

Worship

/// 09

To actively grow in expressing passionate, authentic, and sacrificial worship to God as whole humans, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.



But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.

John 4:23

[...] be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:18-20



PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

Musical worship is only ONE aspect of worship. Our whole lives, words, songs, actions, decisions, and priorities betray what or who we worship. Scripture tells us that our lives should be a living sacrifice to God which is our act of worship. This module however focuses on musical worship.

For many, the concept of musical worship can be awkward, unproductive, lost in ritual, and not an intentional part of our discipleship to Jesus. We may even avoid it by arriving late for the Sunday gathering. We relegate it to the idea that it is an interest and not a necessity. Some people like music and singing – I do not.

By and large, we are not a “musical culture” Israel was a singing culture, songs of repentance, ascent, lament, celebration, feasts, war, harvest, and weddings. There was almost no aspect of life that was not connected with song. In Africa, people sing when they are working, walking, rejoicing, or protesting. In our culture music is a very individual thing, curated playlists, headphones, everything is created to suit my wants and pleasures. When there are occasions when people are gathered to music it is an us/them idea. A performance with professionals and us the audience. The idea is to be entertained. There are personal, cultural, and spiritual barriers to engaging in worship. However, once we have placed our faith in Jesus we are automatically placed in the ekklesia, the gathered or called out ones, and worship of God is a critical part of what we are called out to do.

“ *When we gather for public worship it is because we have been summoned, that is what ‘church’ means: ekklesia (called out ones). It is not a voluntary society of those whose chief concern is to share, build community, enjoy fellowship, to have moral instruction for their children, Rather it is a society of those who have been chosen, redeemed, called, justified, and are being sanctified until one day they are glorified.*

– MICHAEL HORTON

Why do we worship?

It anchors us.



What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. – A.W. TOZER

We DO NOT start with ourselves, with our circumstances, or our pain. As we will see later, this is not to be masked or ignored, but it is not where we start.

To intentionally and properly experience the width of emotion that God is inviting us into we need to be very well anchored. Psalms of orientation anchor us to the attributes of God in the storms and upheavals of our souls. It is a reminder that while you are tossed, tired, and afraid, those realities do not diminish God.



PSALM 23

A PSALM OF DAVID. ¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

- He is **present & attentive** – He provides for my physical needs, & financial security.
- He is **all-powerful** – therefore I can rest and lie down and not stress or worry (v2)
- He is **kind** – He gives me rest and opens my soul to beauty and refreshment (v2)
- He is **strong** – because He strengthens me, and protects me (v3&4)
- He is **intentional** – He is able to lead me (v3b)
- He is **empowering** – He enables me to walk through darkness, not avoid it.
- He is **aware that I have enemies** – He mocks them by preparing a feast in their presence.
- He is **good and merciful** – I experience forgiveness and mercy.
- He is **generous** – My cup overflows, I have more than I need.
- He is **eternal** – I will dwell in God's house forever.

It unites us.

Musical worship unites us TO **ISRAEL**, some of the songs we sing have been sung for over 3000 years. It unites us to the **EARLY CHURCH**, the hymn "*Be thou my vision*" was written in 700 AD, 1300 years ago. We are part of a rich heritage. Early in church history when people couldn't read or have access to written material, songs were the treasure chest of their theology. It unites us to **OURSELVES**. It helps us to integrate our mind, body, and soul. Because only in singing worship are all these aspects of our humanity engaged. We are using our minds, tongues, and bodies. We are experiencing something through all of these senses and it is affecting us spiritually. Songs have the power to ignite our imagination, our intellect, and our body. Sometimes our relationship with God can become functional, intellectual, and academic. We discuss God like He is some kind of floating orb that we can never touch but are amazed at His attributes. Singing a song may be descriptive of a very simple thing, but the arrangement of the words makes it powerful, memorable, and emotional. It transcends our mental faculties alone and is planted deeper into our souls.

It unites us **TO EACH OTHER**, because we are different, and different songs will appeal to us at different times of our lives. Just like there are genres of music. At Mercy Commons, our goal is to sing Hymns, originals, and popular songs. The point is not hymns only, the point is the depth and breadth of engagement. We want to sing about who God is and what He has done as well as more intimate songs referring to our experience of His work in our lives. Whatever our individual experiences, culture, and personality, when we sing we are united in the declaration of this specific unshakeable truth. This breaks down our culture of rampant individualism. We are brothers and sisters. One body, locally, nationally, and internationally.

It is spiritual warfare.

In the OT Israel sang war songs when engaging a physical enemy. There are historical incidents when Israel worshiped God, and that alone would provide victory. (ex. Jericho & Gideon). Your mere presence during musical worship is declaring your allegiance to God. Your decision to be present in the gathering is a spiritual statement: "My mood, circumstances, or options for recreation are not what controls me. I am a disciple of Jesus. I need Him."

Worship declares our need for God, which demolishes pride. Your engagement is a further step into the spiritual battle. Worship declares that circumstances and feelings (though real and true) are subject to the magnificence of our God. Our emotions are reefs or rudders. They either lead us or they are hidden dangers that cause us to shipwreck. Emotions and

feelings are NOT unimportant. They should not be ignored or covered. They take their rightful place in worship. We will discuss lamenting more directly later in the module.

There are times when God has exposed my emotions and also healed them in the corporate worship, no one prayed for me, and no one noticed, but the Spirit of God was active in an environment where we are making much of the person and work of Jesus. Worship declares the power of God over every aspect of our existence and experience even if it doesn't feel like that. I am declaring to principalities and power that my hope, faith, strength, and purpose are in Jesus.

It creates an environment of honest faith & expectation.

We worship on behalf of others. Sometimes our participation at the gathering is more for others' sake than for us.



Psalm 122:8

⁸ For the sake of my family and friends, I say, "Peace be with you, Jerusalem."

Our joy is multiplied when we share it and our pain is divided when we share it. Our corporate worship is increased in effectiveness and intimacy when we know each other. When we see someone worshiping in the midst of disappointment, pain, and struggle. When we see someone who has lost a baby, or a wife, is in financial turmoil, and is still choosing to worship Jesus, my faith is amplified. There are also times when people are present and simply are too broken to sing and the body of Christ sings the truths of God over them and they experience the tangible reality of the fellowship of the Spirit.

It creates a platform to hear God.

Worship is for God, we engage not to receive but to give, however, God is so present, generous and engaged, that even in an activity where we are choosing to focus on Him, His attributes, and works, He is so kind that He engages with us and speaks to and through us. We have the opportunity to hear God on behalf of others and there may be occasions where God speaks to you through others in a worship time. If this is to happen we need to present, be expectant, and be attentive, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We covered this in the "Hearing God" module. Musical worship makes us more open to God speaking to and through us in an unexpected way.



SELF-ASSESSMENT

It is easy for me to engage in musical worship in the Gathering.

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

I have an expectation that the act of worship will affect me tangibly, spiritually, emotionally and physically?

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

I sometimes feel fake in worship. Why?

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

I creativity avoid contexts for musical worship in our church rhythms.

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

What barriers do you experience in expressing worship to God?



PRACTICES FOR WEEK 1

The goal of this module is to grow in the practice of worship – to worship God more *meaningfully* and more *consistently*. The best way to grow in this practice is to do it yourself when you spend time with God.

Take just 10 minutes a day to listen to worship music. Imagine the impact on our church and our community if each person in life groups intentionally engaged with growing in the practice of worship. We have offered a Spotify playlist here:

<http://tinyurl.com/mc-worship-playlist>



Obviously, there will be many opinions about these choices, however, if listening to worship or engaging God through musical worship is not part of your general rhythm, engage this with an open mind. This is a varied collection in style and substance. If you choose to listen to this, ask the Spirit to be present and help you to see aspects of God's character and work more clearly. As you listen, take practical steps to grow in expressing worship – raise your hands, bow down, sing, declare your confidence in Him, etc... Try it out on your own and see what God does.

Imagine what our gathering would look like if we all arrived full of anticipation and ready to be used by God. Imagine how compelling a group of people are that are reveling in the extravagant mercies of God, not because it is natural for them but because Jesus, their Savior is worthy of it all.



BARRIERS TO WORSHIP

Ingratitude.

When we take action towards growing in the practice of worship, we often become aware of barriers in our own hearts to engaging fully with worship. Our hearts have indwelling sin that fights against the awareness of God in our lives and can therefore dampen worship. So often, we imagine that sin is just outward actions of disobedience, but Paul gives us a much clearer picture of what sin looks like in Romans.



Romans 1:18, 21

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth ...

For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Sin suppresses the truth about God. It does not honor Him as God or *give thanks to Him*. The sin in our hearts makes us ungrateful and inattentive. It leads us to a life of taking everything for granted. Sin is living day after day without even a thought towards God.

Even the prevailing culture recognizes how destructive ungratefulness is to our mental health. Practicing gratitude is a huge trend in the world of psychology, and studies show it improves happiness, relationships, and the ability to deal with adversity.

But we have to ask – who are we being grateful to?

As Christians, we recognize that every good thing in our lives is a *gift from God*, and He alone deserves all of our gratitude and praise (James 1:17). So we don't practice gratitude as the world does; we give honor to God alone who deserves it all.

God gets all of the blame and none of the credit, if something does not go the way we want it to, we can easily blame God, but if a situation works out in our favor or benefit, we are very slow, if at all, to recognise God in it.

As we grow in the practice of worship, we must be aware that we face barriers beyond just business or laziness – we face a heart issue of *ingratitude towards God*. Sin has attempted to close every door to awareness of God in our lives. But when we worship, we are declaring that sin has had its way long enough. We declare war on ingratitude. We refuse to be blind to God any longer, and we give Him what He deserves – lips that honor His name (Hebrews 13:15). There are other barriers too:

Familiarity.

There is a saying: "*Familiarity breeds contempt*". The more familiar and constant something is, the more our wonder is lost and we take that person or situation for granted. This can happen in friendships, and relationships and can also happen with the songs we sing. We sing songs often and we do not pause to think about the power of that song. When we become familiar with a song, we sing it without thinking it can lose its power.

This is a verse from [In Christ Alone](#).

*No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand*

Read this again, pause, wait and think about what you have just read.

Personal preference and judgment.

We can be critical musically and stylistically. The world tries to shape us by telling us we should have what we want our way. We can be critical of hymns with words and phrases that don't make sense in our age, are too long, or wordy. We can be critical of modern songs for their seeming lack of theological depth. "This song is too emotional, this song is too intellectual." However, when we look at the Psalms there are often metaphors and allusions that either don't make sense or make us uncomfortable.



Psalm 81:16

¹⁶ But I would feed you with the finest wheat. I would satisfy you with honey from the rock.

This is no excuse for wrong theology in song, but we need to develop a width of emotion, not just connecting cerebrally but emotionally too. Songs must be theologically correct and accurate but they are also poetry and therefore more width is helpful here.



Psalm 56:8

⁸ You yourself have recorded my wanderings. Put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?

Think of the beauty of that phrase and the intimacy of it. We can't be scared of emotion, equally, we can't be driven by emotion. We will not manipulate emotions but we will engage them.

There are complex and long songs like Psalm 119 and simple songs like Psalm 117.



Psalm 117

Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol Him, all peoples! ² For great is His steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

That's the whole psalm! Let's reserve our preference and judgment and we will have a richer deeper experience.

Overly casual.

It is an amazing gift that there are no elaborate ceremonies necessary for us to enter God's throne of grace, Jesus alone has made the way. The veil in the temple has been torn, there is open free access by grace and faith alone. We don't need a cathedral, monastery, or church building. We don't need intermediaries or physical sacrifices. However, sometimes we may become overly casual because of our physical surroundings. We take for granted what it costs for us to have unfettered access to the King of the Universe. We can be tardy, unengaged, distracted and simply see musical worship as the precursor or runway to the important stuff of the morning.

It's not inauthentic to step into a practice of expressing worship, even if it initially feels awkward. We recognize that worshiping God takes work and practice, and it's worth pushing past what is comfortable to engage with worship *more meaningfully*.

By recognising what barriers we face we can call on the Spirit to empower us to change. To re-order our lives, to regain that sense of wonder and awe, and to freshly engage regardless of whether it comes naturally or not.



PRACTICES

Gratitude Practice

Several times this week, take 5 minutes to journal statements of gratitude to God. Let the Holy Spirit bring to mind the many things God has done and is doing in your life. Use this as a launching point for prayer and praise. Here are some topics to help bring focus to this practice of cultivating gratitude:

- **Gratitude** for God's provision and guidance in your life
- **Gratitude** for the family and community God has given you
- **Gratitude** for forgiveness, salvation, and security in Christ
- **Gratitude** for specific things God is doing right now in your life
- **Gratitude** for future hope, eternal life, and all of God's amazing promises for you in Scripture
- **Gratitude** for God Himself – His glory, His excellence, His goodness, His character
- **Gratitude** for God's mission of saving sinners, and His ability to complete it, and that you have been invited into this amazing plan.

Read and meditate on the power of these songs.

There is a Fountain Filled With Blood

WILLIAM COWPER, 1772

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its pow'r,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are safe, to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are safe, to sin no more.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

When this poor, lisping, stamm'ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy pow'r to save;
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy pow'r to save.

Son of Suffering

MATT REDMAN, 2021

Oh, the perfect Son of God
In all His innocence
Here walking in the dirt with you and me
He knows what living is
He's acquainted with our grief

Man of sorrows, Son of suffering
The blood and tears
How can it be?
There's a God who weeps
There's a God who bleeds
Oh, praise the One
Who would reach for me
Hallelujah to the Son of suffering

Some imagine You
Are distant and removed
But You chased us down in merciful
pursuit

To the sinner You were grace
And the broken You embraced
And in the end, the proof is in Your
wounds
Yes, in the end, the proof is in Your
wounds

Blood and tears
How can it be?
There's a God who weeps
There's a God who bleeds
Oh, praise the One
Who would reach for me
Hallelujah to the Son of suffering

Your cross, my freedom
Your stripes, my healing
All praise King Jesus
Glory to God in Heaven
Your blood, still speaking
Your love, still reaching
All praise King Jesus
Glory to God forever

Glory to God
(Glory to God forever) glory to God
(Glory to God forever) all your blood, your
love
(Glory to God forever) your cost, glory to
God
Glory to God forever

Oh, blood and tears
How can it be?
That there's a God who weeps
There's a God who bleeds
Oh, praise the One
Who would reach for me
Sing hallelujah to the Son of suffering, who
gave up his life
Hallelujah to the Son of suffering
Sing hallelujah to the Son of suffering



LAMENT

Biblical lament.

Our spiritual life is like a journey. There are valleys and mountains, difficult passes, easy walks, and brutal hikes. There are times when we enjoy the vistas and the fact that we are outside and other times when we swear, cry, and tend to the blisters, we are afraid when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death and then that fades as we swim in a forgotten pond under an amazing waterfall. Most of us, however, only connect prayer and worship to the “happy” moments of this journey.

“ There is no attempt in Scripture to whitewash the **anguish** of God’s people when they undergo suffering. They **argue** with God, they **complain** to God, and they **weep** before God. Theirs is **not** a faith that leads to **dry-eyed stoicism, but to a faith so robust it wrestles with God.**

– D.A. CARSON

Most of the musical worship in church has tended to focus on the “Instagram-worthy” photos of the journey and not photos of getting lost, blisters and fights, and despair. Walter Brueggemann teaches that the Bible is comfortable with every aspect of being human than we are comfortable acknowledging. He divides Psalms into 3 general groups.

<p>Orientation Psalms that speak TO us Psalm 23</p>	<p>Everything is going right. I know where I am, I am secure, safe, and happy. Creation works, natural wisdom works, and God's word have proven to be true and because of all of these factors, we express trust, hope, love, and commitment.</p>
<p>Dis-orientation. Psalms that speak FOR us Psalm 88</p>	<p>Everything is going wrong. My enemies are triumphing, I am hurt, alienated, and suffering.</p> <p>These psalms are filled with the language of questions, doubts, rage, and despair. People are confused, bewildered, and angry, God seems silent or powerless. There are calls for judgment, revenge, and even death to my enemies.</p> <p>These are expressed personally and corporately.</p> <p>Lament is not just expressing sadness but the expectation of brutal and visceral judgment on those who have wronged us. What we call imprecatory psalms.</p>
<p>Re-orientation. Psalms that speak FOR and TO us. Psalm 121</p>	<p>Things are/were bad but God has/is rescuing me. God HAS heard, I am broken and in pain but expressing thanks.</p> <p>We praise Him for rescuing us, we praise Him for our heavenly home, we praise Him that we are covenantally bound to Him.</p>

What are the characteristics and purpose of Lament Psalms?

Primal and unedited.



Psalm 58:6–11 ESV

⁶ O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord! ⁷ Let them vanish like water that runs away; when he aims his arrows, let them be blunted. ⁸ Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime, like the stillborn child who never sees the sun. ⁹ Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns, whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them away! ¹⁰ The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. ¹¹ Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth."

This person is experiencing seasons of anguish, suffering, confusion, anger, and alienation. This song helps us put words to our emotions. It is visceral, primal, unsettling, and emotional. It expresses that which matches his experience and is NOT religiously or theologically governed. We may have been taught that a prayer is a place of respect, not necessarily honesty, however, the gift that our emotions give us is that they betray our speech and show us what we TRULY believe about God. During a lament prayer or psalm, we do not pretend the world is other than it really is. We do not withhold anything from God.

The invitation here is to be honest with God. He ALREADY knows what is in your heart anyway! Expressing our disappointment or our unfiltered emotion enables us to enter a reorientation phase of looking to Him. This can be as simple as an honest prayer before the gathering.

Directed to God.

We are always more honest with secure relationships. The stronger and vibrant my relationship with God is the more honest I can be. God is able to handle you, you are NEVER too much! The joy of this is that brutal honesty demands a God who is present in the "dark times" of life and it is in the dark places, God gives light and new life. We need to LISTEN as well as speak. That is why the anchoring of regular worship helps us in His presence. This is not just emotional vomiting and leaving before God has a chance to reply. A good theology of God is essential because it acts like a safety net when we take the

leap into the darkness of our soul, we are still safe and secure. Another analogy is that of an anchor (as stated in week 1).

Lamenting is a way to hurt WITH God, not run away from Him. Only when you know someone deeply and intimately well can you speak without qualification. Our problem is that we talk to ourselves and to others and not enough to God.

Empathetic tool.

I may not be going through this, but now I know what others feel like. When I arrive at a worship gathering, I am aware that there is joy, sadness, pain, jubilation, and despair swirling around. This must NOT “tone down” my expression of worship but it helps us to be used as a tool of God’s grace if we are empathetic. If you cannot speak out of your pain to God, it will be very difficult to empathize with someone who is speaking out of their pain.

The Psalms of lament may not detail a “solution” but they invite us to listen to the anguish of another without judgment or censure.



Death is awful, demonic. If you think your task as a comforter is to tell me that really, all things considered, it's not so bad, you do not sit with me in my grief but place yourself off in the distance away from me. Over there, you are of no help. What I need to hear from you is that you recognize how painful it is. I need to hear from you that you are with me in my desperation. To comfort me, you have to come close. Come sit beside me on my mourning bench. – WOLTERSTORFF: (LAMENT FOR A SON, P. 34.)

Preaching theology to a person in the pit of despair is like throwing down a sturdy rope to them that hits them in the face and we wonder why they get angry. Sit with them in the pit. Then use the rope to help them climb out. We tend to either shout from the top or get stuck with them in the pit.

Why are we suspicious of lamenting?

Lamenting seems theologically incongruent. “That was OT language that was used because people had no hope or rescue, but as Christians we do. They didn’t have Jesus, they didn’t have victory and hope. The Kingdom has come NOW! Jesus said that! “ YES!! BUT BUT BUT we live in the ALREADY NOT YET, the kingdom has come but NOT in its fullness, we still live in times of ugliness and despair, and denying that is not equipping us to be kingdom lights. In order to be light we need to acknowledge and move toward darkness. Repression of outrage obstructs justice and healing. Naming evils and calling perpetrators to account is the first

step toward correcting injustice. To love our enemies, we must know who they are and what they've done. Hate should be prayed, not stifled. Apathy, not hate, is the opposite of love.

Aren't we contributing to greater levels of narcissism? The danger of lamenting, examining our feelings, and not hiding them in a narcissistic culture is real! We are in an all-about-me culture, and this just inculcates an individualistic spiritual experience and engagement. This IS a danger, but we cannot allow this reality to rob us of something that God intended for us to experience WITH Him.

How do we lament well?

Lamenting is an important aspect of our spirituality and unless we engage it biblically we will either hide and pretend OR allow life and circumstances and our emotions to overwhelm us.



The language of lament is not an outburst of unrestrained speech that gives us free rein to an emotional torrent of words. It is not venting for the sake of venting. Instead, lament is a structured, controlled language that by its methodical cadence helps restore a modicum of structure in times of disorientation.

– PEMBERTON

What is the difference between a tantrum and lament?

Israel's history was one of grumbling, petulance, and complaining against God. God judges them severely for this. Theirs was not a cry to God but an attitude about Him. We can do the same! We sometimes seek a hiding place from God to rail and murmur against Him. Biblical lament is coming into the Lord's presence and stating your grievances. Lament, done properly, is an act of faith, it insists that the world be experienced as it actually is and not in a pretended way. Lament directs our focus to God, in the midst of our pain. The mere fact that we are talking to God, betrays the fact that we believe Him to be sovereign and capable to change circumstances or rescue.

Flow of a lament.

We are using Psalm 13 we can see what the “flow of biblical lament” looks like. Remember that the point of looking at this is not to get a neat system, it is an example of honest wrestling with our emotions.

Psalm 13 (ESV)

¹ HOW LONG, O LORD?

Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ² How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

³ **Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes,**
lest I sleep the sleep of death, ⁴ lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,” lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

⁵ BUT I HAVE TRUSTED IN YOUR STEADFAST LOVE; MY HEART SHALL REJOICE IN YOUR SALVATION. ⁶ I WILL SING TO THE LORD, BECAUSE HE HAS DEALT BOUNTIFULLY WITH ME.

- **ADDRESS**
- Complaint
- **Request**
- *Motivation*
- CONFIDENCE, PRAISE, OR IMPRECATION

Because of the width of emotion and experience on any given Sunday morning, it is almost impossible to engage every conceivable circumstance, feeling and expectation. There is a level of maturity and love that is required from us to engage in songs that are more triumphant when we feel defeated or songs of lament when we feel envisioned and confident. There will be times when worship is triumphant when it is lamenting or questioning.

Equipping people to lament on their own with God enables a more honest, robust, and faith-filled corporate approach.



PRACTICES

Read through some of these lament psalms. What are you FEELING? Does this make you uncomfortable? Why?

Psalm 3 (CEB)

¹ LORD, I have so many enemies! So many are standing against me. ² So many are talking about me: "Even God won't help him." *Selah* ³ But you, LORD, are my shield! You are my glory! You are the one who restores me. ⁴ I cry out loud to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain. *Selah* ⁵ I lie down, sleep, and wake up because the LORD helps me. ⁶ I won't be afraid of thousands of people surrounding me on all sides. ⁷ Stand up, LORD! Save me, my God! In fact, hit all my enemies on the jaw; shatter the teeth of the wicked! ⁸ Rescue comes from the LORD! May your blessing be on your people! *Selah*

Psalm 58 (CEB)

¹ Do you really speak what is right, you gods? Do you really judge humans fairly? ² No: in your hearts you plan injustice; your hands do violence on the earth. ³ The wicked backslide from the womb; liars go astray from birth. ⁴ Their venom is like a snake's venom— like a deaf cobra's— one that shuts its ears ⁵ so it can't hear the snake charmer's voice or the spells of a skillful enchanter. ⁶ God, break their teeth out of their mouths! Tear out the lions' jawbones, LORD! ⁷ Let them dissolve like water flowing away. When they bend the bow, let their arrows be like headless shafts. ⁸ Like the snail that dissolves into slime, like a woman's stillborn child, let them never see the sun. ⁹ Before your pots feel the thorns, whether green or burned up, God will sweep them away! ¹⁰ But the righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done, when they wash their feet in the blood of the wicked. ¹¹ Then it will be said: "Yes, there is a reward for the righteous! Yes, there is a God who judges people on the earth."

Psalm 88 (CEB)

¹ LORD, God of my salvation, by day I cry out, even at night, before you— ² let my prayer reach you! Turn your ear to my outcry ³ because my whole being is filled with distress; my life is at the very brink of hell. ⁴ I am considered as one of those plummeting into the pit. I am like those who are beyond help, ⁵ drifting among the dead, lying in the grave, like dead bodies— those you don't remember anymore, those who are cut off from your power. ⁶ You placed me down in the deepest pit, in places dark and deep. ⁷ Your anger smothers me; you subdue me with it, wave after wave. *Selah* ⁸ You've made my friends distant. You've made me disgusting to them. I can't escape. I'm trapped! ⁹ My eyes are tired of looking at my suffering. I've been calling out to you every day, LORD— I've had my hands outstretched to you! ¹⁰ Do you work wonders for the dead? Do ghosts rise up and give you thanks? *Selah* ¹¹ Is your faithful love proclaimed in the grave, your faithfulness in the underworld? ¹² Are your wonders known in the land of darkness, your righteousness in the land of oblivion? ¹³ But I cry out to you, LORD! My prayer meets you first thing in the morning! ¹⁴ Why do you reject my very being, LORD? Why do you hide your face from me? ¹⁵ Since I was young I've been afflicted, I've been dying. I've endured your terrors. I'm lifeless. ¹⁶ Your fiery anger has overwhelmed me; your terrors have destroyed me. ¹⁷ They surround me all day long like water; they engulf me completely. ¹⁸ You've made my loved ones and companions distant. My only friend is darkness.

If you are in a difficult season, disappointed, hurt, frustrated, or unseen, try to put that down on paper using the "flow of a lament."

What in your life is disorienting right now? Express that to God as unedited as possible.



SELF RE-ASSESSMENT

It is easy for me to engage in musical worship in the Gathering.

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

I have an expectation that the act of worship will affect me tangibly, spiritually, emotionally, and physically?

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

I sometimes feel fake in worship? Why? Why not?

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

I creativity avoid contexts for musical worship in our church rhythms?

Do not agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Agree

What barriers do you experience in expressing worship to God?

How have you grown in the practice of worship over the past 4 weeks?

What is something God has shown you as you've engaged with this practice?

What barriers do you still experience in expressing worship to God? What next steps can you take to continue to grow?



PRACTICES

Intentional worship.

Several times this week, take intentional time to continue in the practices of worship presented in this module:

- Practice worshiping God on your own by listening to worship music and turning your attention and affection toward Him.
- Express gratitude by journaling statements of thankfulness for all God has done for you.
- Express disappointment, pain, unmet expectations. Ask God to lead this time.
- Intentionally reorder your life to make worship more of a priority.

