

Reflection Questions: Lamentations 3

For the message, "His Mercies Never Come to an End" given by Pastor John Ferguson
at New City Church of Calgary on March 26, 2017

These discussion questions are designed primarily to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the sermon, go to NewCityChurch.ca/sermons

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Lamentations 3

A summary of the sermon: This chapter wrestles with the gravity of suffering and audacity of hope in a God who allows suffering. The Poet experiences a dark night of the soul when everything seems bleak and even his faith in God is on the rocks. It's at this time that he intentionally calls to mind who his God is—Yahewh—and there finds his hope rising.

Key Quotes:

- *The Justice Calling*, "Woven throughout Scripture is an unguarded type of prayer known as *lament*. To lament is to ask 'Why?' and 'Why not?' as well as 'What are you doing God?' and 'Where are you?' To lament is to pour out our hearts, holding nothing back. It is to pray without trying to be more full of faith than we actually are."
- Christopher Wright, "...to name YHWH in the same breath as lamenting the loss of future and hope is oxymoronic—a contradiction in terms. With YHWH in the picture...there cannot *not* be a future. There cannot not be hope. And so, having sunk to its very lowest point, if the poem is to continue, the only way is up. And this is indeed where the Man begins a painful climb, in which for every inch upwards he has to strain every sinew and muscle of faith to grasp hold of the truths deeply embedded in that one word—the *LORD*."
- Psalm 56:8-9, "You have kept count of my tossing; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book...? This I know, that God is for me."

Bottom Line:

- Lament is a gift that helps us to turn God when there is nowhere else to turn.

QUESTIONS

1. How does this text speak to your life?

- How does this text affect you emotionally as you read it?
- Read again 3:16-18. How would you describe the rawness of these verses?
 - Why do you think they are included in your Bible?
- Read the above quote from *The Justice Calling*. Is that definition of lament helpful? Why or why not?
- In the wake of saying, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord," (vs. 18), the Poet calls a certain truth to mind (literally, "This I cause to return to my heart..."), namely, "The steadfast love of the LORD (Yahweh / YHWH) never ceases, his mercies are new every morning." How does recalling this to mind root the Poet in the story of redemption that is bigger than his pain?

- After discussing this question, read the quote above by Christopher Wright. How does that bring clarity to what the poet recalled to mind?
- What does this tell us about the importance of preaching the gospel *to ourselves*?

2. How does this text speak to us as a church community?

- Sometimes Christian communities can feel like everything is whitewashed. No one doubts, no one struggles. Everyone is “victorious.” How does this text call us to wrestle more deeply and honestly with the pain and suffering in our lives as well as in the world?
- What might it look like to make room in our church and in our small groups for lament?
- What is the cost to us if we do not make room for lament, for doubt, for questions?
- How does this text help root our community of faith in the larger story that God is telling?

3. How does this text speak to our city?

- How would lament enhance our witness to our city?
- How does this text challenge the thinking of our city?
- How does this text serve as Good News for those outside the faith?
- What kind of new life / future in Christ is this text calling our city to experience?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....

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- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____