

A Novel Approach to Discipleship
Question from *Seasons of Change*
Chapter 1

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This is a comprehensive exercise touching on the use of context, concordances and cross-references. It should take more than one session to cover the whole thing. Don't shortcut it (except possibly to eliminate some of the lament psalms). By the time you finish, it will have given you a good feel for the basics of studying the Bible.

Read the paragraph at the bottom of page 8. In Steve's conversation with God he says: "... if you don't mind, I don't feel like being thankful right now."

What do you think about that statement? Does God "mind" when we aren't thankful? Does he understand?

What does the Bible say about that?

- ✓ If we search for "thanks" or "thankful" it will give us the places where people praise God, not where they don't.
- ✓ There are *lament psalms* where people do not start out with praises to God. Instead they complain. What words can we use to search for some lament psalms?

- ✓ Use cross references to see if you can find similar Bible passages in which people aren't thankful to God. Can you find verses outside of the psalms where people complain to God?

- ✓ In the Bible, what does God do when people complain to him?

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Exercise – Search Results Using Biblegateway.com

Here are the results of a search for lament psalms using the keywords “how long”; search limited to Psalms only.

Review the verses and cross out any that do not sound like a lament. Crosscheck this list with the list in the chart that starts on page 4. As you review these psalms, fill in the chart.

1. How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame ? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods ? Selah Psalm 4:2
2. My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? Psalm 6:3
3. How long, O LORD ? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? Psalm 13:1
4. How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Psalm 13:2
5. Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue my life from their ravages, my precious life from these lions. Psalm 35:17
6. How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down— this leaning wall, this tottering fence? Psalm 62:3
7. We are given no miraculous signs; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be. Psalm 74:9
8. How long will the enemy mock you, O God? Will the foe revile your name forever? Psalm 74:10
9. Rise up, O God, and defend your cause; remember how fools mock you all day long. Psalm 74:22
10. How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire? Psalm 79:5
11. LORD God Almighty, how long will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? Psalm 80:4
12. How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. Psalm 82:2
13. How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire? Psalm 89:46
14. Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Psalm 90:13
15. How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked be jubilant? Psalm 94:3
16. How I long for your precepts! Preserve my life in your righteousness. Psalm 119:40
17. How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors? Psalm 119:84
18. Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Psalm 119:97

Cross references from the New American Standard Version.

First review this psalm. What is the lament? What is the praise or confidence? Is this one that fits the type of lament we are looking for? (See chart on page 4.)

Check the cross references to see if you can find anything else that can be considered a complaint against God.

Psalm 6

- ¹O LORD, ^(A)do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Nor chasten me in Your wrath.
²Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am ^(B)pining away;
^(C)Heal me, O LORD, for ^(D)my bones are dismayed.
³And my ^(E)soul is greatly dismayed;
But You, O LORD--^(F)how long?
⁴Return, O LORD, ^(G)rescue my soul;
Save me because of Your lovingkindness.
⁵For ^(H)there is no mention of You in death;
In Sheol who will give You thanks?
⁶I am ^(I)weary with my sighing;
Every night I make my bed swim,
I dissolve my couch with ^(J)my tears.
⁷My ^(K)eye has wasted away with grief;
It has become old because of all my adversaries.
⁸^(L)Depart from me, all you who do iniquity,
For the LORD ^(M)has heard the voice of my weeping.
⁹The LORD ^(N)has heard my supplication,
The LORD ^(O)receives my prayer.
¹⁰All my enemies will ^(P)be ashamed and greatly dismayed;
They shall turn back, they will ^(Q)suddenly be ashamed.

Cross references:

- A. Psalm 6:1 : Ps 38:1; 118:18
- B. Psalm 6:2 : Ps 102:4, 11
- C. Psalm 6:2 : Ps 41:4; 147:3; Hos 6:1
- D. Psalm 6:2 : Ps 22:14; 31:10
- E. Psalm 6:3 : Ps 88:3; John 12:27
- F. Psalm 6:3 : Ps 90:13
- G. Psalm 6:4 : Ps 17:13
- H. Psalm 6:5 : Ps 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17; Eccl 9:10; Is 38:18
- I. Psalm 6:6 : Ps 69:3
- J. Psalm 6:6 : Ps 42:3
- K. Psalm 6:7 : Job 17:7; Ps 31:9; 38:10
- L. Psalm 6:8 : Ps 119:115; Matt 7:23; Luke 13:27
- M. Psalm 6:8 : Ps 3:4; 28:6
- N. Psalm 6:9 : Ps 116:1
- O. Psalm 6:9 : Ps 66:19, 20
- P. Psalm 6:10 : Ps 71:13, 24
- Q. Psalm 6:10 : Ps 73:19

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Exercise – Context & Scripture Chart

Read these lament psalms and see what the context of the entire psalm tells you. Make brief notes in the “Context” column (e.g. complaint, probably did something wrong – consideration of who God is/what he’s done – praise). If it is a lament psalm that fits our specific type (complaint against God), indicate it by a “yes” in the “Type” column. (*The chart below includes almost all the lament psalms plus a few other Old Testament lament passages. You do not need to complete the whole chart to get a good representation of how laments work, but they are there in case you want to do a very thorough study*):

Passage	Context	Type?*
Psalm 3		
Psalm 4		
Psalm 5		
Psalm 7		
Psalm 10		
Psalm 11		
Psalm 12		
Psalm 13		
Psalm 14		
Psalm 16		
Psalm 17		
Psalm 22		
Psalm 23		
Psalm 25		

*Type? – Use this for a quick reference. In this case Yes = It holds true to the type stated above; No = It does not hold true to the type stated above. In other cases, the type will be different. For example, if you study healing, the types may be: Example = an actual situation where you see healing; Information = more general information about how, when healing is accomplished.

Passage	Context	Type?
Psalm 26		
Psalm 27		
Psalm 28		
Psalm 31		
Psalm 35		
Psalm 36		
Psalm 38		
Psalm 39		
Psalm 41		
Psalm 42		
Psalm 43		
Psalm 51		
Psalm 52		
Psalm 53		
Psalm 54		
Psalm 55		
Psalm 56		
Psalm 57		
Psalm 58		
Psalm 59		
Psalm 61		
Psalm 62		
Psalm 63		
Psalm 64		

Passage	Context	Type?
Psalms 69		
Psalms 71		
Psalms 73		
Psalms 86		
Psalms 88		
Psalms 102		
Psalms 109		
Psalms 130		

I recommend that before you study the passages below, you find out something about these specific books and the genres they fall into. A good study Bible will help, but an even better choice is *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart. It gives a brief report of the content, date and emphasis of each book then provides an overview, specific advice for reading the book and takes you on a walk through the book. It helps tremendously in understanding the passages the way the original readers would have.

Lamentations 3		
Jeremiah 11		
Jeremiah 15		
Jeremiah 17		
Jeremiah 18		
Jeremiah 20		
Job 6-7**		
Job 9-10		
Job 12-14		
Job 17		
Job 19***		
Job 38-42		

**Read Job 1-3 to get the initial context of why Job is complaining to/about God.

***There are other passages in Job that you can explore. These will give you a fair representation of how Job is feeling.

Review the context notes for the passages that you marked as “yes.” What do they tell you about the reasons people in the Bible complained to God? What happened when they complained? How did God react to their complaint? What does that tell you about God?

Now you need to explore “lament” in the New Testament. Do you still find examples of people who were unhappy with how God was doing things? How are laments to be expressed under the New Covenant? What is one element of the Old Testament lament that is no longer appropriate in the grace-based New Covenant? (It has to do with our attitude toward those who offend us.)

Matthew 26:36-45

Mark 14:32-42

Luke 22:39-46

John 12:27-28

Acts 9:36-42

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

See if you can find other passages in the New Testament that help you understand whether or not it is okay to complain to/about God. This is more difficult than in the Old Testament because the literature of the New Testament is different from that of the Old. We can glean some information. Sometimes in the letters, the author is obviously replying to a “lament” by the people.

Romans 3:1-26

1 Peter 2:13 – 4:6

Sometimes finding New Testament passages on a topic from the Old Testament is difficult (if not impossible) but this is a very critical step to take. The Old Testament is just that – *Old*. Hebrews 8-9 shows us how the New Covenant with Jesus as our permanent High Priest changed everything. You cannot apply anything from the Old Testament to your life without first filtering it through the New. If you a concept from the Old Covenant is not specifically restated in the New Covenant, *it does not apply to Christians!*

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