

## Small Group Studies on Lamentations

Lent 2023

(Sermons will be preached on Feb 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>)

At the first session consider showing the whole group this introductory [video](#). At the last session use the this [video](#) which takes the story through to Easter morning.

To inhabit *Lamentations* I suggest that you use a form of *lectio divina*. Each week read slowly through that week's chapter allowing people time to reflect on what they read, then consider the following questions:

- What has surprised you?
- What has challenged you?
- Have you felt like this and how might these words have helped you to express it in prayer?

Alternatively you may want to use the following notes. Beware of over theologising, so that you are still 'inhabiting' the text rather than 'dissecting' the text. Also, however tempting it might be to rush ahead to 'answers' to the prayers being offered, try and keep focus on the emotions in the chapters with all the uncertainties and ambiguities that are left hanging. The questions focus on pastoral use of the chapters

Christopher Wright suggests the underlying problem in Lamentations is that:

Hope is ... theologically centred in the Poet's faith, but structurally decentred in the Poet's experienced reality. The truth about God's ultimate faithfulness and compassion does not erase that pain or silence the questions it generates. They continue in the unresolved present and into an as yet unknown future, even as the book ends. (Wright: 34)

There are more questions than are needed for one evening. Be selective in what you use, you are not expected to answer all the questions, some may be more relevant in your group than others.

## **Week 2      Lamentations 2**

### Overall structure

- 1-10            Narrator telling the story – with focus on abandonment (v7)
- 11-19          Narration turns into commentary on God's anger
- 20-22          Madam Zion pours out her complaint to God

### *Look at the story of vv1-10:*

Emphasis is placed on God abandoning his people and that this is due to God's wrath/anger towards the sin of the people (as confessed in chapter 1). Remember that God's wrath is linked with God's justice, it is not God 'flying off the handle'. Illustration: somebody enters into a mortgage agreement but fails to pay it off time and again, the bank closes the mortgage and evicts the payer: is this the bank's 'wrath' or 'justice'?

What do you understand by God's anger or God's wrath? Is it just? In what ways does not acting as God wants us to have consequences? (e.g. creation care)

Is God fair in acting like this? How would you feel if he turned a blind eye to what was being done?

Why is it important that God's people live out God's character of righteousness?

P T Forsyth, a great preacher of the last century, said: 'Be thankful that God cares enough for you to be angry with you.'

### *Look at the commentary in vv11-19:*

A key focus in v14 is the work of the false prophets who said everything was alright when it wasn't. Jeremiah challenged them and was persecuted for doing so.

With so many outlets for 'truth' today, how do you discern what is true and what is false?

How do you live 'differently' because you are following God not the world?

### *Look at Madam Zion's prayer in vv20-22*

What surprises or shocks you in what she prays?