

Message.

Jesus' lament in Matthew 23:37-39 demonstrates that biblical grief is an act of worship rooted in God's covenant faithfulness rather than shifting human emotion. Unlike the hollow religion of the Pharisees, which weaponized truth without compassion, Christ models a love that stays engaged with the brokenness of the world without becoming hardened or numb. Because Christ bore the ultimate judgment for sin on the cross, believers are empowered to name their grief honestly and wait for God's goodness without demanding immediate resolution. This practice confirms that *lament is what love does when it refuses to turn away*. #bccBIGidea. Lament is the grace-enabled practice of bringing our honest grief to God so that our hearts are shaped by the Gospel rather than hardened by the world. By anchoring hope in the character of God, the discipline of lament transforms specific pain into a reflection of Christ's own compassion and endurance.

Prayer.

Consider praying a Psalm of Lament. Here are a few you could choose from:

- Individual Laments: Psalms 3, 4, 13, 22, 54, 88.
- Communal/Corporate Laments: Psalms 12, 44, 74, 79, 83, 85, 89, 137

Engage.

Read Jesus' example of lamenting in Matthew 23:37-39. Review the four movements of lamenting below and discuss the following questions.

The Four Movements of Biblical Lament

- **Name the Grief Honestly:** Identify the specific pain, disappointment, or loss without sugarcoating it. True lament begins with the vulnerability to say exactly what is wrong.
- **Bring the Grief Directly to God:** Instead of venting to others or retreating into isolation, turn your focus upward. Lament is an act of faith that assumes God is listening and cares about the details of your suffering.
- **Remind Yourself of Who God Is:** Anchor your emotions in the unchanging character of God. This involves recalling His covenant faithfulness, His sovereignty, and the compassion He demonstrated through Christ on the cross.
- **Wait Without Attaching Resolution to God's Goodness:** Discipline yourself to stay in the "middle" of the story. Trust that God is good even when the situation remains unchanged, refusing to demand an immediate fix as a condition of your faith.

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways have you previously confused "venting" with "lament"? How does bringing grief to God change its impact on your heart?
2. The text suggests that "truth without tears" misrepresents God. How can we ensure our defense of biblical truth remains shaped by Christ-like compassion?
3. Which of the four steps of lament do you find most difficult to practice, and why?
4. How does the reality of the cross—where Christ bore our ultimate judgment—give you the confidence to be completely honest with God about your current struggles?

Day 1. The "Truth and Tears" Check-In

The Goal: To help kids understand that being "right" isn't the same as being "loving".

- **The Activity:** Ask your child to imagine two coaches. Coach A yells at a player for missing a goal because "the rules say you have to kick it better." Coach B sees the player is sad, gives them a high-five, and says, "That was a tough miss, but I'm here to help you get it next time".
- **The Talk:** Read Matthew 23:37. Explain that even when people did the wrong thing, Jesus didn't just point his finger; he wanted to gather them in like a "mother hen".
- **The Prayer:** "Lord, help me to love people more than I love being right. Help my words to be honest, but also kind and full of your heart".

Day 2. The "Lament Box" (Naming our Grief)

The Goal: To teach kids that God isn't afraid of their sad or "messy" feelings.

- **The Activity:** Give your child a piece of paper and ask them to draw or write one thing that makes them feel sad, frustrated, or confused (a "big" feeling).
- **The Talk:** Explain that **lament is what love does when it refuses to turn away**. Sometimes we think we have to "fix" our sadness before we talk to God. But lament means bringing the sadness *to* Him. Even when we don't have the answers, we stay close to Him.
- **The Prayer:** Have them hold the paper while you pray: "God, we bring this [mention the item] to you. We don't have a fix for it yet, but we know You are good and You are listening".

Day 3. Grace vs. Grit (The "I Give Up" Moment)

The Goal: To show that our strength comes from God's love (grace), not just trying harder (grit).

- **The Activity:** Find something heavy in the house. Have your child try to lift it alone. Then, lift it *with* them.
- **The Talk:** When things get hard, we often try to be "tough" (that's grit). But the sermon taught us that we keep going because of **grace**. God's love is what keeps us from hardening our hearts when people are mean or life is difficult. We don't have to be "tough" on our own; we just have to lean into Jesus.
- **The #bccBIGidea:** Share the main point with them: *Lament is bringing our honest grief to God so our hearts stay soft like Jesus' heart, rather than getting hard like a rock.*

Keep the Conversation Going: Learning to Lament

Use the following to carry on conversation at the dinner table or in the car.

- **The "Heart Check":** If you have a really hard or sad day, do you usually feel like hiding from God until you feel better, or do you feel like talking to Him right away? Why do you think Jesus wants us to bring our "messy" feelings to Him instead of cleaning them up first?
- **The "Compassion Challenge":** Think about someone who was unkind to you recently. If we spoke the "truth without tears", we might just say, "They were mean and wrong". But if we look at them with Jesus' heart, what kind of "tears" or sadness might we feel for them?
- **The "Waiting Room":** The sermon said we should "wait without having to fix it". Is there something in our family or at school that feels "broken" right now? How can we trust that God is still good even while we are waiting for Him to help us?
- **The "Soft vs. Hard" Question:** When we get hurt, it's easy to let our hearts get "hard" like a sidewalk so we don't feel anything. How does remembering that Jesus died for us on the cross help our hearts stay "soft" like a garden instead?