



Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart
is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day,
and like vinegar on soda.

Proverbs 25:20

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:15-18

Dear Family at Christ Community Church,

Over the past few years, we've experienced a number of lamentable circumstances in our society; each has offered us the opportunity to answer God's call for us to weep with those who weep. The recent murder of 8 people across our community by a local resident yet again presents us the chance to practice this unique calling for the life of the world. While many rushed to pass some form of judgment on the situation, we as God's people are called to patiently lament the commodification of fellow image bearers before, during, and after this tragic event.

At this point, many of you may be wondering what lamentation looks like in a situation like this in our spheres of influence.¹ I'm glad you asked! But, before we can wrestle with specific ways to grieve with those affected by such an event, we need to understand the foundational principles for wise Biblical lamentation. This letter will help lay that foundation before addressing specifics on lamenting in different circumstances. Instead of trying to learn wise Biblical lamentation all at once, we will use subsequent letters and discussion opportunities to help us grow in tangible ways in our ability to weep with those who weep.

First, let's consider two key confessions that we need to make before we can grow in our ability to lament with and for others:

- 1. We're novices (or inexperienced) at lament for a variety of reasons;**
- 2. You can't weep with those who weep and be selfishly defensive about why they're weeping at the same time.**

In wise humility, we must honestly admit that we're novices in weeping with those who weep. Our overall Western culture as well as our various sub-cultures (the suburbs, evangelical Christianity, Presbyterianism, etc.) have not equipped us to grieve well despite the rich Biblical teaching on lament. As part of this cultural inheritance, we often want to fix or resolve things quickly; grief doesn't work based on our abilities or time tables. In addition, we often move on from the suffering of others while they continue to carry the weight of grief. In wise humility, we must also confess that we're quick to get defensive when confronted by others' suffering. This is frequently the outworking of our selfish views on various matters or a fear of loss of power or control in a given circumstance. **Thus, the humility of both confessions frames the start of our conversation on weeping with those who weep.** We must address this before moving on to potential applications to specific circumstances.

Despite our weakness in these confessions, there is good news! God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each practice grief over human failings and sufferings (for examples see **Genesis 6:6, Psalm 78:40** for God the Father; **Mark 3:5, Luke 19:41, John 11:35** for

¹ The definition of Biblical lament is to express genuine mourning, grief, or sorrow in a tangible way for the support and comfort of those who've experienced a tragedy of some kind when the Bible calls for us to weep with those who weep. This includes crying, praying, singing, dwelling with, and other appropriate creative acts of expression to serve the sufferer in their sorrow.

Jesus the Son; **Isaiah 63:10, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 4:30** for the Holy Spirit). We are in union with and indwelt by each member of the Trinity who knows how to weep for and with those who suffer and weep. Thus, we can grow in lamentation that honors both God and our suffering neighbors because of our union with the Trinity. Take heart: **we will mess up as we seek to grow**. There will be some awkward moments along the way. However, the eternal good that will come from our service to those who grieve will eclipse the temporary discomforts that may occur. Take time to prayerfully reflect on the above confessions as applicable to you; remember the Trinitarian good news as you do this.

In addition to considering the above confessions, take some time to reflect on **Proverbs 25:20** and **Romans 12:15-18**. Pray for the Holy Spirit to grant you insights into each passage as well as opportunities in your spheres of influence to apply wise Biblical lamentation. Look for opportunities in the coming weeks to engage your reflections on these things. We will unpack these passages as well as why the Gospel allows us not to be defensive and mature in our ability to lament as a loving act.

Thank you for joining us in seeking to grow in weeping with those who weep for the glory of God and the life of the world! Please reach out with questions and comments along the way.

Grace and Peace,

Cameron