



the
eastside

STORY
GUILD

— AT HOME —

ESG AT HOME:

STORY

AND

CREATIVE

RESPONSE

INVITATION

Lamentations

If you want to listen to Melanie reading this, the audio version is on our website!

STORY:

Sometimes we want all the stories to be happy ones. But storytellers know that there is sadness and suffering in the world. If we are going to tell good stories, true stories, there must be room for pain and loss as well as celebration and goodness in the stories that we tell.

About two thousand six hundred years ago, the city of Jerusalem and its holy temple were destroyed and the people sent far away into exile. The people who stayed behind in the land had lost friends and family, they were hungry, poor, homeless, and filled with sadness. They needed words of hope and comfort. But they also needed lament.

Lament is when you take all of your sadness and turn it into a poem or a song. You sing that sadness loudly so that your friends and family can all hear and feel the sadness together. And you speak the words of grief and suffering in the hope that God will hear your poem of lament, and will come to bring you comfort and rescue you.

After the people were sent into exile, the poets began to write laments. Five of these lament poems were so important to the people they were gathered together and put into the Bible. These five poems are what we call the book of Lamentations.

The first poem in Lamentations imagines that the city of Jerusalem is a mother, crying for the suffering of her children. She says:

*For all this I weep, weep buckets of tears,
and not a soul within miles around cares for my soul.*

My children don't have anything.

My enemies are much too strong for me.

The second and fourth poems describe all the terrible suffering in the city and the land, how the people are mourning and humiliated, how everything around them is destroyed, how they have lost those they have loved, how the countries who said they would help ended up betraying them.

The fifth poem is similar to some of the laments that are included in the book of Psalms. It asks God to remember all the sadness that has happened to the people and it calls out to God for rescue.

Usually when we write poems in English, we put the most important part that we want everyone to remember either at the very beginning or the very end of the poem. But Hebrew poems aren't always like this. They often put the most important part right in the middle.

So in the book of Lamentations, in the very middle of the middle poem, we get to the heart of the matter. The third poem is written by a man who has experienced the suffering of the people in the ruined city. And he cries out with lament.

But in the middle of his poem he writes these words:

The LORD loves us very much.

So we haven't been completely destroyed.

His loving care never fails.

His great love is new every morning.

LORD, how faithful you are!

I say to myself, "The LORD is everything I will ever need.

So I will put my hope in him."

- *I wonder if you can imagine people in the world who are suffering sadness and loss.*
- *I wonder what it is like to hear words of lament when you are filled with sadness and worry.*
- *I wonder what it is like to say or sing poems of lament when you are suffering.*
- *I wonder what it is like to hear words of God's comfort and hope when you are suffering.*
- *I wonder how God is calling us to show God's always and forever love to people who are filled with sadness and suffering.*

All ages:

1. Imagine you are full of sadness. Now imagine all of that sadness turning into a character - a person, an animal, or a magical being.

2. Draw a picture of what this “Sadness” character looks like. If you wish, give them clothes, accessories, hair, shoes, etc. Give your character a name and write it on your picture.

3. Find an open space in your home. Imagine how your character moves. Pretend you are the “Sadness” character and ‘come alive’. Move around the room like they would. Pay special attention to your shoulders (are they low or high?), your eyes (where are you looking most of the time?), and your feet (are they moving fast or slow?).

4. Choose one body part - shoulders, eyes, or feet to exaggerate. Count to 10 out loud. Every time you count up exaggerate that body part with more sadness. Show sadness through this body part. For example - droop your shoulders lower and lower, so that by 10 your shoulders are so droopy you are dragging your arms on the ground).

5. Give your character a voice. Finish this sentence: “I am most sad when _____”. Say this sentence the way your “Sadness” character would. Perhaps in a very low, sad voice, or in a whiny, high voice. Try to say this sentence a few times and get louder every time you say it. Try ‘lamenting’ this sentence - sing it loudly as if your friends and neighbours next door can hear you. (This is also a great exercise for projecting your voice!)

6. Shake it out! Move your limbs fast, wiggle your whole body, and then stand still. Blink your eyes a few times. Take a few deep breaths.

7. Repeat the last 6 steps, but instead of sadness, create a “Joy” character.

8. Write a script, or create an improvised scene where your characters “Joy” and “Sadness” meet each other. You may wish to create this using puppet theatre or shadow puppet theatre!

Examples of “Sadness” and “Joy” characters from the movie “Inside Out” by Pixar:



**CHECK-IN
QUESTION:**

**IF YOU WERE A
MOVIE SNACK
WHAT SNACK
WOULD YOU BE?**

We'd love to know your answer!
Please send us your answer, as
well as any responses to the
creative response.

**You may write us back or film
a video and email us!**