

## Small Group Studies on Lamentations

Lent 2023

(Sermons will be preached on Feb 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>)

At the first session consider showing the whole group this introductory [video](#). At the last session use the this [video](#) which takes the story through to Easter morning.

To inhabit *Lamentations* I suggest that you use a form of *lectio divina*. Each week read slowly through that week's chapter allowing people time to reflect on what they read, then consider the following questions:

- What has surprised you?
- What has challenged you?
- Have you felt like this and how might these words have helped you to express it in prayer?

Alternatively you may want to use the following notes. Beware of over theologising, so that you are still 'inhabiting' the text rather than 'dissecting' the text. Also, however tempting it might be to rush ahead to 'answers' to the prayers being offered, try and keep focus on the emotions in the chapters with all the uncertainties and ambiguities that are left hanging. The questions focus on pastoral use of the chapters

Christopher Wright suggests the underlying problem in Lamentations is that:

Hope is ... theologically centred in the Poet's faith, but structurally decentred in the Poet's experienced reality. The truth about God's ultimate faithfulness and compassion does not erase that pain or silence the questions it generates. They continue in the unresolved present and into an as yet unknown future, even as the book ends. (Wright: 34)

There are more questions than are needed for one evening. Be selective in what you use, you are not expected to answer all the questions, some may be more relevant in your group than others.

## **Week 1      Lamentations 1**

### Overall structure

1-9b	A narrator telling the story of what has happened
9c	Madam Zion responds with a cry to God to take notice <sup>1</sup>
10-11b	Narrator continues the story
11c-16	Madam Zion cries out again
17	Comment on Madam Zion's situation
18-22	Madam Zion expresses shame at her culpability

### *Considering the narrator passages:*

When things are not going as you would expect, how easy do you find it to tell the story of what is happening to God?

If a friend is suffering, how might you help them tell their story? How good are you at listening to their story?

### *Considering Madam Zion's passages:*

How easy do you find it to plead with God over what is happening in your life when you feel that God has left you or hurt you? How might you use Madam Zion's words?

The narrator tells things as they are, Madam Zion does that to some extent, but is far readier to acknowledge that she is part of the problem.

How is your prayer life with regard to words of confession? How might shame make this harder?

In v21 Madam Zion protests that 'there is no one to comfort me'. Have you felt like that? How have you voiced that to friends or to God?

Turn the answers into prayer for each other.

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<sup>1</sup> Note the quotation marks in v9 and elsewhere. Madam Zion is a personification of Jerusalem