

(Sermons will be preached on Feb 19th, 26th, March 12th, 19th and 26th)

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 5 Lamentations 5

A major change in this chapter is that the prayer is now corporate – it is full of ‘we’ and ‘us’ in place of ‘my’. The pain of the past and the uncertainty of the future have not gone away, but they are accompanied now by the beginnings of hope and an ability to pray either ‘why do you forget us?’, or the imperative, ‘Lord, do not forget us.’

Overall structure

1-18 The lament over what has happened turns to open confession (v16)

19-22 A declaration of God’s sovereignty, but a continued anxiety that recovery is not yet.

When you pray are you very gentle on God ‘please, would you be so kind as’ or do you demand from him, ‘Remember, Lord, what has happened to us’?

When someone in your group is going through a bad time, how do you pray for them?

When someone in your group is going through a bad time, how do you care for them?

If you have been helped, what language did your helpers use that you found helpful?

What do you make of the ambiguity of the last two verses? When have you felt like this?