

Into the Light: Women's Lament

Lesson Three Study Guide

Pray together the pray on page 29 in your study guide.

On what occasions might women's voices be especially appropriate as voices of lament?

Read the two scripture passages on page 30 of your study guide:

Jeremiah 9:17-21

Matthew 2:16-18

What was the cause for lamenting and mourning?

How did the women lead their communities in mourning? What do you think are the benefits of grieving together? What is our loss in this time of COVID when people cannot come together to grieve?

Note that the women are asked to teach the skill of lamenting to their daughters. How can we teach the idea and practice of lament to the next generation?

Scripture is filled with examples of women mourning. Have different people in your group read these examples:

Genesis 21:6 (Hagar mourns thinking her son will die)

2 Samuel 1:24 (women mourn the death of King Saul)

1 Kings 17:24 (Elijah brings a child back from the dead)

Ezekiel 32:16 (women chant laments over the Egyptians)

Luke 7:15 (Jesus brings a child back from the dead)

Luke 8:32 and Luke 23:27-28 (professional mourners are present when Jesus performs miracles)

These examples cover hundreds of years. Our author says "Women weeping over the loss of a future is something that never changes." How do women play a particular role in our church's rituals that surround death (funerals, visitations, meals, etc)?

Our author says “Women have borne the burden of lamenting.” Do you consider lamenting a burden?

Women in scripture led the nation in mourning, but they also led in times of celebration. Moses sister, Miriam, led the newly free nation in a song of joy (Exodus 15). How can we as women bring joy and celebration after times of lament?

End your time together by saying the prayer on page 34

**A footnote: You may find yourself in times of lament with someone who has lost a loved one. Here are examples of comments that are unhelpful and helpful (these are by Rev. Rosalind Banbury in the October 26 issue of *The Presbyterian Outlook* magazine):

“Let me know what I can do to help.” This statement lays the burden on the griever to figure out what you can do. It is more helpful to say something like, “I can pick up your friends and family from the airport” or “I will bring meals over on Wednesday and Friday.”

“I know how you feel.” People grieve differently. You do not know what they are feeling unless they tell you. It can be more helpful to say, “I can’t imagine how you are feeling.” This leaves room for whatever is being felt.

“God wanted her in heaven.” Though we affirm life after death, a griever may react in anger to such a statement. One person said, “God must not care very much about me if that is true.” It is better to say, “You are in my thoughts and prayers.”

“You are handling this so well” or *“You are so strong.”* By saying this, we expect the person to be strong at all times, which can be a great burden. It is better to affirm that you care for the person.

“God has a reason for his death.” This statement is meant to give reassurance, but if the death is sudden or violent, or someone has died at a young age, the death may represent something senseless.

For children, using phrases like “pass over” don’t make much sense. It is important to use simple language: “Grandma died today. To die means we don’t be able to see her or touch her. I am sad that she died. You might feel sad, angry or confused.”