

Naming Our Hurt

LAMENTATIONS 3:42-48

1

GOAL

Youth explore the biblical practice of lament and begin to name and express individual laments.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God of all, help me hold the stories of these young people and offer hope in moments of deepest lament.

THIS SESSION

Naming heartaches heals. In the ancient Jewish practice of lament, God’s people named personal and communal wounds. Turning to God to express anguish gave people a safe outlet to name their individual sorrows and discover that it was OK to acknowledge feelings that led to lament. God can hold our strong feelings with us. In developing a practice of naming our hurts, welcoming our hard feelings, and caring for them, we discover that we can lament, heal, and find hope.

THE BIBLE STORY

The book of Lamentations includes five poems expressing the lament of the Jewish people following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It gives words to the people’s pain in each verse and chapter. The third chapter is written as an individual lament outlining terrible afflictions that have come upon the writer, who expresses anguish in three sets of verses. They repeatedly name their feelings and are clear that wounds, trauma, and despair have been caused by these afflictions.

Naming emotions and hardships is a faithful practice. Often, we move too quickly to resolution, counting blessings, or proposing solutions. While these are necessary, owning one’s feelings is an important step in the process toward healing and growth. This passage joins a long tradition of God’s people trusting God with all our feelings and finding hope in lament.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth often struggle to process and show emotions. They are learning societal norms, which often dictate that they not express their emotions in dramatic, overt ways. They are also taught, often in church, to look for blessings and to remember that their suffering is not as great as others in worse circumstances. While perhaps true, this sometimes leads to learning to suppress feelings of grief and loss. This dulls our ability to express our own lament. Youth may need encouragement to show some of their strong feelings. Youth leaders should be ready to affirm their feelings and receive them with compassion.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Getting to Know Our Feelings” (p. 6): On each of four sheets of newsprint, write one of the feelings from the emoji emotions poster (Resource Page 1): *happy, sad, angry, scared*. Draw a large stick figure on each sheet.
- “Reviewing Lament Infographic Poster” (p. 6): Obtain and display the *Lament* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 3 Set).

GETTING STARTED

- Copies of Resource Page 1
- Markers

EMOJI ART

A C AT

Give each participant a copy of Resource Page 1 showing emoji emotions. Invite them to name other feelings and imagine a person's face who is feeling that emotion. Have them draw and label additional emoji to reflect corresponding emotions.

Gather the group. Invite participants to share one of their emoji drawings. Have the group guess what emotion has been drawn. Then have the youth explain their emoji and its label.

Explain that, during this practice of *Lament*, we explore hard emotions and how we can faithfully talk to God about them.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- Prepared newsprint
- Marker
- Tape

GETTING TO KNOW OUR FEELINGS

C CT

Display prepared newsprint sheets. Invite youth to decide which of the basic four feelings their newly drawn emoji might be most like (from "Emoji Art," above). Tape their emojis to the corresponding newsprint.

Discuss together how each of these emotions feels or looks in our body (knots in our stomach, butterflies, flushed face, tight shoulders). Record their comments on each newsprint near the stick person.

Explain that some feelings are easier than others to express, while some are more difficult because they may make us uncomfortable or other people around us may not respond well when we express them. Explore young people's experiences with expressing hard emotions, asking: When have you had to pretend not to have hard feelings? Who can you share difficult emotions with?

Assure them that God knows that all of these feelings exist, and God is able to handle them.

- Lament* infographic poster (Year 3 set)

REVIEWING LAMENT INFOGRAPHIC POSTER

C

Display the *Lament* infographic poster. Discuss the definition of *lament* from the poster. Explain that when we take our hard feelings to God, we are able to begin to take care of our feelings and ourselves. This poster reminds us of the steps that help us move from hard feelings to hope. In this practice, we will learn how to express our laments.

WHAT IS LAMENT?

C

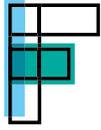
Invite youth to brainstorm a possible definition of *lament*. Encourage them to consider when we lament and why. Discuss whether lament is meant to help us heal or to allow us to dwell on our grief.

Name examples that might be lament. Have youth raise their hand if they think the example is something that could be lamented. If it is not a lament, they should keep their hand lowered. Read aloud these examples; you may also add your own.

- He wanted to be on the soccer team, but he didn't make the team.
- Her grandmother is very ill.

- Their family was going on vacation, but it was canceled.
- They lost their homework.

Point out that these are examples in which someone has lost something. Each of these is worthy of lament.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

LISTENING TO THE STORY



Help youth locate the book of Lamentations in their Bibles. Explain that this book is a collection of five poems that lament the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Show the YouTube video “Overview: Lamentations” (bit.ly/FMLament, 7:16). After the video, read aloud Lamentations 3:20–24 and 42–48. Identify contrasts between these two passages. Discuss these questions:

- ➔ Why does the author express hope and despair in the same chapter?
- ➔ Can a person be angry at God? Why or why not?
- ➔ Can we lament even when someone is mad at us for something we did? Why or why not?
- ➔ Which of these verses express your feelings today? Why?

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- Internet-connected device
 - Bibles

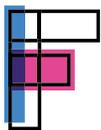
READING AND DRAWING LAMENTATIONS



Form groups of two or three youth. Distribute Bibles, paper, and markers. Have each group read Lamentations 3:42–48 and discuss what the author is saying. Invite them to imagine what might be happening that makes the author feel this way. Have them consider what the people in the story hoped for.

Invite each group to draw a picture illustrating how the author and the people of Jerusalem were feeling. Explain that their picture might show something specific that was happening or illustrate the people’s feelings. Have each group show their picture and describe it. Discuss the benefit of expressing tough feelings to God.

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- Bibles
 - Paper
 - Markers



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

JEWISH FESTIVAL OF *TISHA B’AV*



Explain that *Tisha B’Av* is the annual Jewish day of communal mourning commemorating the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE. It is a day of intense sadness for people of the Jewish faith. As part of the mourning, sections of the book of Lamentations are read aloud. People may refrain from eating, drinking, and bathing.¹

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- Internet-connected device

1. “Tisha B’Av 2022,” *My Jewish Learning*, www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tisha-bav-2022/.



Teaching Tip: Another brief video about this day is the YouTube video “Tisha B’Av: Judaism’s Saddest Day of the Year” ([bit.ly /FMSadDay](https://bit.ly/FMSadDay), 1:06).

Internet-connected device

Show the YouTube video “What Is Tisha B’Av: The Jewish Day of Mourning” (bit.ly/FMTishaBay, 4:10). Invite youth to describe their feelings after watching the video. Discuss ways the Jewish people acknowledge their feelings during this period of mourning. What might be the benefit of engaging in an annual ritual like this?

DEAR GOD

M

Explain that in 2019, Canadian rapper Dax released “Dear God,” which goes through a litany of complaints, naming both personal and communal wounds and addressing God with his questions. Show the YouTube video “Dax—Dear God (Clean)” (bit.ly/FMDaxDearGod, 3:10). Invite youth to talk about their impressions and reactions to the lyrics. Use these questions for discussion:

- What themes or concerns did you hear in Dax’s questions?
- What difference does it make that he names these in a song or a prayer?
- How do you think God receives or responds to Dax’s words?
- What other songs or raps have you heard that express laments?

Describe your feelings about these.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

BREATH PRAYER

QC AT

If you chose “Getting to Know Our Feelings” on page 6, call attention to the poster naming the four basic feelings. Explain that when we experience powerful emotions or feelings, we can take a deep breath and say a prayer naming the feeling. Encourage youth to identify a feeling they have felt in the last 24 hours.

Lead the group in a breath prayer. Have youth spread out in your space so that youth have room to move. Invite them to inhale while lifting their hands, arms, and shoulders upward and tightening their muscles as they name their feeling out loud or in silence. Then exhale, imagining the feeling dripping down from their head, across their shoulders, and down their arms to their hands. Lower their open hands in front of them as if offering their feelings to God. Repeat this breath prayer three times.

Newsprint and markers

ACROSTIC POEM

AT C

Remind the youth that the book of Lamentations has sets of four *acrostic* poems. Each line begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, A to Z in our alphabet. Form groups of two or three youth. Give each group a sheet of newsprint and have them write the letters of the alphabet along one side. Encourage them to create a poem by writing something to lament that begins with each letter. Remind them that these can be personal or communal laments.

Gather the youth and display their acrostic laments. Read aloud the poems. Identify both the common and unique laments named in their poems. Discuss how poems like these help us name our laments to God.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

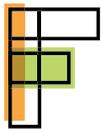
AT C QC

- Newsprint and markers
- Paper and pens

Explain that *grief* is a feeling of sadness because something important has been lost, such as a person or a pet. Sometimes the thing that has been lost is a chance to do something, a friendship that ended, a situation that is unfair, or a way of doing something that is no longer available. Have the youth brainstorm things that are lost. Record these on newsprint.

Explain that, when we feel grief, it is a sign that we need to find someone who can hold all our feelings with us. During prayers of intercession, we take our griefs to God and ask God to help.

Distribute paper and pens. Invite youth to write a short intercessory prayer using the laments named by the group. In their prayer, have them name their feeling and the reason for the feeling (from the list). End with the phrase “O God, hear my prayer.”



FOLLOWING JESUS

COMMIT TO THE PRACTICE

C

Remind the youth that it is OK to have painful and angry feelings and that, by acknowledging them, we begin to heal. While we don't want to dwell only on the negative, we also know that it is not healthy to ignore our feelings, especially our angry and sad ones. Discuss ways that they might notice and welcome their hard feelings this week.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

QC

Say aloud the following prayer or one like it:

God of all, you embrace us in our joy and in our sorrow.

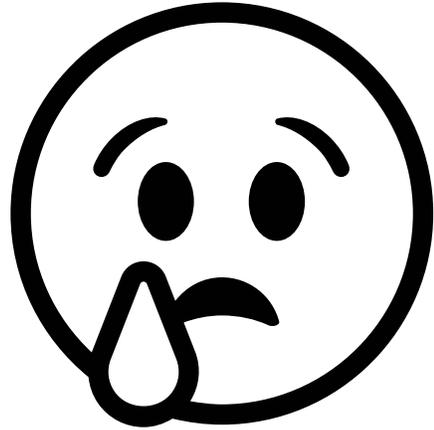
Give us confidence to welcome our feelings and lift them to you.

Hear our prayers and come near. Amen.

Emoji Art



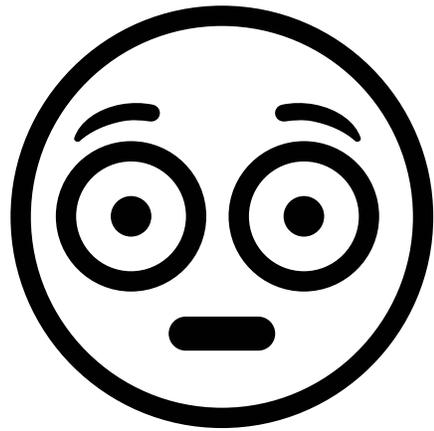
happy



sad



angry



scared

