

# Youth

## 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.
- Listen to the Faithelement podcast for this session
- Use the social media prompts on this session's webpage to help youth begin engaging the session them ahead of their gathering.
- Provide pencils and paper for the writing activity.

### Intro - Which hurts worse?

Have everyone stand, and say: "We all experience pain in our lives. Sometimes that pain is merely a nuisance, while at other times it is overwhelming. I'm going to give you some options to choose between, and you are to choose which is the most painful. Please stand on this side of the room for the first option, and this side of the room (point to the other side of the room) for the second option I offer. Ready!?"

Then offer these sets... pointing to a side of the room for each option. Then give youth a chance to move to a side of the room representing their choice for the most painful (no staying in the middle!).

A bite of cheese that's too hot vs. brain freeze from eating something frozen

Burning your hand on the stove vs. sunburn on your back

Stepping barefoot on a nail vs. getting your finger caught in a car door

Breaking your phone or breaking your arm

Failing a test or getting kicked off a team/club

Sitting alone in the cafeteria vs going to a movie alone

Having a friend move away vs you moving away

Breaking up with a girlfriend/boyfriend vs fighting with your best friend

After each set of options, feel free to take a moment to ask youth why they chose as they did. Why did you choose this as more painful?

## 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.

- If you had experienced an invasion and the destruction of your hometown — and seen your friends and family taken away — how would you feel? How might you feel about God?
- When you are hurting, who do you talk to? (Best friend, minister, girlfriend/boyfriend, etc) Why? (they listen, they care, I trust them).

## Expressing our Pain

Distribute pencils and paper to youth. Explain that, for the next several minutes, you are going to together do a writing activity.

Say: All of us experience difficult times and hardships. I'd like for you to think of an area in your life where you or a loved one are struggling or suffering. Maybe it is a relationship, maybe a health issue, perhaps a difficult decision or challenge you are facing.

Say: Sharing our pain, questions or even our doubts with God is a healthy part of faith. Please take the next few minutes to write a letter to God, honestly expressing your feelings about whatever it is in your life that is causing pain or struggle. Write to God as if you were sharing with a close friend. Your letters are private — no one else will read them, and you will take them with you.

Allow the youth plenty of time to write. If you wish, play some soft music in the background.

After the experience, ask questions like these:

- How did it feel to write the letter? Did it help any to share your feelings?
- How honest do you think you were? What keeps us from being more honest with God?
- Which is hardest to express to God: Hurt, questions, or doubts? Ask those who share to explain their responses.
- When you share deeply with a friend... how does it change your relationship with that person?
- When you share deeply with God... how does it change your relationship with God?
- How might our pain and struggle bring us closer to the things that matter, rather than pulling us away from them?

## Closing

Close by viewing and sharing in this prayer. It was offered at the 2015 General Assembly of the CBF ([cbf.net](http://cbf.net)), a few days after the shooting in Charleston, SC. The families who lost loved ones that day are still very much in pain, and have their own laments to share with God.

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