



Becca Anderson, 08.09.20

What is Lament?

A passionate expression of grief or sorrow.

“Lament is the breaking of numbness by the admission of pain and loss.” Walter Brueggemann

Psalms of Lament:

*O LORD, how long will you forget me? Forever?
How long will you look the other way?
How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
With sorrow in my heart every day? (Psalm 13)*

*O God, why have you rejected us forever?
How long, O God, will you allow our enemies to mock you? (Psalm 74)*

*My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?
Why do you remain so distant?
Why do you ignore my cries for help? (Psalm 22)*

While their feelings of abandonment were real, these psalmists refused to let their feelings define who God is. Though they begin with cries of “Where are you God?” at some point they transition from lament into remembering who God is, what God has done in the past, and base their theology on this, not their present emotional state.

*But I trust in your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because you have rescued me.
I will sing to the LORD
Because he has been so good to me. (Psalm 13)*

*You, O God, are my king from ages past,
Bringing salvation to the earth. (Psalm 74)*

*Yet you are holy,
The praises of Israel surround your throne.
Our ancestors trusted in you
and you rescued them.
You heard their cries for help and saved them,
They put their trust in you and were never disappointed. (Psalm 22)*

If God didn't want to hear this from us, these psalms of lament would not be in our Bible. Like the authors of the psalms of lament, we do not let our frustration or anger or disappointment or hopelessness define who God is. God is the God of our salvation no matter how we feel. In these times when our lives feel like an emotional hurricane, we hold onto the anchor we have in who we know God is.

Breath Prayer:

Breath Prayer is an ancient form of prayer that uses short, easy to remember phrases coupled with our breath to help us center ourselves and focus on God. Breath prayer does not go on and on asking for specific things for specific situations. There is nothing wrong with praying specific prayers, but the goal for breath prayer is to spend time in God's Presence seeking to know God and to be known. Anchoring ourselves in God so we can remain anchored throughout our day.

A breath prayer is usually written in two phrases, one for the inhale, one for the exhale.

Example: **My God who rescues, I trust You for relief.** (from Psalm 22)

Inhale a deep breath, feel your lungs expand, fill yourself completely.

Then say: **My God who rescues,**

Exhale slowly, releasing all the air,
and say: **I trust You for relief.**

Other examples:

From Psalm 74

Inhale: **God, my king from ages past,**

Exhale: **bring salvation to me.**

From Psalm 88

Inhale: **God of my salvation**

Exhale: **be with me in the darkness.** (replace darkness with any word that describes your situation: loneliness, fear, uncertainty, disappointment.)

From 1 John 1:5

Inhale: **God who is only light**

Exhale: **help me see your light in this darkness.**

From Hebrews 13:8

Inhale: **Jesus,**

Exhale: **You never change.**

Other resources for Breath Prayer:

Osheta Moore leads a breath prayer time every weekday morning on Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/oshetamoore/>

A newsletter from Sarah Bessey describing Breath Prayer:

<https://sarahbessey.substack.com/p/breath-prayers-for-anxious-times>