

## Lament: The Prayer of the Forsaken

[There is] a time to weep.  
Ecclesiastes 3:4 NIV

*Depending on which commentary you pick up you'll read that from one-third to over one-half of the psalms are laments. With the exception of Psalm 88, each lament turns eventually to praise, revealing an important truth that has been lost; lament is one of the most direct paths to the praise we know we have lost. In fact, lament is not a path to worship but path of worship. –Michael Card: A Sacred Sorrow*

### Psalm 13

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- 1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and every day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
- 3 Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;
- 4 my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
- 5 But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
- 6 I will sing to the LORD,  
for he has been good to me.

1. The famous Christian songwriter Michael Card stated in his book about the language of the lament that, "The two fundamental questions at the heart of lament, are "God, where are you?" and "God, if you love me, then why?" Richard Foster calls this time of "seeming desertion and absence and abandonment," feeling forsaken. David states in Psalm 13, "How long will you hide your face from me and ...how long will my enemy triumph over me?" Have you ever felt forsaken by God? What was your response?

2. In Psalm 13 David cries out to God, "How long will you hide your face from me?" In Psalm 22 David wrestles with God stating, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Do you feel comfortable with this level of brutal honesty when praying to God? Why or why not?

3. What do you think is the difference between an ordinary complaint and a lament?

4. What do you think the role of faith is in this process that David is going through?

5. Psalm 13 begins with a lament and ends in praise. Michael Card wrote that "lament is not a path to worship but path of worship." Why do you think lament is not a path to worship but path of worship? How have you experienced this?

*As best I can describe the silence of God month after weary month was a purifying silence. I say "as best I can discern" because the purifying was not dramatic or even recognizable at the time. It was a little like when you do not realize that a child has grown at all until you measure her against the mark on the hallway doorjamb from last year. -Richard Foster*

6. Like Foster in the above quote, David also laments about the perceived absence of God in his life in Psalm 13. Why might the silence of God be a "purifying silence?"

7. What can we learn about our relationship with God through feeling forsaken and lamenting?

*One reason why people are uncomfortable with tears and the sight of suffering is that it is a blasphemous assault on their precariously maintained American spirituality of the pursuit of happiness. They want to avoid evidence that things are not right in the world as it is – without Jesus (and Job, David, and Jeremiah), without love, without faith, without sacrifice. It is a lot easier to keep the American faith if they don't have to look into the face of suffering, if they don't have to listen to our laments, if they don't have to deal with our tears. So, learning the language of lament is not only necessary to restore Christian dignity to suffering and repentance and death, it is necessary to provide a Christian witness to a world that has no language for and is therefore oblivious to the glories of wilderness and cross. -Eugene Peterson*

8. How can we as a community encourage each other to grow through the

#### Discussion Guidelines:

1. Allow everyone a chance to speak. If you are bursting with ideas and tend to share a lot – great – but occasionally pause a bit before you go, sometimes the quieter ones are just waiting for their chance and they need a little space before they go.
2. Respect the opinions of others, and refrain from giving advice.
3. Keep discussion focused on the material being studied.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of personal things shared within the group.

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