

Healing for the Holidays: Part Four – A Lament for Your Loss

This is the fourth in a series of articles on healing for the holidays. You can find the previous articles in the series [here](#).

Does My Holiday Loss Count?

I've received a batch of emails in response to this series. One theme is: "Does my holiday grief count?" One person asked, "I haven't lost a loved one, but because of a divorce, half the holidays I don't even see my children. Is it still okay to grieve over that?" Another friend asked, "My adult kids live in Europe and I rarely see them for the holidays. Is that a reason to grieve?"

In writing *God's Healing for Life's Losses* (<http://bit.ly/bKWaP4>), I wanted to communicate that every loss, every separation is a mini-casket experience. Each loss is a reminder of the ultimate loss of death. That is not to say that every loss is of the same magnitude. It is simply to recognize the reality that all loss hurts because every loss is a separation, a tearing away of what was meant to be together.

Yes, your loss counts. Most importantly, your loss counts to God. That's why He invites you, like He did the saints of old, to lament your loss. Today, let's ponder six practical principles of lamenting holiday loss—whatever shape or size your loss takes.

Holiday Lament Principle # 1: Getting Started Is the Hardest Part

Many people find that the hardest part of the grief journey is simply getting started. Stepping on the path by facing your pain and hurt can be terrifying. All sorts of questions flood your mind.

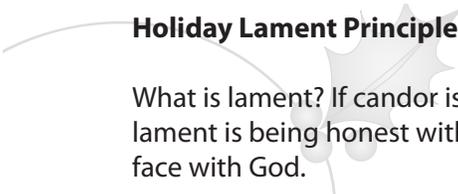
"What will I feel? Will I be able to handle whatever I feel? What if my thoughts consume me and my feelings overwhelm me? Will anyone understand? Will anyone join me? Is it worth it? What's the point?"

But remember, it is worth it. As we learned in Part One, denial changes nothing. Denial only prolongs the inevitable. Pretending doesn't change the facts, can't alter reality.

So don't beat yourself up because you're finding it hard to be honest with yourself and God. But do challenge yourself to begin the journey.

Holiday Lament Principle # 2: Other People May Not Understand

One of the ironies of holiday loss is that your family and friends may think that you're the one who can't move on because you're still grieving. Often, the opposite is true. They can't move on because they've never even started grieving. They're the ones who can't even look at pictures of the lost loved one. They're the ones who don't dare to talk about the relative who is away during the holidays serving our country in Afghanistan. Don't let their fear deter you. Don't let their denial cause false guilt in you about your grief.



Holiday Lament Principle # 3: Be Honest with God—He Knows Everything Anyway!

What is lament? If candor is being honest with yourself about the pain you feel over loss, then lament is being honest with God about your loss and pain. Lament is facing your grief face-to-face with God.

We somehow think we're hiding things from God when we refuse to verbalize them. But since God is all-knowing, and since He knows the thoughts and intents of our heart, He already knows all that we think and feel.

The Psalmists understood this, which is one reason why there are more psalms of lament than psalms of praise and thanksgiving. Let that sentence sink in. So tell God the truth...whatever it is you are thinking and feeling.

Holiday Lament Principle # 4: Be Courageous—God Invites Lament

But let's be honest, this is where grief gets very confusing for the committed Christian. We love God; we know He loves us. We know God is good; we know life has now turned bad. So we want to know, sometimes we want to scream it, "How could a good God allow such loss!?"

But dare we ask? Do we dare verbalize our lament to God?

The Scriptures are clear—God invites lament. The Bible repeatedly illustrates believers responding to God's invitation with honest words that would make many a modern Christian shudder. If you doubt that, read Psalm 13, Psalm 73, Psalm 88, Job 3, Lamentation 5.

Holiday Lament Principle # 5: Tell God the Truth—He Cares Infinitely

Lament demonstrates your faith in God. According to Psalm 62:8, if we truly trust God, then we'll share everything with God. "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."

Think about that. The person who can't be upfront with God about pain, loss, and grief, is the person who doesn't trust God.

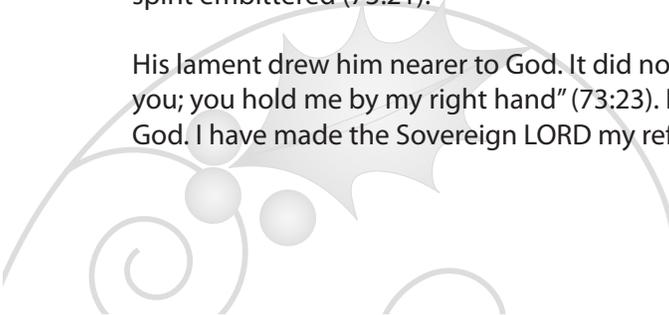
Pour out your heart to God. Why? Because God is your refuge.

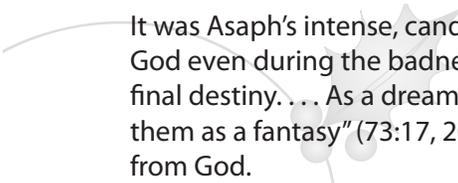
When you lament, you live in the real world honestly, refusing to ignore what is occurring. Lament is your expression of your radical trust in God's reliability in the middle of real life.

Holiday Lament Principle # 6: Honesty with God Draws You Nearer to God

Psalm 73 is a prime example of lament. Asaph begins, "Surely God is good to Israel" (73:1). He then continues with a litany of apparent evidence to the contrary, such as the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the godly (73:2-15). When he tries to make sense of all this, it's oppressive to him (73:16). He then verbalizes to God the fact that his heart is grieved and his spirit embittered (73:21).

His lament drew him nearer to God. It did not push him away from God. "Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand" (73:23). He concludes, "But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge." (73:28).





It was Asaph's intense, candid relationship with God that enlightened him to the goodness of God even during the badness of life. "Till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. . . . As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O LORD, you will despise them as a fantasy" (73:17, 20). Spiritual friendship with God results in 20/20 spiritual vision from God.

To deny or diminish suffering is to reject dependence upon God. God wants us to make use of our suffering, to remember our suffering, to admit our need for Him in our suffering, and to rehearse our suffering before Him.

The Rest of the Story

But what does God do when I am honest with him about my holiday hurt? What are realistic expectations about what happens in me and what God promises to me? Great questions—ones we'll explore in our next post on healing for the holidays.

Join the Conversation

Psalm 88 is a classic psalm of lament. In fact, some have called it the Psalm of the Dark Night of the Soul. What would your Psalm 88 sound like?

Help for Your Healing Journey

For additional help on your healing journey, learn more about *God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting* (<http://bit.ly/bKWaP4>). Also, visit *GriefShare* for information on their small group video series *Surviving the Holidays* (<http://bit.ly/bdSP9j>).

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