

Into the Light: Lesson Five

Lamenting Life Study Guide

“Sometimes it is life, rather than death, that is cause for lament.” What are you lamenting today in life?

Opening Prayer on page 45, or pray for the laments that have been offered.

Scripture Study

Job has lost his family, his business, his home, his health. Three friends come and visit him. Read Job 2:11-13. What do they do at first? What do you think about their initial visit?

Read the scripture passage printed out on page 46. This is the first thing Job says after seven days of silence. What statements strike you?

Job’s friends find it difficult to listen to Job, and begin to suggest that Job was responsible for his condition: He must have sinned, therefore Job needs to repent not lament his condition. How do we respond when friends and loved ones lament their lives? Do you try and fix them? Are we too much like Job’s friends, wanting to cheer the person up or tell them to get on with it?

Our author talks about the “dark night of the soul,” a spiritual experience where God seems absent. Read Psalms 88:1-7 and 109: 20-25 that describe the dark night. Have you ever experienced a “dark night of the soul? Describe your dark night of the soul if you feel comfortable in your group. If you are alone, lament it to God. Follow the steps the author gives on page 48 – 49. In short, they are:

- Name our experience
- Communicate with God
- Be heard

The author gives two examples of people who lamented: Thomas Dorsey who wrote *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* (page 49-50) and Parker Palmer (pages 50 – 51). Both stories tell how others helped these two men through dark nights. What are ways we can walk beside people when they are lamenting life and experiencing a dark night of the soul?

The Hope

Jesus: I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10)

Read first paragraph under “Trusting in the God of Hope” on page 51.

Take the laments that you mentioned at the beginning of the study and rephrase them with “even though” and ending with “I am a child of God.” For example: “Even though I am blamed for things I did not do, I am a child of God.”

Or

If you are in a group, when a person gives their “even though” statement, the whole group ends it with “You are a child of God.”

(Instructions for the above exercise are in the second paragraph under the section “Trusting in the God of Hope” on page 51)

Closing Prayer on page 51: read or sing