

Year of Lament – A Pathway to God

Resource Pack - 'Survivors of Abuse'

Tom Henderson-Brooks
Rockhampton Diocese, January 2019

Introduction

2019 has been set aside as a '**Year of Lament.**' The idea sprung from reflecting upon how the church has failed our society in the area of child abuse. Whilst our diocese has fewer claims against it than other dioceses, some even dating back to the second world war, having just one claim would be one too many. Our 'Year of Lament' has not been instigated to placate our collective guilty consciences, rather Bishop-in-Council (BiC) wants to help our parishes realise that there is a rich tradition of lament within the Scriptures that calls us to weep with those who weep and to mourn with those who mourn. BiC further recognised that there are also many other areas that should give us reason to lament. We need to weep with victims of child abuse; weep with our first peoples and refugees over their mistreatment; weep with those caught in war zones; weep with the homeless; and weep over the degradation of our environment and much more. This Resource Pack focuses on *Survivors of Abuse*. It is meant to be a spring board of ideas for clergy and lay leaders to help their parish express lament for victims and survivors of abuse, many of whom are in our churches, Sunday by Sunday, and many of whom stay away from our churches, Sunday by Sunday, because of our collective failure to protect, nurture, listen and love.

Lament – a pathway to God



Year of Lament Program

January	+David	Introduction - Theology of lament
February	Tom	Survivors of abuse
March	Jen	War zones
May	Luke	Homelessness
June		Environment
July	Luke	First Peoples
August		Family violence
September	Luke	Illness (living with)
October	Jen	Mental Health
November	+David	Church past – big event

Survivors of Abuse – Resource Pack

Scripture

One could add many other passages to this short list – this is just a few. The ones in red are the ones I will use for our service at North Rocky.

- The Story of Joseph – Genesis 37-50
- **Psalms 10, 13, 51, 130,**
- **Hebrews 4:12-16**
- 1 Peter 2:23-25, 3:18
- **Habakkuk 1:2-4**
- **Mark 14:32-42**

Prayers of Lament

Here's some samples of prayers of lament. Feel free to adapt and use.

By **Terry Falla, Be Our Freedom Lord**, Openbook Publishers 1994.

This is an excellent resource book. If you don't own it, stop what you are doing now, and go buy it online. <https://www.amazon.com/Our-Freedom-Lord-Responsive-Contemporary/dp/0802800149>

See Pages 110 – 130. Here's just one prayer from a selection of many.

Out of the Depths (Psalm 130)

Out of the depths I call to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my cry.
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.

*If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, could anyone survive?
But with you there is forgiveness:
and for this we revere you.*

I wait for the Lord with all my soul,
in the Lord's word I put my hope;
my soul is longing for the Lord
more than a watchman
for the coming of dawn.

*Then let us rely on the Lord
as much as the watchman on the dawn;
for with the Lord there is love unfailing,
and great is God's power to set us free;
it is the Lord who redeems you
from all your sins.*

By **Debbie Przybylski**

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/pouring-out-your-heart-in-lament-to-god.html>

Lord, I know that you are faithful over all things, even the hard, dark times of my life. Help me not back away from you in my time of grief. Help me instead to lean into you and trust you, even when I do not

understand your ways. Please keep my head above the waters of anguish and my feet from slipping off the ground of truth. Help me see you in these hard moments and glorify you in my response. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

By Christina Fox

<https://www.ibelieve.com/blogs/christina-fox/habakkuks-lament-and-ours.html>

Lord, my joy is found in you. You are my salvation and my strength. Whatever my circumstances, whatever fears or anxieties I have, whatever darkness lurks on the horizon, whatever is happening in the world around me, you are my salvation and my joy. When the world around me seems confusing and hopeless, I pray that you would fill me with incredible hope in your goodness, grace and sovereignty over all things. Help me fix my gaze on you all the days of my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Hinson Baptist Church, Portland Ohio, USA

<https://www.9marks.org/article/what-does-a-prayer-of-lament-sound-like/>

The first prayer was written for a service which used the Garden of Gethsemane passage as the basis for the service. The second prayer is from another service focused around Jesus' cry of dereliction on the cross.

Father, this morning we come to you deeply distressed and troubled. Like Jesus, our souls are overwhelmed with sorrow by the difficult circumstances that have come upon us. Circumstances that seem to have no end in sight. Lord, we think of those in our faith family who are dealing with the loss of loved ones—spouses, children, unborn babies, friends, relatives. Losses that will remain with them until they too go home to be with you. Oh God, we grieve these losses. We confess that we don't understand. Questions fill our minds: Why did this have to happen? How could you allow it? Where are you in the midst of it?

We're also filled with sorrow over the relational difficulties that have come into our lives. We think of the challenges of marriage or parenting. The difficulties that have overtaken marriages because of porn addiction, broken trust, rampant insecurities, outbursts of anger. The pain of wayward children who reject you, despite everything they were raised to believe. The strains of taking care of aging parents as we watch life drain from their bodies. Oh God, these daily difficulties wear on us until we feel too exhausted to go on.

God, we're also exhausted by the physical, mental and emotional trials you have brought upon many of us. We think of those who are battling physical and mental illness, disease, and disability. Lord, it's such a demoralizing and dehumanizing path. The constant nausea, dizziness, fatigue, fog, tremors, the pain that shoots through our bodies, the insomnia, the loss of basic physical functions, the inability to do simple things like walk or run or play with our kids...or even have kids. We grieve the anxiety that ravages our lives, the darkness of depression that bleeds into every part of our soul, the highs and lows that destroy our relationships, all of it, makes us feel less than human. We HATE it. We hate it God. And we confess that we often struggle to see you in the midst of these trials.

But, of course, Lord, when it's all said and done, we acknowledge that many of our trials have been brought on us through our own sin. We've gone after the false gods of sex or money or comfort or control or escapism and now we're tasting the bitter consequences of those choices. Like Israel, we spurned you to go after other lovers and now those very lovers have spurned us in our greatest moment of need. Oh God, our sin makes us miserable. We hate it and yet often we keep going back to it. We feel trapped.

All of these things fill our hearts with sorrow and grief. And yet we do not grieve as those who have no hope. On this side of the cross, we know that all of our grief, sorrow, and sin has been borne by another for us. For there, on the cross, Jesus the ultimate grief-bearer, took our sins and sufferings upon himself so that we might not be consumed by your wrath or by the suffering that comes in this broken world. Because

of his atoning work on our behalf, we not only experience salvation amidst sorrow, but we also have great confidence that one day all of our sorrow will be wiped away when Jesus returns to right all wrongs and cause us to walk with you in unbroken fellowship on a renewed earth. Oh Lord, we have great hope because of Jesus. And so we continue to submit ourselves to you just like Jesus did, trusting in your goodness and relying on the Holy Spirit to help us when we feel too exhausted to go on.

Strengthen us now in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

....

Our heavenly Father,

Though we gather here this morning cleaned up on the outside, maintaining a cheerful exterior, Lord you know our hearts. We are those who are lost and ruined by the Fall. We represent all kinds of griefs, and sorrows, and burdens here this morning.

Oh God, you know the particular physical suffering that exists in this congregation. We are those who have been ravaged by all manners of sickness and disease—by cancers, by chronic illness, by incurable diseases, by mental illness, and much more. In our bodies, our minds, our emotions, we have felt the curse of the Fall. And God, we confess to you—this is hard. Oh God, surely You see the daily, moment by moment battles—the despair, the nausea, the pain, the loss of perspective, the endless and seemingly ineffective treatments. Oh God, surely you hear the cries and prayers of your people, in all this—as we pray for ourselves, for our loved ones, for our children.

And yet, so often those answers seem to come so slowly—or even not at all. Oh God, we know your promises to work good in our trials, but Lord we confess, oftentimes, we just don't see it. It just doesn't make any sense. So God, help us. Do not abandon us. See our suffering and act, in your mercy.

Oh God, we are a people who have seen death. Many here this morning grieve the death of a spouse, the death of a child, the death of a friend. We miss these loved ones. Our hearts ache. And the nights are long and lonely. Oh, Lord, we know from your Word that death was not initially a part of your creation. We know that death is your judgment on sin. But Lord, we pray, do not abandon us in your judgment. Because you more than any of us feel the wrongness of death. You are the God of life.

So even as we live in the midst of all this death, as we ourselves live in these dying bodies, oh Lord, do not forsake us. Do not leave us in our sorrow. Please show us the light of your face.

Because in the midst of all this suffering and dying, our deepest sorrow is not our physical pain. Our deepest sorrow is the distance we feel from you. Our deepest sorrow is the fact that we are separated from you, our God, our Father. We do not see you face to face. We never have! And though we know and believe that you are here and that you have entered our world—still we live by faith and not by sight. We mourn that we are not with you now. In our suffering, we are again and again reminded of that separation, reminded of our sin, of the judgment we deserve, of your wrath against our sin. So God, please be merciful to us. Do not allow Satan to use our suffering to deceive us. In the midst of our suffering, hold on to us.

Oh God, we believe that you have provided the greatest answer to our suffering in the resurrection of your Son. Impress upon our hearts the truth and hope of the gospel. Help us to hear the comfort of the gospel louder than the condemnation of our pain. Help us to see Christ, our suffering Savior, our sympathetic High Priest. Cause our hearts to be satisfied in Him.

Be merciful to us. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

A Lament Communion

The Scandal of Grace by Terry Falla, Be Our Freedom Lord, p.214

Lord Jesus Christ, as we break this bread and put this cup to our lips,
we would remember that we are in unusual company:

***The company of every disciple, every outcast, every hesitant follower,
with whom you broke bread, drank wine, and shared a meal;***

The company of every person who knew in your presence
the grace of God and the joy of the kingdom;

***The company of the poor, the sick, the blind and the lame,
with whom you laughed, with whom you wept, and whom you healed;***

The company of beggars, prostitutes, and extortioners,
the tormented and the rejected, the disillusioned and the condemned;

***Of Mary from Magdala, sneered at, avoided, the subject of whispers,
haunted by shadows of a demon-dark past,
to whom you gave womanhood, dignity, freedom, and life;***

The company of Zacchaeus and Levi, self seeking, inscrupulous, hated, unhappy,
to whose homes you were welcomed, whose lives were transformed;

***Of Simon the zealot, disciplined, dedicated, insurrection in his thoughts,
revolution in his dreams, impatient for the overthrow of his people's oppressors;***

The company of Thomas, doggedly loyal, determined, unyielding,
wanting the truth, but unwilling to settle for a second-hand faith;

***Of Peter the fisherman, once bold, then broken, alone with the memory of a friendship betrayed,
whose love you affirmed in the dawn by the sea.***

With the breaking of bread and the fruit of the vine, you offered them friendship and peace, forgiveness
and trust, the love of God and a future with promise.

***Lord Jesus, with the church through the ages we join them today;
we share their need, we have their doubts, we know their failures,
we too are sinners hungry for grace.***

We come in their company, hesitant, eager,
scarcely daring to believe this incredible news, this offence to niceness,
the scandal of your love, for them, for the world – for us.

***With awe, with amazement, in worship, we break the bread, we share the cup, we hear your words,
'Until I come', we confess you, Lord, now and forever.***

Amen.

Songs (there are many – here's a small sample)

- Amazing Grace My Chains Are Gone
- Blessed Be Your Name – Matt Redman
- Create in Me A Clean Heart – Keith Green
- God of Justice – Tim Hughes
- Jesus Messiah – Chris Tomlin
- How Deep the Father's Love for Us – Stuart Townend
- Arms of Grace – Beth Croft
- Power of the Cross – Keith Getty + Stuart Townend
- There is Strength within the Sorrow – Aaron Keys
- When I Survey The Wondrous Cross – TiS 342
- Abide with Me TiS 586
- I Heard the Voice of Jesus – TiS 585
- What a Friend we Have in Jesus – TiS 590

Links

I haven't had the time to personally 'vet' these sites or read the following books. So have a look and make up your own mind.

<http://counselingoneanother.com/2012/07/19/bible-study-projects-for-victims-of-abuse/>

A Bible Study/Blog (19/7/2012) reflecting on some of the above passages of Scripture by Paul Tautges, a pastor in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

<http://www.abigails.org/a-studypage.htm>

The Abigail Support Group for Women with an Abusive Partner is a ministry of the Olympia Union Gospel Mission. There are links to resources, bible studies, support and information. Focus is more towards Domestic Violence.

<https://www.bibleinfo.com/en/topics/abuse>

Some quick Bible verse related to abuse.

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/women/13-healing-lessons-from-a-sexual-abuse-victim.html>


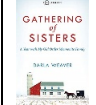
A good short biblical blog by Dawn Wilson, as she writes about how the Bible helped her on the healing path to recovery from abuse.

<https://ibcd.org/5-resources-for-helping-sexual-abuse-victims/>

A link to a resource library for helping victims of abuse. There is also a link on this page to many talks.

Books

I didn't have time to look for books, but as I was researching, this author piqued my interest for a whole other reason that may be of interest to our diocese at some point.... and this is that this material and author is drawn from ministry to 'cowboys'. If you go to any of our local rodeos, you will see that there is a whole (massive) 'sub'-culture from those working on our land who are into rodeos and all things associated with horses, beef and cattle. Whilst I would not personally agree with all the theology of the Lone Star Cowboy Church, I take my 10 gallon hat off to them for ministering to this group of people in a way that seems very effective, at least from their websites etc.

	Caught in the Act of Grace: A Sexual Abuse Recovery Bible Study for Women Paperback – September 23, 2011 by Darla Weaver There's also a similar book for men.	Darla Weaver co-pastors with her husband, the Lone Star Cowboy Church in the USA. It is associated with the AoG.
	Gathering of Sisters: A Year With My Old Order Mennonite Family - Sep 25, 2018 by Darla Weaver	

Images

These are some images you could use for bulletins, powerpoints, etc. They are from the web so be aware of potential copyright infraction.







