

# Talk It Over

## Lamentations

### Week #5 - "Help"

June 29-30, 2019



### Background

Lamentations is a historical book in the Old Testament which, technically, is anonymous; however, ancient Jewish and early Christian traditions believe it to be authored by the prophet Jeremiah. Lamentations is a poem made up of five chapters. Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 are laments that contain 22 verses, one for each of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 or the third lament is distinctive in that it is made up of each letter of the Hebrew alphabet used three times in a row for a total of 66 verses. It is believed that the poem may have been written by Jeremiah after the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem during the Babylonian exile around 586 BC. The prophet and his fellow Jews lament the devastation of their beloved city at the hands of the Babylonians. It is important to note that the author of these laments understands clearly that God allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem. God, in his power, could have, at any time, saved Jerusalem yet He didn't.

### Read Lamentations 5

### Questions

1. Who is responsible for the punishment Judah is suffering (v. 7)? Is this a realistic view or blame-shifting (v. 16)?
2. Who are the different groups mentioned in verses 11-14? What is said of each? What is the total impact of these verses?
3. Describe the emotion you hear in verses 15-18. What is the climactic line of verses 1-18? How is this the beginning of Judah's return?
4. What attribute of God does the poet mention (v. 19)? Why is that significant?
5. For what does the poet pray throughout the chapter? Has God abandoned Judah or has Judah abandoned God? Both? Neither? Does the book end on a hopeful note or a despairing one? Why do you think so?

## Application

1. How do you help someone who has experienced loss? How would you help someone who is physically struggling?
2. How do you practice the “ministry of presence”? What does it look like to lament with someone while practicing presence? What do you think others hope to experience as you come alongside them?
3. How can your prayers help those who are suffering? In what ways would you like others to help you?
4. How do you think God wants us to respond to suffering?

## Closing Prayer

*If in a group, pray the following prayer of St. Francis of Assisi together before doing your regular prayer time.*

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith  
Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O divine master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console...  
To be understood as to understand...  
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.”