldn't say to your mother. "How long, Mother, must I put up with this?" And you know, if you're the father, you said, "That's enough, son." Right?

But that's, that's kind of what these do. They allow us to have with our God an understanding that we, and our relationship, isn't always perfect, and our feelings are valid. You know, if you have any counselors in the room or if

you've gone to a counselor, isn't that like the, the number one rule, right? To, for you to know your feelings are valid, that you have those. Well, they're right here in the Psalms that way.

So the last thing I wanna say here is lament then is not a lack of faith. It's an [00:08:00] honest faith, right? It's, it's allowing us to speak pain out loud, and it's also a modeling of what we can do as the people of God. It gives language to suffering, does not hide grief or anger.

It also says to the people of God, maybe, you know, you've all... We've all been in moments where somebody says, "Well, we don't talk about that here." The Psalms remind us that we do. God welcomes honesty.

Have you ever, if you have somebody who's really gone through some tough times, maybe you've even felt it in yourself, you just wanna make everything better. A psalm reminds us that's not, that's not our job, to make everything better. Our job is to remind us that your feelings in this moment are okay, are valid, and that God loves you, and that God is walking with you.

Also, I just lifted up Psalm 22:1-2 is a prayer that Jesus prayed as he [00:09:00] lamented. He lamented from the cross. He was quoting Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" So that's just kind of a cool thing to lift up.

Um, the last thing is we're about to read Psalm 13. I'm just gonna tell you a couple things about the Psalm before we dig into it. Um, it's a very short Psalm, but the piece that we're not gonna cover as much, but I want you to be aware of, is the Psalms, like any piece of art, have some things that if you're trying to translate it or show it in a different way, you're gonna lose some of that.

So for instance, the Hebrew word... Let me put this in front of me 'cause I have it right here. The Hebrew words for, "How long, O Lord?" They actually are, ad-anah, ad-anah, Adonai, ad-anah, Adonai. And I want you to hear that in a cry. ad-anah, Adonai, ad-anah, Adonai. That's, "How long, O Lord?" You see how the words themselves sound like a [00:10:00] cry? Mm-hmm. That's, that's on purpose, and if you look at the Psalm as you read it, you'll see that they say those words over and over again.

That's just one demonstration of a lot of word art. I wish we had a Hebrew, um, scholar with us that could just go through this sometime, 'cause it's actually beautiful. Because more than other scripture, the Psalms do this a lot. Even sometimes because the language itself is, is more th- it's closely related to like

hieroglyphs than ours. You know, there's, there's actually pictures, so to speak, that are in that, in the Hebrew language.

Uh, some of those are also that there are certain words where, where what you see and we just totally lose it, where a word one way that is negative is seen with the same letters spoken again in a positive. So it's, "God, take this jumbled life that I have and restore it." That's not specifically in this one, but I'm just lifting up that [00:11:00] piece there.

Finally, I'll mention to you that Psalm 13, there is some number things in here. If you've spent much time looking at the Old Testament stuff, you know that the Hebrews cared about numbers. And specifically, this is Psalm 13, and there's some things that add up to 13 if you were to look at this in Hebrew.

Again, that's just kinda cool, but that's those things that matter to the people of God, and it's kinda like sometimes when, when a musician hears a certain song and they go, "Oh, wow, look what they did there." They did something. Well, not all of us appreciate all of those type of, of those little bits, but we can see them in the Hebrew language that they were even there then, and we're, when we're reading it in church we don't always appreciate that.

But what I would like to do now, and for those who are attending a Bible study for the first moment, we're just gonna read the Psalm, and I think this time around, I'll just read it out loud. I am gonna read it in English. So even though there's some really cool [00:12:00] things in Hebrew, that's just not where we're gonna spend our time. Nor could I do a very good job of it, so truth is out.

But I'm gonna, I'm gonna read it out loud, and I want you to tell me what you notice. And this is important because you have... You can look at the questions you're gonna have for a small group. I'm gonna give you seven minutes to talk about it. But I wanna start with the out loud piece of what you noticed in this Psalm, what you heard, and even connect it to some of the things that I told you about laments. Did you catch the parts...

Um, allow yourself just to kind of weave together some thoughts. But especially on this opening piece, it reminds me, I always like to say that this is the piece where I want you to read or to listen for what catches your own attention. What are the words that you get caught on? You don't have to have an answer for why. Just name it. You can almost circle it. That caught my attention, and, or that made me almost [00:13:00] miss the next line 'cause I was thinking about that line over and over again.

You ready to listen? Mm-hmm. Okay. Psalm 13, you're welcome to follow along, but I'll read it out loud.

"How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 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?

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy will say I have prevailed. My foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with [00:14:00] me."