

Mix

The Importance of Lament

Lamentations 3:22-32 | Session 7.26

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Have any selected video or music clips ready to show
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)

Intro

Recently, a Bible study group, not unlike the one you are currently enjoying, gathered at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. In an act of hatred, 9 persons were killed.

There has been much news coverage of the event and its aftermath. If history is any example, the story will fade from the news soon. Yet, Charleston, this congregation, and the families of those killed will feel the pain of this act for years to come.

Let's view two videos. The first, narrated by a prayer given at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church by Pastor Clementa Pinckney, shows the names and faces of those killed. The second shows the response of victims' families in the courtroom, as they faced the one who killed their loved ones.

The Victims and a Prayer

Victims' families offer forgiveness

After viewing the videos, ask questions like these:

- What feelings do you think are strong in this congregation (the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church)?
- What fears do you think are there?
- What might it feel like to be hated by persons who do not know you?
- What is your reaction to the videos we viewed?
- Regardless of the news cycle, how long do we mourn?

Content

Read together Lamentations 3:22–32 and watch the Bible Background Video.

Say: The people who wrote the book of Lamentations were in a lot of pain. A foreign country invaded their land and destroyed Jerusalem and their temple, and took many of their friends and family members as prisoners. The book of Lamentations reveals their pain, but also their hope that — if they waited — God would again restore them.

Sharing with God

Ask: How do we express our pain and grief? How do we find hope in the midst of misery and suffering?

Say: After World War II, a poem was found in the Auschwitz concentration camp. The words are:

I believe in the sun, even when it's not shining.

I believe in love, even when I feel it not.

I believe in God, even when He is silent.

Then show this video of the St. Olaf Choir singing “Even When He is Silent” (a 6 minute presentation). For the first hearing, ask the participants to listen for the phrase that most speaks to them.

Play the video again, but this time, make available pens, pencils and paper (even crayons, if you wish). During the second hearing, invite the participants to sketch, draw or write something relating to or expressive of the phrase that most spoke to them.

After the second hearing of the song, invite the participants to share their thoughts, writings or sketches, along with explanations.

Closing

Close by viewing and sharing in this prayer. It was offered at the 2015 General Assembly of the CBF (cbf.net), a few days after the shooting in Charleston, SC.

There was much loss from this act of hatred and violence. In the face of such suffering, we call to God, who knows the pain of these families, and this congregation.

The prayer is given by Kasey Jones, Senior Pastor, National Baptist Memorial Church in Washington DC.