

After turning to God, each of these psalms cries out with a complaint—a defining characteristic of lament. This involves naming the problem being seen or experienced and expressing it vividly before God. This is a righteous response to the wrongfulness of life's circumstances. It's a refusal to wish away suffering, or stiffen our upper lip in the face of sin and suffering.

We see this in Psalm 13 when David cries out to God when he seems absent in his life:

How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? (Psalm 13:1-2).

Again, David feels distance from God in Psalm 22 and questions why he is forsaken (Ps 22:1-2)—words which Jesus himself takes up as his own on the cross (Mt 27:46). In Psalm 88:6-9, the psalmist expresses a sense of grief that is evidently unbearable.

Psalms of lament show us that crying out our complaints with heart-wrenching honesty is not only okay—but godly. Even in the depths of the pit, the loss of a loved one, or a moment of despair—God anticipates and hears each of our cries.

Laments don't end with complaints. Their third movement is an appeal for God to hear and respond. The grounds for this appeal is God's word; his character and his promises. Even in the darkness of Psalm 88, the psalmist appeals to a God who hears—"May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry" (Ps 88:2).

David similarly appeals to God: "Look on me and answer, Lord my God" (Ps 13:3). As we lament, we not only express our difficulties to God, but we call upon him to hear us in our moment of need—knowing that he alone is our source of comfort, hope and help. As people living after Jesus' death and resurrection, our prayers of lament are now anchored in what we believe and know to be true about the character and promises of God revealed in Christ.

Finally, a confession of trust in God acknowledges that, even if the answer to our prayer is unknown, God is trustworthy, whatever the circumstances. David declares, "I will declare your name to my people" (Ps 22:22) and "I trust in your unfailing love" (Ps 13:5) as he brings his psalms to a close, even when an immediate resolution is not found. And yet Psalm 88 doesn't conclude this way. While the psalmist cannot bring himself to declare praise as the climax of his song, he has already acknowledged "the God who saves" (v1).

Lament is a form of prayer that helps us turn to God, honestly name our suffering while appealing for God to hear and respond with comfort and help, and counsels us to confess our trust in God too. May the psalms of lament be a guide for your prayers in the difficult moments you face.



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'My sheep hear my voice' says the Lord. 'I know them and they follow me; and I give them eternal life [John 10:27, 28]

Ordinary 16 (21st July)

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalm 89:20-37

Ephesians 2:11-22

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Ordinary 17 (28th July)

2 Kings 4:42-44

Psalm 145:10-18

Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:1-21

Learning to Lament: A Guide to Praying in Our Hardest Moments

TGC 23/02/2023 MITCH EVERINGHAM

It can be difficult to know how to pray in hard times. How are we meant to pray faithfully, when hardship feels thick and when hope seems desperately thin? This is a question that afflicts each of us. The doctor confirms your fears: the cancer has returned. Or your hope is crushed by the news of a miscarriage. For some of us, it's rising to a new day only to be met by the dark and familiar clouds of depression. You mourn the disclosure from a friend that they've been abused. Or perhaps it's arriving home to tell your family that you've lost your job: hopes dim, and anxiety rises. Maybe it's the toll of wars beginning, flood waters raging and constant destruction that fills your newsfeed.

In moments like these we lean on God has given us a model of prayer for these exact situations—the ones that hurt the most. This form of prayer is called *lament*: the honest expression of our sorrows to God.

The first feature of lament is an address to God. The direction of the prayer matters here; it's not grumbling to others—it's intentionally coming before God in prayer. The difference between the two is the *direction*. Notice how this is expressed in the opening verses of these three psalms;

"How long, *LORD*?" (Psalm 13:1)

"My *God*, my *God*, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1)

"*LORD*, you are the *God* who saves me; day and night I cry out to you." (Psalm 88:1)

Psalm 13 and 22 begin by bringing a question before God, Psalm 88 with an acknowledgement of the salvation God offers. But did you catch the common thread? They all turn to God first.

A guide for our prayers during the week

Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes
- Dean for Cathedral – Rev. Ross Nicholson

Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Chris and Nancy

Wednesday

Our community and the gospel

- St Luke's Op Shop
- Blackwater
- Emerald Churches

Thursday

Our nation and the gospel

- Prime minister
- State and local government
- Religious Freedom legislation

Friday

God's world and the gospel

- Islamisation
- War and poverty
- Persecuted Church
- CMS and ABM

Saturday

Ministry and the gospel

- Bible Studies
- Food for Body and Soul
- Wardens and Parish Council

Dates to Remember

23 July	Parish Council meeting 4.30 pm
27 July	Lay Ministers Retreat – R'ton 1-4 pm
3 August	Barra Fishing Day

	21 July	28 July
Service Leader	Russell	
Read	Donna	Russell
Prayers		
Shop	Ted & Donna	
Grounds		

The BCA Prayer

Lord our God, help us to remember those who live in isolated and remote parts of our land. We ask you to strengthen and encourage all whose ministries are supported by The Bush Church Aid Society.

Refresh them in times of discouragement and loneliness and call others to stand with them in the task of making Christ known.

Grant that, through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, through caring service and by support for young people, the message of your redeeming love may be proclaimed and accepted by the people of our land. We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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