



grow groups

Valley Ranch  
BAPTIST CHURCH

## Week 2: Faithful to Rescue the Hurting

### Lamentations 3:19-26

**GOAL:** To learn how to lament our suffering with honesty AND hold on to the hope that God is faithful to carry us through.

#### CHECKLIST

- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- Welcome anyone who is new this week. Discuss any logistics (weekly schedule, snack signup, serve project, etc.)
- If you have not yet identified an Inreach Coordinator for your group, share about the role and identify someone to serve. (Then send his or her name to Amy asap.)
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members. Help new members register for your group using the QR code in your room or at [vrbc.net/grow](http://vrbc.net/grow).

#### PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

*Father, we thank you once again that you are faithful. You are faithfully present in our suffering that is a result of living in this broken world. Thank you that your mercy is constant and true. Thank you that your compassion meets us exactly where we are. Thank you that suffering does not have the last word. Our hope is in you and you will indeed have the last word! Amen.*

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*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25*

## CONNECT

- Use this time to connect with your group relationally - both formally and informally.
- Consider using an icebreaker to help the group engage with one another. You could ask something like, “What’s your favorite thing about your family?” or “If you had a free day next week to spend however you’d like, what would you do?” Invite them also share any prayer requests.
- Spend time praying for your group members and for your time together today.

## COORDINATE

Spend a few minutes covering any details the group needs to know:

- Choose a date for your group to serve with Building for the Better. This year, you cannot sign up for spots in bulk. You will need to ask each participating group member to sign up themselves for the date that your group selects.
- This is a great time to plan a group social (Super Bowl party, Galentines brunch, supper clubs, etc).
- If you haven’t yet identified an Inreach Coordinator, please do so this week.

## DISCUSS

- What stood out to you from the Growth Guide readings this week around the topic of God’s faithfulness in the midst of our suffering? How did the weekly readings help you engage with Pastor Arthur’s sermon on Sunday?

**Leaders Note:** *We are going to be asking questions either at the beginning or in the midst of a lesson each week about how folks are engaging with the Growth Guide. We realize not everyone may be choosing to use the guide, but we want to encourage people to share about their engagement with God’s Word during the week through whatever plan they are using and how God might be speaking to them. One of our goals in Grow Groups is to increase our ability to talk about our life with God in the here and now. Of course, it’s crucial for you, as leaders, to model this, too*

### **Read Lamentations 3:19-20.**

- Pastor Arthur makes a startling statement in his first point about Jeremiah voicing his despair. Arthur says, “It is OK to lament!” Why is this true? Why is lamenting an important part of prayer?

**Leaders Note:** *Entering into our pain and facing it head on is hard! We would often much rather find a way to ignore or deny it. But Jeremiah names it and describes how it makes him feel. The Psalms also give us many examples of this. Look at Psalm 42:3: “My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’” This is just one example of many where the psalmists express the broad spectrum of human emotion in the midst of suffering. Lamenting our*

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*pain is biblical! Yet while facing the pain head on, Jeremiah and the psalmists turn their pain into prayer. They do not turn away from God. They let their pain drive them to God for refuge and comfort and healing.*

*Perhaps a good definition of “lament” is properly recognizing the goodness of God’s creation and mourning the brokenness that sin leaves in its wake. “This is not how it is supposed to be!” I wailed (Deirdre) as I watched my mother slip away with disease. “This is not how I wanted my life to be!” we might say, as relationships break that we thought would be unbreakable. We grieve deeply because we love deeply. When we don’t allow ourselves to honestly lament, we are not acknowledging the goodness of what was lost. It’s not only OK to lament, it is important to take time to lament. AND it is important to turn to God in our lament, not away from him.*

### **Read Lamentations 3:21-26.**

- What intentional action does Jeremiah take in verse 21? What is the result?

**Leaders Note:** *After acknowledging his pain and its impact on him, the author makes an intentional decision: He “calls something to mind.” We’ll see in the following verses exactly what it is that he calls to mind, but the main point here is that Jeremiah makes a choice as to what he will focus his mind on. Pastor Arthur reminds us that we have this freedom too! And this freedom leads to HOPE when we choose to remember who God is.*

- List the characteristics of God that Jeremiah calls to mind in verses 22-26. What difference does each description of God make for our lives in the midst of our suffering?

**Leaders Note:** *Jeremiah calls to mind God’s love, his compassions (some translations say mercies) that are new every morning, and his great faithfulness. It’s interesting that he doesn’t say that he calls to mind the fact that God is going to fix everything, or that God will punish the Babylonians. Instead, he focuses on God’s character.*

*He first thinks about the fact that despite his circumstances, God loves him deeply. As the Psalmist says, “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.” (Ps. 103:12) And importantly, he reminds himself that because of that love, there is nothing in the world that can happen that will be ultimately harmful to him – “we are not consumed.” Like Paul would say six centuries later, “neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38-39)*

*Jeremiah then remembers God’s merciful compassion. We can always depend on his consistent character to meet us in our pain. And not just once – but over and over again! Every time we wake up, God is ready to meet us with new mercies. He is faithful, day in and day out. He won’t change. He can always be counted on. “Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!”*

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*This is a really important lesson for us. By nature, people tend to “put God on trial” based on what they experience in their circumstances. If their circumstances don’t line up the way they want, they call God’s character into question. “How can a loving God allow this to happen?” But Jeremiah takes a different path – he first establishes who God is in his heart and mind, and then he responds to his circumstances from that place of faith.*

*There’s a major takeaway here for us. As we discussed in the last question, we have the freedom to fix our minds on whatever we choose. And the healthiest place we can fix our minds is on the character of our Lord! As we fix our minds on who he is, we find that we gain a new perspective on everything else in our life. As the Psalmist says in Psalm 16:8, “I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”*

- Pastor Arthur points to Jesus as the ultimate proof of God’s faithfulness to us in the midst of our suffering. What difference does Jesus’ incarnation as a human being make in regard to our suffering? How is this an encouragement to you in the midst of your own struggles?

**Leader’s Note:** *Pastor Arthur says:*

*“He is so faithful that He decides to get down here, leaving behind his mighty an become one of us, to face everything that we face to be able to say: ‘I understand you. I get you.’*

*Were you hungry? Jesus was too.*

*Were you thirsty? Jesus was too.*

*Do you feel abandoned? He did too.*

*Have you lost a beloved one? He did too.*

*Were you betrayed? He was too.*

*Were you beaten? He was too.*

*Are you facing something that is so challenging that seems impossible to overcome, to a point that you pray: God, I am not sure if I can bear this and I don’t know what else to do, can we just skip this? Jesus did too.*

*Have you lost everything and everyone and it looks like all the weight of the world is on your shoulders right now? Jesus has been there as well.*

*Jesus went through all of it so today he can whisper in your ears – ‘I understand you. I’ve been there and I know exactly what you are going through. But this is not the end.’”*

*A movie was made of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life called “Agent of Grace.” Bonhoeffer was a German pastor in Germany during WW II who suffered persecution for rejecting the Nazi regime’s worldview, calling Christians to be faithful to Jesus whatever the cost. We don’t know if Bonhoeffer actually used these exact words, but the script attempts to show how Bonhoeffer viewed his suffering and death. At the end of the movie, just before Bonhoeffer is executed by hanging, the Nazi who ordered his execution says jeeringly, “Well, this is the end.” And Bonhoeffer says, with a confident calm in his voice, “No it isn’t. This is just the beginning.”*

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## WEEK 2

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- When we experience any kind of suffering, what are some practical, intentional steps that we can take that will enable our ability to have HOPE?

**Leaders Note:** *Try to let your group come up with ideas of their own, then offer these in addition as needed:*

- **Stay in community with your church family.** *Let them pray for you when you can't. Let them believe for you when you are full of doubt. Let them care for you and carry you in your weakness.*
  - **Intentionally turn your mind toward who God is.** *Worship God through prayer, through singing, through being with the family of God as you corporately remind each other of God's greatness and goodness.*
  - **Practice gratitude.** *Count your blessings. This adjusts our perspective. Do as the psalmist does and remember all the ways that God has been faithful to you in the past and present. "I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done." (Ps. 143:5)*
  - **Stay in Scripture.** *Even when you don't have the energy for your usual habits of reading Scripture, find several promises of God that speak to you and keep them in front you in tangible, practical ways.*
- When we are NOT experiencing any particular kind of suffering, what practical steps can we take to be prepared for the storms that will come?

**Leaders Note:** *Just like we exercise our muscles in small, repetitive ways to build our physical strength, we can build our spiritual strength so that we are more able to cope when suffering comes. Here are some examples of ways to do this that you can add to what your group comes up with:*

- *Keep up the spiritual habits or rhythms that keep you connected to God and focused on who he is and what he his ultimate purposes are for you. (Regular engagement with scripture, conversation with God through talking and listening, worship, serving others, building relationship with good soul friends, engaging with a community that will stand by you when suffering comes.)*
- *Practice trust in God for the little things; this will build your ability to trust him with the bigger things.*
- *Ask God to teach you compassion for those who are suffering; give of yourself to encourage and serve.*

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## PRAY

Close with a time of prayer that intercedes for those who are experiencing some kind of suffering or hardship in your group. You might say something like, “Who is lamenting something right now? You can choose to share what it is or you can simply indicate that you are struggling. But would you allow us the privilege of carrying you to God in prayer together?” Let those who want to indicate they are lamenting something. Then invite others to pray for them.

If no one indicates that they are lamenting something, of course that is OK. Be ready to voice a prayer that responds to the rich truths of Lam 3: 22-23. You can use the one that is at the beginning of this guide.