

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP**JOIN A SERVE TEAM****NEW HERE?****CONNECTION CARD****STAY UP TO DATE****SUBSCRIBE TO DIGITAL BULLETIN****Series: How Long? Waiting on God with Honesty and Hope****Title: How to Pray in Pain****Text: Psalm 13**

Have you ever been in a situation when you or someone around you has asked, “How long is this going to take?” We often wait through the mundane events of life, but there is a different, weighty, burdened waiting. The burdened, soul-level waiting arises from pain, emotional, physical, psychological, and relational pain.

Today, we’re beginning a four-week series on waiting. We’re all waiting on something. Waiting is not something we experience occasionally. In fact, waiting is a normal part of the Christian life. Waiting is normal, and waiting is hard, especially when God feels silent. Waiting on God is a command numerous times throughout Scripture. Psalm 27:14, *“Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.”*

What is a Lament?

- The Scriptures give us a model for praying in the waiting and in times when God feels distant.
- The Psalms are the songbook of the people of God. Each of the 150 Psalms captures the range of human experience: joy, praise, celebration, sorrow, struggle, victory, and pain.
- “The Psalms have a unique place in the Bible because most of the scripture speaks *to* us, while the Psalms speak *for* us.” St. Athanasius the Great from Alexandria, 298 - 373
- Over one-third of the Psalms are psalms of lament, personal and corporate lament. Lament is what the faithful people of God do when life doesn’t make sense. A lament is a persistent cry for salvation to the God who promises to save, in the confident hope that He hears and will act. Lament calls God to keep his promises.
- In his book, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, Mark Vroegop defines lament simply as, “Lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust.”
- God’s apparent silence or hiddenness in the face of suffering is the fundamental problem that prompts the lament. The most common request of the lament is for God to be present because God’s presence brings salvation.

The Structure of Lament: Psalm 13

- Rebekah Eklund, in her book *Practicing Lament*, further explains, “Lament takes wordless, almost unbearable pain, and gives it a shape and a voice. It provides structure to hang pain on.”
- Psalm 13 is the perfect example of how lament provides a structure for praying to the Lord in the midst of pain, confusion, or feeling abandoned by God. Lament takes pain that feels overwhelming and gives you something to hold onto when everything feels like it’s falling apart.
- There are four movements to a lament: invocation, complaint, petition, and trust.

1. Invocation — Cry Out to God (Ps 13:1)

- A lament is not just venting or complaining into a void. A lament is a prayer that brings pain to the Lord, not away from him.
- David begins Psalm 13, “O Lord...” David begins by directing his cry to the Lord. He goes addressing the Lord, “Will you forget me forever?” This is strong language. David feels abandoned and that God is distant. David does not hide this feeling. Instead, he brings it to the Lord in prayer.
- Lament begins when you cry out to the Lord. You don’t shut down in your pain, or walk away from your relationship with God because of the struggle, or you don’t pretend everything is okay. You cry out in prayer, and perhaps even shake your fist at God.

2. Complaint — Name What’s Wrong (Ps 13:2)

- Four times in verses 1-2, David asks, “How long...” David has been in a season of abandonment, trauma, and pain.
- David names what’s wrong:
 - Internal struggle: “Sorrow in my heart all the day.”
 - Mental exhaustion: “I struggle with anguish in my soul.”
 - External pressure: “My enemy is winning.”
 - Spiritual confusion: “God, where are You?”

3. Petition — Make a Defiant Ask (Ps 13:3-4)

- David moves from naming what is wrong to asking the Lord to do something about his pain:
 - “Turn and answer me...”
 - “Restore the sparkle in my eye...”
 - “Don’t let my enemies win.”
- David is not defiant against the Lord, but his asking is in defiance against his present circumstances. Ask the Lord to defy and resolve the current situation that you are powerless to address. Essentially, David says, “Lord, without you I won’t survive.”

4. Trust — Choose a Confident Contrast (Ps 13:5-6)

- Notice the contrastive conjunction, “but...” Nothing has changed externally, but something has shifted internally. David chooses to anchor his life in his trust in the Lord.
 - “I trust in your unfailing love.”
 - “I will rejoice because you have rescued me.”
 - “I will sing to the LORD because he is good to me.”
- David’s situation may be uncertain, but his trust in the covenantal faithful character of the Lord is certain because he has experienced it in the past.
- Lament reminds us that God is trustworthy. He is trustworthy because of his record of faithfulness recorded in the Scriptures. He is trustworthy because of the record of faithfulness in your personal life. Do you have a record of God’s faithfulness in your life?

This week, take some time to write out your own lament. Follow the structure of Psalm 13, pray to the Lord in your pain, and trust him with whatever situation in life is causing uncertainty and confusion. May the Lord be good to you as you trust in him.