

A format for lament

Lamentations 3: 19 - 23

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.

Michael Card¹ writes:

“Lament is the path that takes us to the place where we discover that there is no complete answer to pain and suffering, only Presence. The language of lament gives a meaningful form to our grief by providing a vocabulary for our suffering and then offering it to God as worship. Our questions and complaints will never find individual answers (even as Job's questions were never fully answered). The only Answer is the dangerous, disturbing, comforting Presence, which is the true answer to all our questions and hopes.”

¹ Card, Michael. 2005. A sacred sorrow: Reaching out to God in the lost language of lament. Colorado Springs: NavPress.

A format for lament

Address your prayer to God with an invocation as your initial cry.

Express a complaint to God, describing the source of the suffering. (This is the body of your lament; allow time for your outcry to find voice. Describe how your grief feels, tastes, smells, looks, and sounds. Employ as many details as you can to portray your experience.)

Silence: Sit with your suffering and your grief. Then stay in the silence and stillness to allow space for a movement from pain to emerging hope.

Write a petition or plea (including motivation) for God's help.

- Petition - Speak requests, couched in bold, direct language
- Motivation - gives reasons for God to act -- God's character, justice, promises, etc.

Silence: Space for a movement from pain to emerging hope.

Express your assurance that God hears you.

Write a vow of praise & commitment— what you offer in response to God's grace.

- Praise: Assurance of being heard (trusting the relationship we have with God)
- Vow of Commitment: We promise to keep our part of the covenant

A **Doxology:** A reassertion of our relationship with a God who hears and responds.

Address my prayer to God

My complaint or grief or confession

Silence - sit with my emotions

My petition

Silence - allow for a movement from pain to emerging hope.

My expression of assurance that God hears me

My vow of praise & commitment

My Doxology