An aerial photograph of a city, likely Chicago, with a prominent circular monument in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text 'LENT' is centered in large, white, sans-serif capital letters.

LENT

TEARS FOR
OUR CITY

Spring

A 5 Week Reading of the Book of Lamentations

2019

“But we all suffer. For we all prize and love; and in this present existence of ours, prizing and loving yield suffering. Love in our world is suffering love. Some do not suffer much, though, for they do not love much. Suffering is for the loving. This, said Jesus, is the command of the Holy One: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ In commanding us to love, God invites us to suffer.”

–Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*

“Beneath the economic and political development of any society is a spiritual reality. It represents the complex of motivations and dreams that a people have developed or that have called them together. On a daily basis, however, leaders of the government, business, and education do not treat these spiritual issues as influential in economic or social development. Neither, surprisingly, do most religious leaders. So there are few scholars or leaders who would consider or admit publicly that the present state of metropolitan Richmond is related to unhealed history or spiritual illness”

–Ben Campbell, *Richmond’s Unhealed History*

“The truth is that there are such things as Christian tears, and too few of us ever weep them.”

–John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This little guidebook is designed for individual, family, and small group use during the 2019 Lent season at Redeemer Anglican Church. It tracks with our Sermon Series TEARS FOR OUR CITY—helping us learn to lament in response to what we are discovering about the pain of our city and the hope of the Gospel.

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|---------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Week 1 | Lament for Suffering | Week 4 | Lament for Our Leaders |
| Week 2 | Lament for the Past | Week 5 | Lament for Renewal |
| Week 3 | Lament for Mercy | | |



READ

For each week, there is a chapter assigned from the book of Lamentations.



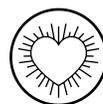
REFLECT

After reading the chapter take a moment to reflect on what you have read. *Slow down*. This is *poetry*, and not just any kind of poetry—it is poetry of *lament*. This is a new genre for most of us. Linger on the imagery—what does it stir in your mind and heart? There are a handful of questions provided to stimulate reflection (and discussion with your Small Group).



PRAY

The time of prayer follows a simple liturgy: a call to prayer, a time of confession and forgiveness, a time of supplication (making requests to God), the Lord’s Prayer, and a benediction. This liturgy can be prayed alone, with others in your household, and with your Small Group.



ACT

When we truly receive the good news of the Gospel, we are motivated to embrace new habits and extend the good news to others. The love of God to us in Jesus overflows within us and spills out to our neighbors. Each week there are suggested actions that help us receive, embody, and extend the Gospel.

The season of Lent traces its roots back to the early days of the church when new converts seeking baptism would spend 40 days (only counting weekdays) in preparation for their baptism on Easter Sunday. Today, the season of Lent is understood as a time for Christians to devote themselves to prayer, fasting, and repentance.

WHY THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS?

Lamentations contains 5 poems of lament over the desolation of the city of Jerusalem and the deportation of her citizens by the Babylonians. With the prophet Jeremiah, sometimes called the Weeping Prophet, we will learn to lament for the unhealed wounds of our own city of Richmond—by telling the truth about what is wrong while crying out to the Lord to come renew and restore us in Christ Jesus. Along the way we will find that, in order to truly lament as Christians, we must resist indifference on one hand, and false solutions on the other, for lament finds its resolution solely in the cross and empty tomb of the Lord Jesus and nowhere else.

WHY IS IT WORTH LEARNING TO LAMENT?

Lament has the potential to change our hearts. It compels a search, strips the heart of pretense, and forces us to wrestle with God. It opens our eyes to see God's profound hatred of sin and His equally profound love for His people. Lament leads to awe that God has turned His wrath against His Son and not those who most deserve His condemnation.

HAVE MERCY

Have mercy on me
Have mercy on me
O Lord have mercy
O Lord have mercy

O help my unbelief
O help my unbelief
O Lord have mercy
O Lord have mercy

PSALM 126

Our mouths they were filled, filled with laughter
Our tongues they were loosed, loosed with joy
Restore us, O Lord
Restore us, O Lord

Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping will go out with songs of joy

The nations will say, "He has done great things!"
The nations will sing songs of joy
Restore us, O Lord
Restore us, O Lord

Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping will go out with songs of joy

WEEK 1 | Lament for Suffering



READ

Lamentations 1



REFLECT

- How familiar are you with the concept of lament? How have you encountered it before this series?
- Lament as an essential ingredient of honest faith. What parts of your own life and the culture of our city are most difficult for you to speak honestly about?
- Lam. 1:12 says, *“Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?”* From whom that is suffering around us have we withheld our tears?
- Verse 12 foreshadows crucifixion of Jesus—pointing towards both His suffering and to the fact that no one, at the time, recognized what was being accomplished on the cross. How does the suffering of Christ give meaning to the suffering we witness around us here in Richmond?

NOTES:



PRAY

Lament | How lonely sits the city that was full of people.
–Lam. 1:1
[Optional: Sing one of the Songs of Lament found in the front of this guidebook.]

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- Dismiss the suffering of others.
- Have tears only for ourselves and not for anyone else.
- Look to false sources of comfort instead of looking to Christ.

Forgiveness | The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him.
–Lam. 3:22–24

Supplication | [Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who hears our cries.]

Lord's Prayer | [It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]

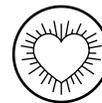
*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name.*

*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.*

Benediction | Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old. –Lam. 5:21



ACT

- Practice telling the truth this week, for things that are easy and also for things that are difficult. Do not say you are “fine” if that is not the truth.

WEEK 2 | Lament for the Past



Lamentations 2

READ



REFLECT

• *“Healing comes through memory, not through forgetfulness. A vital part of the grieving process is honestly confronting what has been lost.”*
If this is true, why is it still so hard to be honest about the past?

• When we make God our enemy, we should not be surprised to find that He is against us. In what ways has the city of Richmond made the Lord her enemy? (This question is an invitation to tell the truth about where Richmond has gone wrong [i.e. against the virtues and values of the Kingdom of Heaven] in the past and the present.)

NOTES:



PRAY

Lament | Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord!

–Lam. 2:19

[Optional: Sing one of the Songs of Lament found in the front of this guidebook.]

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...
• Cover up the painful past and embrace a kind of forgetfulness that leads to a shallow life (life in the present with no roots in a shared history).
• Refuse to admit the good things that are lost to us.

Forgiveness | The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him.

–Lam. 3:22–24

Supplication | [Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who hears our cries.]

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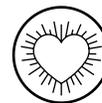
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ACT

• Lamentations 2 shows us what it looks like to have witnessed such unspeakable sorrows that we have only questions, and no answers. This week, practice lament by praying your questions to God, and resist the urge to insert your own hypothetical answers. Ask the Lord questions like, “Why did _____ happen?” “How should I respond to _____?”
• Let the Holy Spirit answer your questions in His time, and practice patience as you wait.
• Read a portion or all of *Richmond's Unhealed History*—giving intentional time to learning about the past and present wounds of our city.

WEEK 3 | Lament for Mercy



READ

Lamentations 3



REFLECT

- When cities experience tragedy, the greatest suffering is always at the personal, individual level—usually amongst the poor and most vulnerable. When you think about the challenges facing the city of Richmond, who has the most to lose?
- “Christians who suffer do more than suffer. They also wait. This is not the passive waiting of stoic endurance. It is rather the active resting in the goodness of God, with the hopeful expectation that someday one’s trails will come to an end.” In this season of life, where is your place of suffering and waiting?

NOTES:



PRAY

Lament | The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. –**Lam. 3:25**
[Optional: Sing one of the Songs of Lament found in the front of this guidebook.]

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- Lose hope and give in to the lie that God will make us wait indefinitely, that He will *never* bring redemption and renewal to our suffering.
- In our grief, doubt that the Lord is still listening to us.

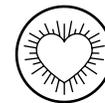
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Supplication | [Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who hears our cries.]

Lord’s Prayer | [It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord’s Prayer]

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Benediction | Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old. –**Lam. 5:21**



ACT

- Walk through your neighborhood and think about the ground underneath your feet. What sins and pain has it seen over the years? Think about all the people who have lived on this land. Consider—In what ways is this place waiting for the mercy of the Lord?

WEEK 4 | Lament for Our Leaders



READ

Lamentations 4



REFLECT

- Spiritual leaders have the responsibility to feed God's people with God's word—what happens when they (because of cowardice or self-interest) fail to do so?
- The people of Jerusalem have learned a hard lesson, that it is futile to look for political solutions to spiritual problems. Where do you see your own tendency to do the same? [Please resist the urge to point out only how other people do this—that's too easy. Be self-reflective, how do you do this?]
- *“At their best, the prophets, priests, and kings of the O.T. foreshadow Christ's coming. At their worst, they showed why His coming was so necessary.”* How do the past and present corruption of Richmond's spiritual, political, and business leaders point to the city's need for Christ's redemption?

NOTES:



PRAY

Lament | Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help; in our watching we watched for a nation which could not save. **–Lam. 4:17**

[Optional: Sing one of the Songs of Lament found in the front of this guidebook.]

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- Look for political or financial solutions to our spiritual problems.
- Respond to our leader's failures by looking for the next great leader, instead of recognizing that Christ is the only one who will never fail us.

Forgiveness | The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him. **–Lam. 3:22–24**

Supplication | *[Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who hears our cries.]*

Lord's Prayer | *[It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]*

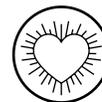
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Benediction | Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old. **–Lam. 5:21**



ACT

- Visit and offer prayers of lament over one of Richmond's many government buildings:
 - Virginia State Capitol – 1000 Bank St
 - Richmond City Hall – 900 E Broad St
 - John Marshall Circuit Court – 400 N 9th St

WEEK 5 | Lament for Renewal



Lamentations 5

READ



REFLECT

- Before we learn to trust Jesus, we must learn to openly and honestly bring our questions to Him. Has God rejected me? Can I still be saved? Is there any hope? Will my sufferings ever come to an end? Why does God allow persecution and oppression? What purpose does He accomplish through warfare and famine? What are your most important questions to bring to Jesus?
- Bringing our questions is the beginning, not the end. God has promised us, *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”* How is the atoning death of Christ Jesus a comfort to us, even in the midst of our questions?

NOTES:



PRAY

Lament | Remember O Lord what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace! **–Lam. 1:1**
[Optional: Sing one of the Songs of Lament found in the front of this guidebook.]

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...
• Look for restoration in any place other than in Christ Jesus.

Forgiveness | The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him. **–Lam. 3:22–24**

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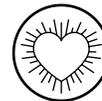
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ACT

- Lament finds no resolution in itself. Rather, true Christian lament finds its only resolution in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, the most appropriate action in response to Lent, our journey through the Book of Lamentations, and our reflection on the Tears of Our City, is to participate fully in Holy Week.
 - Walking the path of the Lord Jesus from His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, to the washing of His disciples' feet and His institution of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, to His crucifixion on Good Friday, to the silence of waiting on Holy Saturday, culminating in His glorious resurrection on Easter Sunday!



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