

INTRO

- We know what physical health means, but what does mental health mean?
- Why do you think issues of mental health have become so important to discuss?

If the pressure, struggle and suffering of life is unavoidable, the question for us is, "How can we learn to suffer well?" One of the ways is through lament.

Lament is an emotional expression of anguish, sorrow, frustration and sometimes anger before God.

READ

Psalm 3 (over 1/3 of the Psalms are laments)

REFLECT & RESPOND

Perhaps fitting, the first prayer in the Psalter is one of lament and a cry for help. Ps 3 gives us a guide on how to lament well.

COMPLAINT: Lament as a tonic for suffering

Qu: what are unhelpful ways to deal with difficulties in our lives?

We tend to deny, bury, medicate, project or play the victim in dealing with pain. However, in v1-2, David goes to God first and acknowledges his situation describing what he sees and feels. God desires for you to pour out your heart to Him, whether in joy or pain.

Qu: is it easy for you to express your emotions honestly before God? Why or why not?

CONFIDENCE: Lament as a sign of maturity

Read v3-6. David confesses what he believes. Some believe "true" faith only confesses what's good and true, but true faith isn't a denial of reality (v1-2).

Qu: how is lament a sign of spiritual maturity?

"Pain isn't the worst thing...Death isn't the worst thing. The worst thing is failing to deal with reality and becoming disconnected from what is actual."

— Eugene Peterson

True faith confronts reality with confidence in God. Lament is a sign of maturity because it says something about our trust/confidence in God, builds intimacy with God, and cultivates compassion in us towards other's pain.

Qu: why is it important that we live in this tension of confronting reality whilst remaining confident in God? Which do you struggle with the most?

CALL TO ACTION: Lament as a prayer of hope

True lament doesn't end in despair but rather in hope of God's resolve. In this way, lament makes an important progression from a greater self-awareness of our inner pain and emotional reality, to a greater hope and trust in God's presence and goodness.

Qu: In light of this discussion, how does lamenting prepare you better to deal with struggle, pain and suffering in your life?

PRAY

- What was most challenging/encouraging from this discussion that we can pray for?
- As you pray for one another, confess this confidence in God from Lamentations 3:21-23:

*But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*