



How to Handle Tragedy By Dr. Norman Wise

Where we are going?

What is a tragedy?

The Hebrew Answer: Prayers of Lament

The problem of tragedy & God

The process of grief

Final Thoughts

What is a Tragedy?

An event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe.

Terrible times

8 "For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;"
[2Co 1:8 NASB]

The Hebrew Answer: Lament

"Lamentations is a sacred text.

Your laments are also holy.

Lamenting is part of the initial process of healing from a wounding.

Sometimes this can become a stuck place, a tape playing over and over.

A lament must be

heard, honored, and looked into

to see what you need.

When a lament moves on to become part of your sacred history, no longer the foreground of your daily life, then healing has begun."

—Rabbi Goldie Milgram

Your Thoughts & Feelings

What is a Lament

1. Lament is a spiritual prayer tool that God's people can use to navigate pain, evil and suffering.
2. Lament is vital prayer for the people of God because it enables them to petition for God to help process loss, doubts, confusion, and despair.
3. Lament can also ask God to deliver from injustice, distress, suffering, and pain.
4. Lament prayer is designed to boldly complain to God, share our pain with God, and beg from God a more just and better life.

An Example: Psalm 77 – Yelling at God

1 "I yell out to my God, I yell with all my might, I yell at the top of my lungs. He listens.

2-6 I found myself in trouble and went looking for my Lord; my life was an open wound that wouldn't heal. When friends said, 'Everything will turn out all right,' I didn't believe a word they said.

I remember God—and shake my head. I bow my head—then wring my hands. I'm awake all night—not a wink of sleep; I can't even say what's bothering me."

Doubts Expressed in Prayer

"I go over the days one by one, I ponder the years gone by. I strum my lute all through the night, wondering how to get my life together.

7-10 Will the Lord walk off and leave us for good? Will he never smile again? Is his love worn threadbare? Has his salvation promise burned out? Has God forgotten to act right? Has he angrily stalked off and left us?

'Just my luck,' I said. The High God goes out of business just the moment I need him."

Scripture Reads US: Encounter with God

11-12 "Once again I'll go over what God has done, lay out on the table the ancient wonders; I'll ponder all the things you've accomplished, and give a long, loving look at your acts.

13-15 O God! Your way is holy! No god is great like God! You're the God who makes things happen; You showed everyone what you can do — You pulled your people out of the worst kind of trouble, rescued the children of Jacob and Joseph."

Your Thoughts & Feelings

Write YOUR Own Lament

1. **“Address and introductory cry:** Identify the Lord as the person to whom you are addressing your complaint. Request for His presence as you express what is on your heart.
2. **Complaint or Lament:** Articulate the problem you are wrestling with. Detail how it is affecting you, the pain it is causing, and ask the Lord for His help.
3. **Confession of Trust:** Verbalize your trust in the Lord. Share your hopes that He will come to your aid, that He will be present with you in your situation.
4. **Prayer for Deliverance:** Request deliverance, or God’s intervention in the problem.
5. **Praise:** Offer praise and thanksgiving to God for God’s many blessings and faithfulness.”

(<http://annarborvineyard.org/getting-connected/spiritual-formation/write-your-own-psalm-of-lament>)

Grief Journaling

“In the book *Lessons of loss: A Guide to Coping* Dr. Robert Niemeyer explains ‘Especially when losses are traumatic, they may be difficult to discuss or even disclose to another. And yet the psychological and physical burden of harboring painful memories without the release of sharing can prove far more destructive in the long run.’”

“There is plenty of research to suggest that grief journaling after a significant loss has therapeutic value. According to grief experts, the task of reconstructing your personal self-narrative is critical in the healing process. A grief journal will provide you with a venue for expression without fear of being judged, as well as a record of your experience that will reveal recurring patterns and dramatic growth.”

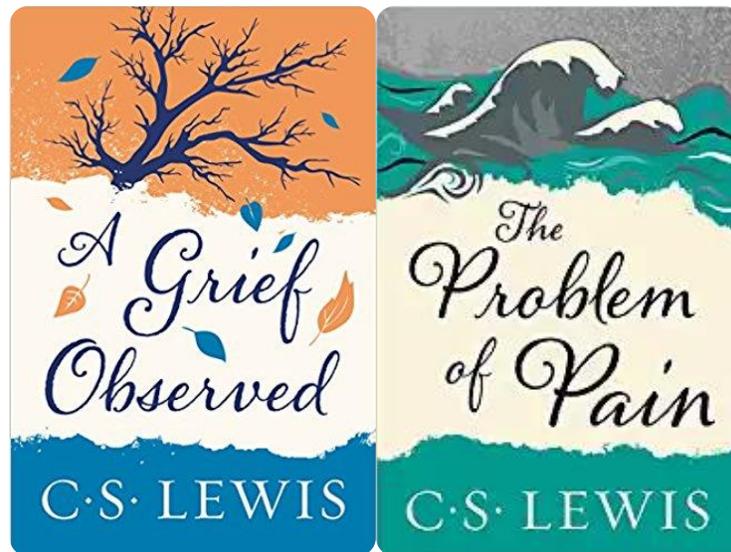
— Heather Stang

Your Thoughts & Feelings

God & tragedy

“I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, like the despicable fabrication of the impotent and infinitely small Euclidean mind of man, that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, for all the blood that they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened.”

— Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*



**Would you like to join a discussion group dealing with God & the Problem of Pain?
Sign up on the sheet on the table.**

Your Thoughts & Feelings

The Process of Grief

1. Shock & Denial
2. Pain & Guilt
3. Anger & Bargaining
4. Depression, Reflection, Loneliness
5. The Upward turn
6. Reconstruction & Working Through
7. Acceptance & Hope

<https://www.recover-from-grief.com/7-stages-of-grief.html>

Your thoughts & feelings

Final Thoughts: But IS This Christian?

1 *“Now Messiah Jesus was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, 2 saying, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.’ 3 There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ 4 For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’ 6 And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?’ 8 I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” [Luke 18:1-8 NASB]*

Messiah Jesus Prayed Lamentations

41 *“And Messiah Jesus withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.’ 43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.” [Luke 22:41-44 NASB]*

Final Prayer of Messiah Jesus: A Lament

46 *“About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?’ that is, ‘MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?’” [Mat 27:46 NASB]*

Comfort Comes

2 *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus The Messiah. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus The Messiah, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of The Messiah Jesus are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Messiah Jesus.” [2Co 1:2-5 NASB]*

Justice Comes

9 “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ... 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” [2Pe 3:9-10, 13 NASB]

Questions, thoughts, and feelings