

Writing a Lament: A pattern for crying out to God in trouble

A lament is a form of a prayer used when people who are in trouble cry out to God for his help. It provides a good pattern for expressing our need as well as our trust in God.

Example Lament Psalms

- Psalm 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 88, 120, 139, 142

Typical lament structure

- Address (we are speaking to God)
- Complaint (what isn't right)
- Statement of Trust (our confidence in God's goodness and power)
- Petition (what we need God to do)
- Poetic exclamations (optional ways to ask for God's help)
- Certainty / Anticipation of Praise

Example

Psalm 3: A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

Address

¹ LORD,

Complaint

how many are my foes!

How many rise up against me!

² Many are saying of me,

“God will not deliver him.”

Statement of Trust

³ But you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

⁴ I call out to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy mountain.

⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

⁶ I will not fear though tens of thousands
assail me on every side.

Petition

⁷ Arise, LORD!

Deliver me, my God!

Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
break the teeth of the wicked.

Certainty / Anticipation of Praise

⁸ From the LORD comes deliverance.

May your blessing be on your people.

Filling in the template

A psalm of _____. When she/he...

[use this pattern, whether you will write a poem or a song, paint a picture, create a physical object, dance, make a movie, ...]

Address

Complaint

Statement of Trust

Petition

Certainty / Anticipation of Praise
