# Learning to Lament: Bringing Our Pain to God

theStone Church | Mercy in Our Mess

Scripture: Psalm 13:1–6

Big Idea: Biblical lament is God's gracious invitation to bring our suffering honestly before Him and learn to trust His steadfast love.

## Part 1: Discover What Scripture Teaches

Read Psalm 13:1–6 slowly, preferably twice.

### Head — Understanding God's Word

1. What four questions does David ask in verses 1–2? What do they reveal about his suffering?
2. What specific requests does David make in verses 3–4?
3. What changes between verses 4 and 5? Does Scripture tell us that David's circumstances changed?
4. What does David remember about God's character in verses 5–6?

### Heart — Examining Our Response

5. Why do Christians sometimes feel uncomfortable expressing sorrow or disappointment to God?
6. What's the difference between complaining about God in unbelief and bringing our complaints to God in faith?
7. How does Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection give us confidence to trust God in our darkest moments?

## Part 2: Practice the Four Movements of Lament

In *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, Mark Vroegop identifies four movements commonly found in biblical lament:

TURN → COMPLAIN → ASK → TRUST

Today, rather than simply learning about these movements, you're invited to practice them.

First, identify a real burden.

It might be a broken relationship, an unanswered prayer, a health concern, grief, financial uncertainty, a struggling child, or something else weighing heavily on your heart.

You do not have to share your burden publicly. This exercise can remain between you and the Lord.

My burden:

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Step 1: TURN — Choose to Pray

*Psalm 13:1–2*

David begins by addressing the Lord. Even when he feels forgotten, he continues speaking to God.

Suffering often tempts us to withdraw, become distracted, or stop praying altogether. Biblical lament begins with a deliberate decision to turn toward God.

Ask yourself:

- Have I been taking this burden to God or trying to manage it alone?
- What has made prayer difficult in this situation?

Now pray:

"Father, I am coming to You because..."

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Step 2: COMPLAIN — Tell God What Hurts

*Psalm 13:1–2*

David doesn't pretend like everything is fine. He describes his sorrow, his questions, and the pain of God's apparent silence.

Faithful complaint is not an accusation that God is unfaithful. It is an honest expression of suffering brought humbly before the God we trust.

Ask yourself:

- What specifically hurts about this situation?
- What am I afraid might happen?
- What questions have I been afraid to express?

Now pray:

"Lord, this is painful because..."

"God, I don't understand why..."

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Remember: God already knows your heart. You can speak honestly before Him.

Step 3: ASK — Boldly Seek God's Help

*Psalm 13:3–4*

David moves from describing his pain to asking God to intervene.

He prays, "Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes."

Notice that David doesn't merely ask for his circumstances to make sense. He asks God to sustain his life.

Hebrews 4:16 reminds us that because of Jesus Christ, we can approach God's throne of grace with confidence.

Ask yourself:

- What do I specifically need God to do?
- Am I willing to ask boldly while submitting to His wisdom?
- What strength, grace, or endurance do I need while waiting?

Now pray:

"Lord, I am asking You to..."

"While I wait, please give me..."

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Step 4: TRUST — Remember Who God Is

*Psalm 13:5–6*

David declares, "But I have trusted in your steadfast love."

Those words mark the turning point of the psalm.

David's trust is not based on a changed situation but on God's unchanging character.

God's steadfast love is demonstrated most clearly in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again.

Ask yourself:

- What does Scripture reveal about God's character?
- How has God demonstrated His faithfulness to me?
- What does the cross assure me about God's love?
- What truth can I cling to even if this situation remains unresolved?

Now pray:

"Father, even though I don't understand..."

"I choose to trust You because..."

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A necessary reminder: Trust does not mean that grief instantly disappears. You may need to return to these four movements many times. Lament is not a formula for removing pain; it is a biblical way of bringing pain into God's presence.

Part 3: A Real-Life Example

The situation:

A mother has prayed for years that her adult son would return to Christ. Instead, he seems to be moving further away. She is discouraged, exhausted, and beginning to wonder whether her prayers matter.

Here is how she might walk through biblical lament.

1. TURN

*"Father, I'm coming to You again. I don't know what else to do, but I know You hear me. I need You."*

2. COMPLAIN

*"Lord, my heart is breaking. I've prayed for years, and things seem to be getting worse. I don't understand why my son keeps running from You. I'm afraid for him, and I'm weary of waiting."*

3. ASK

*"Father, please open his eyes to the truth of Jesus Christ. Bring conviction where there is sin and repentance where there is rebellion. Give me wisdom to love him faithfully. Protect my heart from bitterness and help me persevere in prayer."*

4. TRUST

*"Lord, I cannot change my son's heart. Only You can. I remember that You are merciful, patient, and mighty to save. Jesus died and rose again to save sinners. I don't know what tomorrow holds for my son, but I know You are worthy of my trust. Help me remain faithful while I wait."*

Notice: The son's circumstances have not changed. The mother still grieves. Yet her burden has been brought before the Lord, and she has reaffirmed her confidence in His character.

That is biblical lament.

Part 4: Hands — Living Out God's Word

This week's challenge: Write your own Psalm 13 prayer.

Set aside 15–20 minutes in a quiet place.

Write four short paragraphs:

1. Turn: Address God and tell Him why you're coming.
2. Complain: Describe your pain and unanswered questions honestly.
3. Ask: Make specific requests for God's help.
4. Trust: Declare what you know to be true about God through His Word and through Jesus Christ.

Read your prayer aloud to the Lord.

If you're comfortable, share your burden with a trusted Christian who can pray with you. If you're in a small group, consider praying a lament together for a shared concern.

Part 5: End in Song

Psalm 13 begins with the question, "How long?"

It ends with David declaring, "I will sing to the LORD."

We often assume that singing should come after God fixes our circumstances.

But David teaches us that praise can arise from remembering God's steadfast love even while we're waiting.

Consider these questions:

- Can I worship God while still grieving?
- Is my confidence in God's goodness dependent on receiving the outcome I want?
- What truth about Jesus can I sing today, even through tears?

If you're able, finish your time of prayer by singing or listening to a worship song that declares the truth of who God is.

If you aren't ready to sing, don't pretend. Continue praying. The Lord welcomes you in your sorrow.

Closing Scripture

Romans 8:38–39 reminds believers that neither death nor life, nor anything else in creation, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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