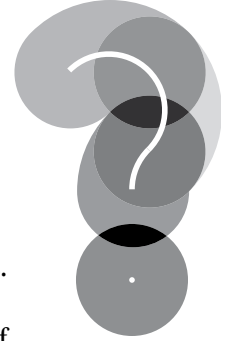




WHAT IS LAMENT ABOUT?

A central practice of people of faith is the ability to lament in hope. God knows us inside and out, and welcomes our whole selves: happy, sad, and every other kind of emotion. Lament acknowledges that the range of human experience includes hurt, sorrow, and tragedy. It allows space for weeping and wailing, quiet sorrow, or feelings too deep to express except in the depths of our soul. Scripture gives us many examples of God's people pouring out their lament, trusting God can handle it. Indeed, God welcomes it! We learn, however, not to stay there. We name our wounds, and we weep and wail honestly. Then, we take our cue from Jesus. He told us to remember him—his body broken and blood shed—in the ritual of communion. This shared meal reminds us that we are never alone in sorrow, nor is it the final word. Signs of hope are everywhere! We can learn to lament and hope in a never-ending dance of faith.



NAME HURTS

God has always welcomed our lament. Learning ways to speak our most difficult truths, and trust God to hear us in love, is a crucial practice.

FAMILY LAMENT

Supplies: paper, markers or crayons

Write a family lament following the example in the book of Lamentations, in the form of an acrostic lament. Write the alphabet letters in order down the left-hand side of one or more sheets of paper. Starting with A and continuing on, list things that make you cry out in lament. If you don't finish, use it in "Family Hope" (p. 46).

MIXED-UP FEELINGS

Supplies: I'm Happy-Sad Today: Making Sense of Mixed-Together Feelings by Lory Britain (Free Spirit Publishing, 2019) or internet-connected device

Read aloud *I'm Happy-Sad Today: Making Sense of Mixed-Together Feelings* by Lory Britain (Free Spirit Publishing, 2019) or watch the YouTube video "Kid's Book Read Aloud—I'm Happy-Sad Today: Making Sense of Mixed-Together Feelings by Lory Britain" (bit.ly/FMHappySad, 5:06). Make up words for two mixed-up feelings, like the girl in the video does.

LAMENTS AND LAUGHS

Try an end-of-the-day practice of naming highs and lows. Some people call them *roses and thorns*. To encourage the language of lament, invite family members to name their *laments* and *laughs*.

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- ➡ What made you sad today?
- ➡ What made you laugh today?
- ➡ Where did you remember God today?
- ➡ Where did you see hope today?

CRY OUT

The practice of grief was ritualized at the time of Jesus. Over time, such displays of grief have become more private for some, and—at times—something to be ashamed of. Reclaiming our need to cry out to God is a skill families can practice together.

SADNESS STICK

Supplies: small branch or wooden spoon, glue, craft supplies for decoration

Create a safe space for sharing sadness at home. Develop a ritual around it. Make a family *sadness stick* to use when family members have something sad to share. Use a small branch or wooden spoon and decorate it with items as you choose.

BIG SAD FEELINGS

Normalize talking as a family about big feelings of sadness that come from grief and trauma. This could mean including children in memorials or gatherings around death from which you may be tempted to shield them. You can find ideas from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to support children grieving at bit.ly/FMGrievingChildren. At the bottom of the page are links for more resources. Reach out to experts as needed for short-term help if you or a child needs more care.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- ➔ What were you told or taught as a child about crying?
- ➔ What has made you cry recently?
- ➔ What do you think God feels when we cry?
- ➔ What is most helpful when you are crying?
- ➔ Where is a place you like to go when you feel like crying?

REMEMBER JESUS

Jesus gave us a ritual meal and sacrament as a way to recall his wounds and his continuing and sustaining presence with us today. Explore ways to learn and grow together as you learn more about communion together.

RE-MEMBERING

Supplies: internet-connected device

Read about remembering and re-remembering at bit.ly/FMRe-membered.

THE LAST SUPPER

Supplies: internet-connected device

Watch together a version of the Last Supper story in the YouTube video “Jesus’ Last Passover—Children and Worship” (bit.ly/FMLastPassover, 12:00). Note that this link begins at 3:25 with the story. You may wish to pause the video after each wondering question, which begin at 7:40 and end at 8:31.

CHUCK KNOWS COMMUNION

Supplies: internet-connected device

Watch together the YouTube video “24—Communion—Chuck Knows Church” (bit.ly/FMChuckCommunion, 3:03). Talk together about your family’s experience and understanding of communion.

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- ➔ What do you think about when you take communion?
- ➔ Is it a happy or a sad time—or sometimes both—for you? Why?
- ➔ How can we get ready for communion as a family?
- ➔ What in our house can help us remember Jesus during our own meals?

HAVE HOPE

Lament is not a static thing. It dances, swirls, seesaws and circles from despair to hope over and over again. In times of sadness, having the skill to see and recognize signs of hope is critical. How can you practice the movement from lament to hope as a family?

FAMILY HOPE

Supplies: lament acrostic from “Family Lament” (p. 45)

Compose or finish a family lament, using the following four steps: Name Hurts, Cry Out, Remember Jesus, and Have Hope. If you began a lament acrostic in “Family Lament” (p. 45), finish it with hope. Partway through the A to Z lament, make a switch to remembering you are not alone, and then include signs of hope.

HOPE IN OUR FAMILY

Talk together about the things you do as a family because you have hope. Some ideas might be: making vacation plans, helping people in need, recycling, sending cards or food to people who are sick, praying, voting, and trying again. Wonder what else in your daily activities and core values you can frame using the language of hope.

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- ➔ What do we do as a family in hope?
- ➔ How can we help each other have hope when we feel especially sad?
- ➔ What are some signs of hope we can see right now?



PRAYER

Dear God, you are always with us. When we lament and cry out, you hear us. We remember how Jesus was wounded, and in our remembering we are strengthened. Help us hold onto signs of hope, and your constant love, all around us. Amen.