



Episode 3-13: Miscarriage

Resources:

Books

[Dark Clouds, Deep Mercies - Mark Vroegop](#)

[Dark Clouds, Deep Mercies Devotional Journal - Mark Vroegop](#)

Lectures:

[The Grace of Lamenting in Counseling Preconference](#)

Websites:

[Faith Bible Seminary MABC](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Okay. Welcome back, ladies. This is Janet here once again with my trustee, co-host Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hi, friends.

Janet: And today we get the privilege of having a guest on our show whose book I know has been very impactful for both of us, and maybe for some of you, so we're very thankful to have Mark Vroegop here today, and many of our listeners may recognize his name, even if they're afraid to try to say it. If not, you may be familiar with his book, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, which is all about the biblical subject of lament.

Jocelyn: And which we recommend all the time.

Janet: Yes, and it will definitely be linked in the show notes. I was personally helped by this book and I've talked with several people who, like me, avoided reading it because I thought it'd be depressing. And my life is hard enough, I didn't want to be depressed. And then I read it and it



is certainly not depressing. It's very hopeful because it's how to deal with those things. So it really has helped me to be able to encourage other people as well, walking through deep waters.

Jocelyn: Yeah, absolutely.

Janet: So Mark, welcome.

Mark: Thank you. It's great to be with you.

Janet: If you could just start by telling us just a little bit about who you are and what drew you to this subject.

Mark: Yeah, well, you know, for most of us, you don't set out to study lament. Lament finds you.

Janet: Yeah.

Mark: And there's a story. So I'll capture that with a little bit of context for my family first. So, I'm a pastor in Indianapolis and I'm married to Sarah. And we have four children of three adult sons, who are married, and a daughter, who's 17. And in between our third son and our daughter, Savannah, we had a stillbirth, full-term stillbirth just days before our baby was to be born. And that set us into a long season of grief and sorrow. We had multiple miscarriages, and while I'm still pastoring a church, at the time I was pastoring in Western Michigan, preaching sermons, counseling people, visiting hospitals, congratulating people who have live babies.

Janet: Wow.

Mark: And, you know, through that process, just trying to pour out my heart to the Lord with what's going on inside of my soul. And I began just to recognize that there seems to be a gap in how we handle grief. Especially, when you consider what we believe to be true substantively about God, that He's sovereign, He's in control, He's good. Yes, yes, and yes. But there was this other reality that I just I couldn't quite piece together with this is hard. It's earthy. I've got big questions and I know I need to trust the Lord and how do I get there? And so, over the number of years, I started teaching on some Psalms. Started counseling people who were walking through grief. Started walking through the book of Lamentations and I just sort of found this beautiful language called lament. Somehow I had missed it in seminary. I don't know how, but when I look back, I think that my heart wasn't ready to hear the language of lament or tuned to it, and I needed a pretty significant tragedy in my life to help me read what was already in the Bible. Or come to acknowledge and see this language that is really important. And I just set out on a journey just to learn more and more about lament and I've just learned that it's a beautiful gift from the Lord, a grace that can help us to know how to process our deepest and darkest moments. And tried to help people learn this grace because it's been super helpful to me and helpful to the people that I've served.



Janet: I totally can relate to, how do I miss something like that? Because I know when I read your book and thinking through the fact that I believe you said in there that a third of the Psalms are lament. How does it that I read through the Bible every year and I didn't notice that? But I didn't, you know, what is that? That we read what we already think instead of sometimes what's already there. But I also love that it means you're not coming up with something new. I mean that should make us nervous if somebody comes up with something that no one in the world's ever thought of before. If what you're doing is helping us see what's been there in the word, and that somehow for I'm sure a variety of reasons, we've lost a connection with it. And we need it. We need it. So that's great.

Jocelyn: Well, we're big on defining terms on this podcast because we wanna make sure everybody is all talking about the same thing. And I think lament is a word that most of us would struggle to define in good terms. So could you define lament for us and then help us understand what that looks like?

Mark: Yeah, sure. So, let's start with a really simple definition of lament. I define it this way as a prayer in pain that leads to trust. So that's a really simple definition, but every single one of those words is really important. It's prayer language, first of all. So it's what Christians do when they're talking to God. It's the way in which we communicate with Him. But it's the kind of prayer language that's used in a particular situation. So it's a prayer in pain. So it relates to some kind of tragedy or grief, brokenness of the world. A prayer in pain that leads. So it's really important to think about lament as, not a, think of it as a cul-de-sac of sorrow. It's not like a dead end where we keep rehearsing and rehearsing and rehearsing and rehearsing. It's process language. It's designed to move us from where we are to where we need to be. So it's a prayer in pain, and then it leads to trust. So the ultimate destination of all lament is a greater commitment to believe in God's goodness, to rejoice in all things, and to be thankful. So lament helps us to get there. It's the means by which we kind of traverse a world where I know that God is good, but my life is really hard. How do I talk to God in that space? And there's a lot of space that Christians occupy with that kind of pain. That's why one out of every three Psalms is lament and it's fitting that we would recover this language because it's not only needed, but it's been given to us by the Lord for the purpose of helping us to be able to persevere well. So that would be a definition. Most laments have four key elements to them, and those elements shouldn't be seen as linear, like 1, 2, 3, 4 because it's poetry, it's music. They're all part of the mix and they don't always appear in the same way, or sometimes they're condensed. Like two of them could be combined into one section in a lament, but generally we find, turn, complain, ask, and trust are the four elements within a lament. So the turn is in my pain. I'm refusing to give God the silent treatment. I'm gonna keep talking to him. I'm going to pray even though it's messy. Complain is where I lay out in clear and stark terms what's wrong, because I believe that God is good, because I believe He's sovereign. Something's in the world that doesn't fit with that.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Mark: And complaint is saying, God, this is hard. Doesn't mean that I'm a complainer. Complaining can be sinful. This means to lay out what's wrong. So turn, complaint, ask. Ask is taking the promises of God and applying them in my situation. So I say, God, I'm asking you to do what the word of God says you can do. I'm asking for your promises to be true in this situation, so I'm asking, and then trust means I'm recommitting my life and my situation to be under the banner of God's providential control and that I can trust Him even with pain and difficulty that is unresolved. So a prayer and pain that leads to trust with four elements, turn, complain, ask, and trust. And so maybe that's a simple way to think about lament. It's far more complicated nuance, but that's a good high level summary of what it is in its essence.

Jocelyn: I think that's super helpful because how many times do people who are living in intense pain just try to just jump to the trust one, I can trust God, I can trust God, but they're not actually talking about the pain.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: They're not being real and honest with the actual situation that's going on because they're not being honest. They don't even know what to ask God for. It's just like, believe about Jesus, you know, think stronger, be wiser, and just not experience what God is allowing and it's helpful to say it's appropriate for you to cry out in pain because it leads somewhere. It leads to somewhere real with the Lord.

Mark: Yeah, I mean, I found in pastoral ministry that when people are grieving and they're not given the opportunity to really deal with their grief well, like a bandaid, just trust the Lord, or all of the promises that are true, but when given to people in the wrong moment.

Jocelyn: Right.

Mark: Can really be unhelpful that people tend to kind of fall into one or two ditches, which is the ditch of denial or the ditch of despair. So denial is people showing up on Sunday and they're really struggling. People ask 'em how they're doing and they find some sort of Christian lingo to cover it. I'm fine, just trust in the Lord or believing in His goodness. And people are like, oh yeah, good, good, good, good. And they think that real Christians talk like that. When inside, they've got a lot of struggles. On the other hand is despair, where Christians think, hey, if I think these thoughts or have these doubts, or I'm wrestling with these questions, I might not even be a Christian. In fact, I heard a, or saw rather, I saw recently a tweet from a pastor friend of mine who was commenting on some interns at his church who had read *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, and one of them in a paper made the comment and it, I think it's really insightful. I hadn't thought about it before until I saw this. He said that I wonder if some people have deconstructed their faith because they don't have a category within their suffering to actually deal honestly with the struggles of their soul, and that few things are more disorienting than being told to deal with your pain without really wrestling how hard it is. And I think that's right.



Jocelyn: Yeah.

Mark: And that's where lament can be incredibly helpful for Christians to really understand, we have this language and it's all over the Psalms and it says some really gutsy things because God really wants to help us

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Mark: When life is really hard.

Janet: Yeah, you know, I've heard you say, and I read it in the book as well, the whole, even turning to God to give my complaint, my acknowledgement of what is wrong in the world is an act of faith, and yet, I think for many, if they've not thought that through, they think that's faithless. I'm questioning God. We should never question God. So then we get into the denial. When I can't deny it anymore, I end up in despair. Maybe I'm not even a believer or I wouldn't be struggling with these doubts or I wouldn't have these thoughts. And I think that's so interesting that you say that about, could that be part of what. It would deconstruct my faith. If I go through something horrendous, and I think if it's this hard and I'm not feeling like God is there, I'm probably not even believer.

Jocelyn: You're probably, yeah, that's what I was thinking. You're probably not even a believer. You should doubt your salvation.

Janet: Or maybe this stuff isn't real.

Mark: Right.

Janet: So I love that you're taking us to the scriptures to show us. That's just not true.

Mark: Yeah. In fact, it's precisely because we believe that God is good and because we believe He's sovereign and because we believe He's all powerful that we lament. So, it's actually an enormous step of faith because if we thought that God wasn't good or wasn't kind, or wasn't all powerful, then why lament?

Janet: Why talk to Him?

Mark: There's nothing to lament. Like this is just the way that it is, like hunker down and, you know, get over it. But it's because Christians believe God could intervene. He is good. That we lay out our complaint, our lament before Him, and so it is, lament is one of the most theologically informed things that Christians do. It's one of the most faith-filled things to do. I mean, to talk to God, to talk to God when you are in pain, the risk of being disappointed, in light of what you're hoping for, it takes an enormous amount of faith to pray lament prayers.



Jocelyn: I was thinking back to a time, after I had my first daughter and was experiencing some really difficult postpartum depression, and part of what made that so hard is that some of the questions that were coming up during that time were questions about God and it felt really sacrilegious to be asking those questions because not having those answers were making my life pretty miserable. And so, I think it's helpful to know that God is not scared by our questions about Him, and when we're willing to investigate those questions, there is solid answers that make us more devoted to Him on the other side of that pain. But I think that's one reason people are afraid to lament sometimes. There's some pretty scary questions and some pretty strong complaints that seem like not okay to talk about.

Mark: Right. Yeah. That's why, on the other side, if you can start to see them in the scriptures. They actually serve to validate. Oh like these aren't just questions, these are inspired questions, and God can handle them. Here's a couple from Psalm 77 where the psalmist says, and it's six rhetorical questions. Let's listen to these. Will the Lord spurn forever? Will He never again be favorable? Has His steadfast love ceased? Are His promises at an end? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His compassion?

Jocelyn: Those are serious.

Mark: Like, whoa. I mean, can you imagine if somebody in a small group is like, hey, I got some questions for you?

Jocelyn: They're like, no, no big deal.

Mark: Right. No big deal.

Jocelyn: A couple.

Mark: I mean, my phone would be blowing up like, hey, you gotta talk to so-and-so, they've got bad theology. Well, if we play out Psalm 77, what's interesting is the rest of the Psalm bears out that he doesn't believe those things to be true. No, he read the Psalm. He talks about God's faithfulness, His footprints, you know, even unseen through the waters. But here's the thing, the reality of what it means to live in a broken world and be a committed follower of Jesus is that there are things that feel true, that we know aren't true. And what do you do with that? Do you just deny that that thought doesn't exist, or do you deny that that feeling doesn't exist? No. What happens is that in lament we're able to take those to the Lord and then to be able to deal with them in a way in which spiritually we can address the core question. And we can see the way that it leads us to trust. One of the things that laments do is they validate really important questions and really important emotions, and it shows us that God can handle 'em. So whatever you do, don't stop praying. That's the point, a prayer in pain that leads to trust. Keep praying.



Janet: And I think for those of us that are walking with others, because we all, at some point or another, whether you're a counselor or not, you're going to be walking next to somebody else who might say some of those statements. And I can tell you I'm convicted as I hear that because I'm like, my temptation is, but that's not true, when they say that. But I need to hear enough of the context. Maybe they even know it's not true. They just need to wrestle through it. Or is it truly where they are?

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And then we need to address it, but right, I need to have time to figure that out and not knee-jerk respond to them saying those things.

Jocelyn: I think it's sometimes scary to hear someone say something like that because you're like, oh my word, what would I say?

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Like, you know.

Mark: Oh, yeah.

Jocelyn: Those are big questions. That's really hard. And you feel like someone better not be that real with me because I might mess it up.

Janet: Yeah.

Mark: Yeah, and that's one of the big mistakes that people make when they're trying to help people in grief or people who are struggling through deep pain is they don't realize that as a friend of the person grieving, their grief or their pain really can make me nervous, and it's really tempting to kind of center yourself in the middle of that conversation and speak to their pain because you want an answer or you feel uncomfortable or you're nervous about where their thoughts are gonna go or you want to be helpful, and the reality is, you know, Job's friends were the most helpful when they didn't say anything, right? And so we just have to understand what's going on in that person so that maybe they do have some belief issues that we need to work through. Okay, but there's something worse, which is if they're not expressing their unbelief issues, and lament gives us a venue to say, okay, let's talk about what's going on inside of your soul so we can take it to the Lord so that it can lead us to trust.

Janet: So that kind of leads me to my next question with that the four steps, which I know are not linear, but we need to be able to complain to the Lord. Okay. In our lingo, complaining is bad. We tell our kids, don't complain, be grateful. Can you help us understand how is Biblical complaint different than being the complainer or the child that we're trying to tell to stop complaining, but be grateful?



Mark: Yeah. So, I want to be clear, you can be a sinful complainer big time. If you are self-centered, you think God owes you a good and easy life. You're demanding, you've got a proud spirit, like you're not lamenting, you're sinning, right? So.

Jocelyn: Good to clarify.

Mark: Right? So let's just be clear on that. It's really possible to be a sinful complainer. Complaint in a lament is different. It's more like a legal proceeding where the complaint is filed, something is wrong. It's more like saying, God, I don't understand. This is really hard. And yet at the same time, I don't want to diminish the real pointed language that the Psalmist sometimes use when they are kind of getting in God's grill a little bit like this doesn't make sense and it feels like you're being unfair. I think that there are ways to deal with those thoughts of unfairness that we have between us and God, and the way to deal with it is to put it on the table and to process it through the language of lament. So complaint in lament is different in that it acknowledges God you're good, but this doesn't make sense. So in the book, I talk about a moment where after the stillbirth of our daughter and multiple miscarriage, we go back to the doctor's office to confirm what we thought was a pregnancy, had a pregnancy test, all the numbers were going up, like this was supposed to be. The moment we go into the ultrasound room, we're expecting to see that beautiful little grainy flutter of a heartbeat, only to confirm there's no baby there, and like the same ultrasound room where our stillborn daughter's death was confirmed. Now here we are again 18 months later after multiple miscarriages and it was just awful. We get in the car and close the door, ready to head home starting over again. And I asked my wife if she could pray and she said, I think I can. And she prayed this, God, I know you're not mean, but it feels like it today. And that's a complaint.

Janet: Yes.

Mark: That's, I know, but I live in the real world, and Lord, I don't, I can't put this together. It's the humble heart that says I'm struggling because I don't feel like my arms are long enough to bridge this gap between what I feel and how I'm living and what I know to be true about who you are.

Janet: Yeah.

Mark: So that's what biblical complaint is, and I think it's really important to get back into our language as Christians.

Janet: And I like how it fits with your definition because it leads to trust, and I like the language of the cul-de-sac because in my mind, if you're spinning around a cul-de-sac at some point, that's probably a complainer because it's not leading to trust, and that's helpful to me. It's like, okay, I need to be able to be honest, but am I being honest in humility and saying I don't know how to



put it all together, but I know that doesn't mean there isn't, I just don't know how to do this right now versus I'm gonna rehearse it over and over and over because I'm entitled to.

Mark: Right.

Janet: And I have a right to, and everybody else better know that that's what's most important about me.

Mark: Right. You know, if I could redo that section in the book, although cul-de-sac conduit has some nice planned words, I almost wonder if the bad side of being a complainer is more like going around a roundabout. The reason is there's exit points. Like you can get off like a cul-de-sac just turns you right back around. Right. So, but a roundabout there are options to take the exit, and what happens is the complainer doesn't take the exit.

Jocelyn: That is so true.

Mark: They just wanna stay in the complaint and the complaint becomes their identity, or their grief becomes their identity. Instead of it being a part of their story, it's the only story.

Janet: Yes.

Mark: And lament helps you to process that by saying, hey look, your story is real. The pain is significant. I understand this is really hard. All of that's true. Let's pray this through because we want you to head a particular direction. So, that might be another way to think about the difference between a complainer and a biblical complaint.

Janet: And that will take time, which I, as someone walking with others who are doing that, I might not know it first and I need to be okay with that.

Mark: Right.

Jocelyn: It's so interesting when you said that complaint becomes the identity because that's what it feels like our culture lives like right now. Like I am what's wrong with me and learning how to talk this way biblically is so different than the world we live in, which says you should never feel anything bad. Like you should feel pretty persistently good all the time. And you know, that's horrible that that has to be the culture, but what away for the Christian's light to shine so brightly. It's so different to say, I'm willing to live in this pain while I work through it with God and I don't need a quick or shallow solution. I'm willing to sit here in this unsettled place.

Mark: Yeah. So on the one hand we have folks whose in our cultural context, and this affects how Christians, who I should have an easy life, and if I don't, like this, it's outrageous. And on the other hand, we have folks who have had horrible things done to them and ends up becoming their entire identity forever. So you either have people who expect that they're gonna have a great



life, or you have people who expect that they're never going to be hurt. And as a result you've got massive identity issues as people don't know what to do with what's happened to them, and then you put them in a world filled with all kinds of hurts and grievances and pains. It could be a real challenging world to live in.

Jocelyn: And we have to know how to lament because we do live in a sin cursed world. We're promised pain and sorrow. That's the reality.

Mark: Right. We live in a broken world.

Jocelyn: Can you walk us through an example in the Psalms so we can see the elements of lament?

Mark: Absolutely. So the short, one of the shorter ones, I don't know if it is the shortest, but is Psalm 13 and if we take those four elements, turn, complaint, ask, and trust, we see three of them really clearly. Actually number one and number two are condensed really into one movement. Verse one and two. So, how long, oh, Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? So in that first section, he's turning and complaining instantly. Now, in other Psalms, there's a more gradual movement into the complaint. And sometimes trust is right up front, but in this context, complaining and trust or turning are put together. And then we see him asking, consider and answer me, oh Lord, my light up my eyes unless I sleep the sleep of death. He's basically, God, hear me and see what's going on. Lest my enemies say I have prevailed over him, lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. So there's the ask, and then we see trust show up in verse five with a really important word that leads it out, but. So that's important. We'll pause there for a moment. Laments always have some kind of turn like that, whether it's the word and or yet, or even so, or but, they pivot. And what that means is two things are true at the same time. How long, oh Lord, there's the complaint, and now he's gonna talk about trust. And those two things are in the exact same Psalm, so it's not either or, it's both. And here's what trust sounds like, but I have trusted in your steadfast love. My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord because He has dealt bountifully with me. So isn't it interesting that in just six verses, we go all the way from how long? Oh Lord, you've forgotten me to I will sing because He has dealt bountifully with me. That's a lament. It's a beautiful movement. Really quickly from, I think God has forgotten about me to I'm gonna keep singing because I can trust Him.

Janet: Even while I probably still feel.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Possibly like He has forgotten.



Mark: Absolutely.

Janet: Which is what I love. It's not a matter of because you could read this and go, what happened between four and five that he suddenly felt better and it's like I don't know that he did feel better, but what I read is, no, I will do this.

Jocelyn: And there's no resolution.

Janet: I will rejoice. I will. And it's like, I love that.

Jocelyn: There's no resolution of whatever was going on at this time, either, like.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: The circumstances haven't changed.

Janet: Because He delivered me then.

Jocelyn: Right.

Mark: Right. Yeah. Yeah. To answer your question, what's the difference between four and five? It's the word, but. So, it's essentially what the psalmist does all over in the psalter in laments and they say, this is true and this is true. And so lament celebrate both at the same time. And that's the journey. Yes, this is hard, but God is good. This is really painful. And the key is, is that both elements or both sides of that equation are equally weighted. God is trustworthy and this is really hard. And that's where I think lament helps to bring a little balance that many of us, who love the scriptures, who believe in God's sovereignty, we're maybe a little too quick to jump to the trust side with people who really need to understand, and have their pain validated that life is really hard. I get it. Yeah. And this is gonna be more of a journey that may take some time.

Jocelyn: And it really demonstrates the need to know who God actually is. We have to have that knowledge of God's character or we won't be able to get to the but place.

Mark: Right. Yep.

Janet: Yeah. And I think the whole concept of them both being true at the same time, it's probably human nature. It seems to be even more in our culture where that's just not acceptable. It's one or the other. And I, and for us to just acknowledge it really is both, and, and we see it all throughout scripture. We just, we don't know how to deal with that.

Mark: Right.

Janet: And I think it's part of what we have to get over.



Mark: Yeah. The uniqueness about grief is, grief is theological and it's experiential or it's intellectual. There are categories that have been violated, but it's also emotional.

Janet: Yes.

Mark: And sometimes those emotional categories have theological and spiritual overlays, but they don't completely overlay one another. And so sometimes my theology needs to have better emotional intelligence with it. And sometimes my emotions need to have better theological intelligence with it.

Jocelyn: I'm so glad you said that. That's a very good point.

Mark: So those two things kind of go together depending upon what you're dealing with in life, you might start theologically or might start, you know, emotionally, and grief is one of those things that really highlights when you haven't thought through how both of those things go together. We can sometimes give people bad counsel because we're mistaking emotional issues for primarily theological issues or we're mistaking theological issues for emotional issues. So we have to know how to be able to deal with both.

Janet: Excellent. So you've noted that there are different types of lament. Can you help us understand the different types and why do you think it's important that we recognize that the different types?

Mark: There's four different types, at least. So there's personal lament, corporate lament, repentance lament, and justice-seeking lament. So, you know, one out of every three Psalms are lament oriented, so you know, that's just about 50 Psalms. That's a lot of material.

Janet: Yes.

Mark: Personal lament is far and away the largest category where someone individually is struggling and they're trying to work it out between them and God. There's corporate lament, which is a group of people, who are grieving together something they're experiencing, either all at once, or they have a shared experience. There's repentance lament, which is somebody's blown it or they're grieving not over the circumstances of their life, but the effects of their own sin. And then justice-seeking is something's wrong. Something's been done wrong to them.

Janet: Yeah.

Mark: And I'm talking to God about it because I want God to intervene. I want justice. And in the same way, that theology and emotions need to coexist, so too forgiveness and justice need to coexist.

Janet: Yes.



Mark: And imprecatory Psalms or justice-seeking Psalms help us to kind of understand the right desire for justice, but what needs to be expressed in the right way. And so each of those are really important because depending upon the grief that someone is dealing with, they might need one of those different kinds of laments to be able to speak to their soul. So repentance lament, for instance, is a really unique application and so does justice seeking, and I think the more you understand lament, the more you realize, boy, there are applications of this in a lot of different spaces. As lament begins to really be spiritually helpful for all kinds of different seasons in life.

Janet: I especially was impacted by thinking about that God specifically put in repentance laments because I've worked with women who have said, I know I deserve this because it was my _____. Frequently it is, it's their own sin. It's their own consequences, and yet it is still proper to be able to lament that. But they almost think because I did it, I don't deserve to be able to lament and move to trust. Like it's just, I just need to bear it because it's my own fault. But to know God even gave us Psalms that are specifically around how can I lament even my own sin in a way that moves me to trust in God more. And I think what a gracious God to do that.

Mark: Yeah.

Jocelyn: I also was really thinking about the justice seeking laments or the Imprecatory Psalms, like, it's been helpful working with people who have been really violated to know there's an appropriate way to think about situations where people have done unjust things, and it gives a language to someone suffering that is often needed. Like, you don't just have to pretend that it wasn't a terrible thing, it was a wicked thing that happened to you, and there's a vocabulary that you can use when you talk to the Lord about it.

Mark: Yeah, and even seeing inspired words that it's like, man, if the shoe fits where. Like this describes what I've been dealing with. Yeah. So I think of one text and a situation where I shared this with somebody and it was like, wow, that's helpful to hear. Psalm 55 that says his speech was smooth as butter, but war was in his heart. His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. If you know anybody who's experienced emotional or verbal abuse of any kind, like this verse is so helpful because a lot of times. There's a lot of people like, no, they would never be like that. And you give no idea, dude.

Jocelyn: They are. Yeah.

Mark: You're right.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Mark: Right. And so this text validates kind of what that experience is and to see inspired words that speak to what's really going on in someone's life has been really life-giving.



Jocelyn: I also really appreciated your examples of corporate lament in the book. I had never thought through what it would be to lament as a congregation over difficult things in our city. That was such a helpful part of the book for me to think bigger about how we can personally lament, but we can corporately lament in a way that gets us to a different place.

Mark: Yeah. Part of the trouble is that I think many American Evangelical Christians think that Sunday morning is merely supposed to be positive and encouraging. Right? Right. And man, we kill it on the triumphalism. We're gonna win. And let me be clear, we're gonna win and we need to be positive and encouraging. But the hard part is that a lot of our people are dealing with stuff that's not very positive and that's very encouraging and if we're not acknowledging how broken the world is, we're not acknowledging that there are people in the room who are really in a dark place. And it was just a victory for them even to come to church today. We end up making them feel like they're exiles unintentionally because that's what you all are experiencing, but that's not my experience. And the tragedy is there's far more people who are coming to church barely making it because of the sorrows of difficulties going on in their hearts. And that's praying lament prayers like that, remind us, oh yeah, we live in a really broken world and it's a big time broken world.

Jocelyn: And just think about how that increases the unity of our congregation. Like Jesus asked, Jesus prayed that we would be unified. It just offers a different level of identification with our brothers and sisters who are in sorrow. What are some dangers in not learning how to biblically lament and what are some of the typical consequences if this is not a practice that you follow?

Mark: Well, there's a lot of consequences, some of which we're already kind of dealing with, and we can see, you know, one is the church isn't a place that people run to when the bottom falls for really good and solid answers. They view the church through a lens of kind of fake and veneer hurts the gospel witness.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Mark: Another one is we don't demonstrate how to really help hurting people at the worst moments of their life. We drop the ball when it comes to caring for people, and it's really hard when people you love are actually unintentionally hurtful in your most darkest moments. And wow, have I seen that? And, you know, we don't know just to be quiet at a receiving line at a funeral, like just don't say a lot. Like, just be okay in the space, in lamenting. Additionally, when you've got people who are hurting and really wrestling with their grief, if the church and the scriptures aren't able to be given to them in a way that proves helpful. They end up looking for solutions in other spaces, other categories that define their grief in ways that don't prove to be helpful because it's not God-centered or gospel-centered. People are gonna find hope somewhere because they're so desperate. And I think the challenge before us is this language can really pave away for healing to take place, right answers not be given, and really apply the gospel in some of



the really important moments in people's lives. I think it's an important language that needs to be rediscovered.

Janet: So I'm picturing that at this point, I hope our listeners are in agreement that this is really important. Hopefully, this is my prayer that as they hear this they have hope because even if they don't yet know exactly how what to do, they realize God's word really does have answers. They don't have to be afraid of those strong emotions. There is a path forward, but what are some practical ways that you would say that we can grow in learning how to biblically on that?

Mark: We could read lament Psalms, and just begin kind of studying them or picking them apart. If one out of every three psalms are Psalms of lament, then we ought to think that maybe God knew what He was doing and one out of every three days might be a little challenging, and we may need, you know, more lament than what we realize. And it'd be good to practice lament in the smaller griefs of life so instead of just only pulling lament out when it needs, you know, big gun sort of moments, there's a lot of brokenness. And I think we should be regularly practicing lament in the smaller, less substantial griefs that we're bearing. And I think being aware of the grief that's around us, like even maybe just this podcast will help, you know, some women to hear their friends differently and like, oh, wait a minute.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Mark: She's just lamenting. Or when you see something on the news, instead of developing a spirit of, can you believe that's happening? Instead a Christian ought to go, yeah, I can believe that's happening. I know the reality of sin in the world and instead of developing a judgmental can you believe that attitude. We could use that as a moment to lament.

Janet: Yes.

Mark: And to kind of tune our hearts to the brokenness of the world. I think that of all people on earth, Christians ought to be the ones who really know what to say and what to do when the world falls apart.

Janet: Yeah.

Mark: Because we've got a category for why death exists and why there's pain, and we also know the solution. And I think if Christians don't understand lament, I think it's a real tragedy, a missed opportunity.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: It's so interesting to hear you say practice it in the small things because everything about my American upbringing is I do all that myself, and I go to God when it's too big for me.



Mark: Right.

Janet: And then to realize, oh, that's not biblical. That's American.

Mark: Right.

Janet: And to know it's, yes, I should recognize. I shouldn't, I don't have to like be afraid of using up my coupon so I can't go to God with the little things because maybe I've used it all up when I might need it later. I don't have to. Every little thing I should acknowledge my dependence and my weakness and build those muscles.

Jocelyn: It's so interesting that you said that about being an American because I've been filtering this whole conversation through my growing up in a third world country and thinking, I experienced people who had an unbelievable level of joy because their entire life was lament and they lived day-to-day crying out to a God to save them from unbelievable circumstances. And so it's a weighty way of living that most Americans would say, don't ever make me live that way.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: That results in a relationship with God that is so precious. It's not very good circumstances and a life of pain, but such a precious reliance on God.

Mark: Yeah. If you look in church history, our inexperience with lament is very unusual.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Mark: And that's just something for us to think about. Like what in the world? You go to different parts around the globe, very familiar with lament as a prayer language, although they might not even know what to call it. They're just trying to make it.

Jocelyn: They're just doing it.

Mark: Right.

Jocelyn: Because that's what's needed.

Mark: Right.

Janet: Yeah.

Mark: And because the dynamics are such, or the situation and the circumstances are so overwhelming, they couldn't fix it even if they wanted to or could. Like their only hope is I've gotta work this out with God.



Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Mark: And I think one of my hopes is that more people, who worship in the spaces that I worship will realize this language is really important and it needs to be recovered. One of the things that I think was the benefit of a global pandemic is it woke us up really fast to what it's like to have everybody grieving at the exact same time.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Yeah.

Mark: And we also saw what that did. And I think we're unprepared at times for that kind of global or corporate grief.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Mark: But that was pretty common a generation or two ago, when you were a follower of Jesus.

Jocelyn: And all over the world right now.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Right. That's incredibly helpful. I would also commend people to the journal that you wrote. I think is a great practical way because what I'm hearing you say is in Western/American kind of thinking, we're not naturally lamenting like they are in other parts of the world because we're deceived. So we're gonna have to maybe work at seeing clearly and going to the Lord. And I think that journal is so, so helpful. I wrongly assumed when I heard you had a journal that it was a bunch of blank pages with a title, so that it would be something I could write in while I read your book. What I didn't realize is it's really how to practically apply and giving me questions to ask about different verses and learning how to lament myself, and even the appendices in the back that talk about if these are the things you're struggling with, here are the Psalms that might have principles that would address that.

Jocelyn: Oh, that's cool. Yeah.

Janet: So, for anybody listening, if you're thinking, how do I begin to grow in that, reading the book, and then working that journal I think would be a great tool for them and we'll definitely link that in the show notes along with, Mark just recently did a pre-conference for us for our counseling training conference, and that is something that can be rented virtually for a month at a time to watch and we'll have a link for you to be able to do that as. So thank you for just taking



the time, Mark, to come and talk to us on a subject that really is hope-filled and is something that we all need to think more about.

Mark: You're welcome. Thanks for having me on today.

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