

TAKING IT HOME

On Sunday we talked about grief and forgiveness as tools to help us overcome any debilitating pain from our past or from a sense of God's absence. One way to guide grief journaling is to follow the structure of the Psalms of Lament. Below are listed questions that you might find helpful for your own reflection over the next few days or weeks. You can use them for writing your own lament or praying them verbally. Feel free to adapt them according to your own situation and way of relating to God.

1. Address to God: How do you address God? How do you believe your relationship with God will initiate change in your life situation? 2. Complaint: What is your complaint? What anger or pain do you have that may need to be discussed with God? 3. Affirmation of trust: Have you experienced God being on your side in the past? Is there something you can look back on and say that you experienced the presence of God's love in your life? 4. Petition: What is your deepest desire from God? What do you want for your life situation right now? 5. Additional Argument: Having gotten in touch with your desire, is there anything else you want to say to God about your need and why God should intervene? What past situation do you feel like you would like to "remind" God of? 6. Curse on enemies: Are there things or people in your life that feel like enemies? How can you bring them to God? How can you forgive them? 7. Assurance of being heard: What do you need from God to feel heard? 8. Vow of praise: What can you promise or offer to God? 9. Hymn or blessing: What thing/person/event (no matter how small) can you thank God for? What other things/persons/events can you be grateful for and give God the glory for?

Why We Hope In Spite of Our Past

"Why We Hope: a series on Esther" – 1 of 5

Esther 1-2

May 12, 2013

Pastor John Fanous

What is the weakest link from your past?

Esther's Story

Why We Hope

Practicals:

1. Spend time _____ the loss with God
2. Ask God's help to forgive the _____
3. Live with _____

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Growth Group Homework

For the Week of May 12, 2013

MY STORY

“No man is rich enough to buy back his past.” — Oscar Wilde

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.” — Søren Kierkegaard

“We can gain experience from the past, but we can't relive it; and we can hope for the future, but we don't know if there is one.” — George Harrison (The Beatles)

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?
2. If you could change or “do-over” one thing from your past what would it be?

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Psalm 10:1; Psalm 22:1-2; Psalm 13 (Psalms of Lament)

In biblical culture, lament was a specific practice that sometimes produced written musical lyric texts (such as the Psalms above). In biblical times the social settings for lament singing would have been at informal gatherings of the community and also in formal temple (or sanctuary) and funeral settings. Nearly half the psalms (73 of 150) include the essential element of lament, which is: the prayerful plea to God for help. The description of “distress” and the “prayerful plea” are the most essential components of a lament.

1. In your own words describe the types of distress the writer of these Psalms is feeling? Can you at all relate to this feeling(s); whether from your past or present situation? Give an example.
2. In Psalm 13, verses 5 and 6 take a noticeable, almost abnormal, turn toward the positive. What do you think accounts for this drastic change towards hope and praise? How would you have responded in a similar situation?
3. What part of Pastor John's sermon gives you the most hope in spite of your past?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10- Pastor John shared about the “weak links” in each of our lives. After reading Paul's words about his own weaknesses, have you ever considered that your weaknesses could actually be the key to your usefulness for God? Discuss!

(see next page)