

# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY ONE

### As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect

*Selections from Jeremiah 1*

*It takes a special person, like Jeremiah, to minister in a treacherous time like the time in which he lived. Even now, during our days, we need special voices to speak forth because many people in our land have lost their heart. They have lost their way. Where is the visionary? Where is the prophet? We need voices who can lift our eyes above our times and show us that there is a sovereign God at work. He knows what He is about.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EVERYONE'S journey will involve seasons of woe. Whether these seasons occur because of our frail bodies, fractured societies, failed decisions, or nature's chaotic forces—woes come in a variety of colors. Some explainable. Others unexplainable.

We all face a great temptation during these seasons of woe. Woes can easily grip our hearts and narrow our minds, and then paralyze us by hurling an unbearable weight of lament upon our shoulders. This fallen world often necessitates our lamenting. Lament is appropriate. Yet only with God's perspective and through God's power can we find hope and direction in our laments.

In this series, we'll discover how to find such supernatural hope and direction as we trace the laments of a prophet whom God raised up during the darkest episode in the history of ancient Israel.

Jeremiah wrote a whole book lamenting the exile of God's people and the destruction of God's city. In doing so, he affirmed the tears produced in our journeys while also pointing our gaze to the Sovereign Lord who providentially rules the world. To begin this series, we examine the remarkable and instructive call of this prophet of God.



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**As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect**

*Selections from Jeremiah 1*



**PREPARE YOUR HEART**

We open the Word of God to seek Christ's presence and glean truth for life. Therefore, we must pray. Just as the Spirit inspired the Word, He also ignites the Word in our hearts so that it produces authentic, life-giving change.

So consider what you wish to gain from your time in this eight-part study on Lamentations. Ask our Father in heaven to bless your time exploring His Message.



**TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

We don't know the year of Jeremiah's birth, but we do know the year of his call: 627 BC during the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign. Jeremiah prophesied for approximately forty-five years, mostly in Jerusalem and some in Egypt after Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC.

Jeremiah authored the longest book in the Bible which also takes his name. Yes, it has more words than the Psalms—even with ninety-eight fewer chapters! Because similar themes arise in both Jeremiah and Lamentations, take a few minutes to review Chuck Swindoll's book chart on Jeremiah on the following page.



# As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect

*Selections from Jeremiah 1*

## JEREMIAH

	<b>Judah's Sin and Judgment</b> <u>Jeremiah's call</u> <u>Idolatry</u> <u>Corrupt leadership</u> <u>Moral compromise</u> <b>CHAPTERS</b> 1–45	<b>Prophecies against the Nations</b> Egypt      Damascus Philistia   Kedar and Hazor Moab      Elam Ammon      Babylon Edom <b>CHAPTERS</b> 46–51	<b>A Sobering Ending</b>  Jerusalem <u>in ruins</u>  <b>CHAPTER</b> 52
<b>Theme</b>	Judgment is coming; repent!		
<b>Key Verses</b>	7:23–24; 8:11–12, 21; 9:23–24; 31:1–40		
<b>Christ in Jeremiah</b>	The fountain of living waters (2:13); the righteous Branch, the coming Shepherd, the LORD our righteousness (23:4–6); the New Covenant (31:31); Redeemer (50:34)		

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What themes do you see in Jeremiah you hadn't noticed before?

God raised up Jeremiah to give Jerusalem a final warning of the consequences of their rejection of God. Had the people of God in Jerusalem softened their hearts, turned to God, and followed His ways, God would have spared them. But they didn't. Jeremiah heralded warning after warning, yet they stiffened their necks. The city fell. Jeremiah lamented.

After decades of rejection and hardship, Jeremiah recorded his laments for people he loved who lived in a city he loved. God remained with Jeremiah every minute just as He had promised him when He called him . . . just as He promises us when He calls us—even during seasons of woe.



## As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect

*Selections from Jeremiah 1*



### Observation: The Prophet's Call

Reading—slow, thorough, assiduous reading—just about sums up observation. We tune into the words of the text because the Spirit inspired those words. Do that now with the words that record Jeremiah's call, [Jeremiah 1](#). Write down the key subjects addressed in this chapter.

### Reluctance to the Call

How did Jeremiah express reluctance to God's call ([Jeremiah 1:6](#))? How did God respond to Jeremiah's reluctance ([1:8–9](#), [17–19](#))?

*Let me tell you something: we are always inadequate. Everyone God calls is inadequate. In fact, those who think that they are the “end-all, be-all,” are those who need a whole lot of discipline before they’re going to be called. A great place to begin is at rock bottom. See how the sovereign God replies? “Don’t waste your time telling Me what you’re not. Don’t lose the plan here hiding behind your inadequacies.” —Chuck Swindoll*



## As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect

*Selections from Jeremiah 1*

### The Nature of the Call

How did God preview for Jeremiah the nature of his divine call ([Jeremiah 1:10–16](#))?

The call of God never involves a life of blanketed ease and five-star comfort. His call will frequently take us through many woes as we voluntarily walk through various kinds of suffering for the welfare of others. But as we walk that path, we receive unique and special blessings unavailable anywhere else. We explore those blessings next.



### Interpretation: God's Promises for the Call

Interpretation leads us to explore timeless truths about God by mining them from historical circumstance.<sup>1</sup> Here, we use special resources like Bible dictionaries and commentaries to help us understand the language and times of the author. We recommend [Netbible.org](#) as a free, excellent tool to aid your study of God's Word.

When God first spoke to Jeremiah, He uttered words of comfort to inspire Jeremiah's confidence ([Jeremiah 1:5](#)). Summarize those words below. Describe how the timeless truths in these promises inspire equal comfort and confidence in Jesus' followers today.

God did not pick Jeremiah at random, as if He were blindly picking a number out of a bowl. Back in eternity past, God ordained that Jeremiah would be born and become His prophet. God calls us in a similar way. He did not choose us randomly but by special selection according to His foreknowledge and grace.



## As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect

*Selections from Jeremiah 1*

*You and I are not random. We were chosen before we were conceived, and we were appointed before we were born to fulfill something very important that God is doing. We step into history, as God has been at work. We're a part of that divine calling. When we realize that, our whole direction of life changes. —Chuck Swindoll*

Look at [Jeremiah 1:7–9](#) and [17–19](#). What three things did God tell Jeremiah not to do? What accompanying promises did God give Jeremiah to strengthen Jeremiah so he could obey God? What timeless truths can we draw from those promises for our day?

Those who say yes to God's call access special blessings like a heightened awareness of God's presence, increased resolve from God's power, unique insight into God's will, and added comfort from God's protection. Jeremiah would need all such blessings because of the extreme pain and difficulties that awaited him and would eventually lead him to pen his journal of woes.



## As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect

*Selections from Jeremiah 1*



### Correlation: An Exile's Perspective

The Israelites did not listen to Jeremiah's warnings from God. They kept the pattern of disobedience which they had established throughout their nation's long history. Eventually, God's patience wore thin. He raised up Babylon to sack the nation.

Psalm 137 gives us a glimpse of the pain experienced by those exiled to Babylon. Read the [psalm](#). Describe the intensity of the pain of their exile. How does it preview our exploration of Jeremiah's Lamentations?

During their long darkness of exile, they had ample time to reflect on the cause of their woe. Some woes we can't explain, but the exiles had reams of scrolls that recorded the warnings against rebellion coupled with the promises that come from obedience and faith. The Jews in Babylon knew the cause of their pain.



### Application: Letting Grief Teach Us

The pain of failure often leads us to ponder amid our grief. In his sermon, Chuck gave two examples of how we reflect when we grieve.

- 1) *When we grieve others' failures, we reflect on the possibilities that might have been.* We ponder things like the joyous celebrations and deep conversations we might've had together if only they'd used the wisdom of God in their decision making.
- 2) *When we grieve our own failures, we regret losing the pleasures we once enjoyed.* The fruit of folly never tastes as good as it promises us.

Let the pain of lament drive you to the feet of Jesus Christ. Often, only through lament can we gain a proper view of the world . . . how life and its joys exist as a vapor, how desperate each person is for the eternal hope and true healing that God offers us freely through His Son. At the height of his pain, Jeremiah experienced how hope can be found in God alone.



## As the Prophet Laments, We Reflect

### *Selections from Jeremiah 1*

How should you respond to what you learned in God's Word? Do you need to trust God and pursue His call upon your life despite the woes? Do you need to take your laments to the feet of Jesus so you can move forward in life? Think it over. Pray. Record your response below.

Jesus never calls us into difficulties without promising the strength to walk through them or the hope that we'll get past them. As the apostle Paul said:

*For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*  
(2 Corinthians 4:17–18 NASB)



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for giving me purpose and strength and hope. Death and pain and woe do not have the final word. In each, I will more than conquer through Jesus who loves me, who experienced the worst of woes on my behalf, and who promises me the greatest of victories, eternal life. In His precious name I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a [copy](#) of the book for your library. Chuck also uses the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. It's one of his favorites.





# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY TWO

### The Influence of One Devoted Parent

*Selections from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 33–35*

*Now let me tell you something that I hope you never forget. I speak to parents and to grandparents. I speak to mentors. I speak to coaches. I speak to choir directors. And I speak to teachers. To anyone who influences a young life, you just can't imagine how significant your influence is. It is incredibly significant!*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**J**EREMIAH received his call to prophesy while Josiah held the king's scepter over Judah. The two men belonged to the same kingdom and likely shared a similar age. But their fathers could not have been more different.

Hilkiah, the godly priest, reared Jeremiah. Hilkiah taught Jeremiah how to worship and how to pray. Hilkiah taught Jeremiah how to follow the God of Moses who had rescued the people of Israel from Egyptian tyranny and slavery.

Contrary to faithful Hilkiah, Amon, Josiah's father and wicked king of Judah, "did what was evil in the LORD's sight . . . worshiping the same idols his father had worshiped. He abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors, and he refused to follow the LORD's ways" (2 Kings 21:20–22).

Josiah inherited the throne at the raw age of eight years old after conspirators assassinated his father. Josiah, however, "did not turn away from doing what was right" (22:2). Long before Jeremiah's laments over Jerusalem, he had entered the ministry during a time of promise—when godly King Josiah led the nation with God-aligned edicts and God-aimed worship.



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### The Influence of One Devoted Parent

*Selections from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 33–35*

While under Josiah, Jeremiah likely cultivated the spiritual depth and courage needed to withstand the flood of depravity and hostility he would face leading up to Jerusalem's destruction. Before perusing Jeremiah's journal of lament over Jerusalem, we explore the righteous influence behind the last great king of Judah.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Let's pray before we dive into God's Word.

*Father, right now I acknowledge and give thanks for those in my life who have taken the time to love me, to teach me, to help me, and to grow me. Thank You for the godly leaders who have gone before me and modeled for me the life of faith. Please use this time to open my eyes to wondrous truths in Your Word and equip me to be a godly influence in the lives of those in my life who desperately need it. In Christ's name, amen.*



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

King Amon scorned the God of his fathers. He ignored the Word of that God. He bowed to figurines and worshiped false gods. He did not care to seek God's will or follow God's ways.

What a miracle to read how Amon's heir to the throne did otherwise! The author of 2 Kings documented Josiah's reign by opening with the following lines:

*Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath. (2 Kings 22:1)*

Surely the author did not write "His mother was Jedidah" merely for informational or genealogical purposes. As Chuck Swindoll emphasized in his sermon, surely that twig of a statement hints at a spiritual influence that would govern the entirety of Josiah's righteous reign.



## The Influence of One Devoted Parent

*Selections from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 33–35*

Before we explore how Jedidah's influence expressed itself in Josiah's life, think over the godly influences in your life. It might be a parent. Or it might be a grandparent or friend. How did this person help you? How does the love this person showed you in the past still affect you today?

*I don't believe Jedidah was caught up in the lifestyle of her husband Amon. I believe she detested the life of Manasseh. I believe she walked with God. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Observation: The Example of His Ancestor David

Begin by reading [2 Chronicles 34:1–7](#).<sup>1</sup>

Did you notice the three time-markers in this verse? At what age was Josiah in each? Biblical authors include repeated statements like these time-markers to add emphasis and to increase the historical legitimacy of their writing. What do these markers emphasize?



## The Influence of One Devoted Parent

*Selections from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 33–35*

Summarize how Josiah refused the evil ways of his father.

By his early twenties, King Josiah had all but eradicated the pagan idol-worship that pervaded society during Manasseh's and Amon's reigns. Then, without expecting it, a discovery occurred in the temple that presented a powerful portrait of almighty God as well as a reliable blueprint for how to worship Him. Josiah would never be the same.



### Interpretation: A Scroll of the Holy Writings

Now, give a thoughtful reading to the rest of the chapter, [2 Chronicles 34:8–33](#). Here, we really see the kingdom-wide benefits of the spiritual influence of Josiah's mother.

How did Josiah exemplify a godward heart in the rest of this chapter? How did God respond to Josiah's humility and obedience?



## The Influence of One Devoted Parent

*Selections from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 33–35*

How might Jedidah have inculcated and fostered in Josiah the spiritual devotion and character he displayed throughout his reign?

*Josiah grew up sheltered from the evil of his father. Why? Jedidah. She had such an overwhelming influence, I'm convinced, in the life of this boy that some would never even guess he was related to Amon or Manasseh. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: The Godly Home

Correlation compares Scripture with Scripture. Spanning fifteen-hundred years and written by dozens of authors, the acts of God are preserved in the Word of God. Numerous subjects and themes thread the whole corpus of biblical literature, which demonstrates how the Bible portrays a unified story.

As we read the Bible, we gain spiritual insight by comparing what different biblical authors wrote regarding the same subject. We'll do that now with the topic of this *Searching the Scriptures* study: godly parenting. We will examine three passages. Comment briefly on each passage's key directives and ideas.

*Deuteronomy 6:1–9*



## The Influence of One Devoted Parent

*Selections from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 33–35*

*Deuteronomy 6:20–25*

*Ephesians 6:4*

The family unit began in the heart of God. He endows parents with authority over their children to be used for building up, not tearing down. God smiles upon devoted parents and blesses those who labor to instruct, encourage, and disciple the children under their roof.



### Application: Every Minute Is Worth It

Often, the daily grind of parenting and teaching as well as coaching and discipling keep one focused on the nuts and bolts of doing without leaving time for reflecting. How easy to miss the profound, even eternal significance of their efforts. For this reason, Chuck Swindoll wants to keep you spiritually encouraged and energized by offering some powerful reminders.

First, *any amount of time you spend encouraging and instructing your children is worth every minute*. Plant that truth deeply within your heart and water it such that it grows into a giant oak of conviction. Second, *any investment in your child's walk with Christ is a lifelong investment*. Keep your hand on the plow and your eyes straight ahead. God is with you.



## The Influence of One Devoted Parent

*Selections from 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 33–35*

Reflect upon and record how these two reminders encourage you. Translate them into applicational pursuits for your walk with Christ even if you aren't a parent. How do these reminders inspire you to continue in that work? During this study, did a new idea come to mind about how you can improve in these endeavors? If so, record it here.

One person touching another's life can create ripple effects in eternity's ocean. Christ has authorized you and empowered you to make as large a splash as you possibly can. Children, students, mentees, athletes, and employees make for a good aiming point.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for the way You produce transformation—often in the unattractive, unadorned, and unrecognized routine of life-on-life. Thank You that I don't have to have years of expertise or mountains of wealth to do the good that You have called me to do. Thank You for giving me every spiritual blessing in Christ my King. In His name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a [copy](#) of the book for your library.



# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY THREE

### Jeremiah's Journal of Woes

#### *Survey of Lamentations*

*The prophet Jeremiah is writing Lamentations. He's walking through the remains of the city of Jerusalem after it has been taken captive and destroyed. A temple that stood for centuries is now in ruins, burned and in rubble, and Jeremiah is heartsick. He's broken. As he records what he witnesses, he cries out to God for God's strength and God's help. In the middle of it, he finds hope in God's faithfulness.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HOUGH fashioned by God and chosen to reflect heaven's presence on earth, Adam and Eve chose their own path and fell from their divine calling. Destruction and chaos and suffering ensued. The tragic experience of humanity's fall in the garden of Eden finds itself symbolized in the tragic experience of the nation of Israel—the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of God's people.

Jeremiah spoke for God as a prophet of God by warning the nation against forgetting its divine call. The people didn't heed the prophet's words and thus ate the bitter fruit of their actions, which they had sown across centuries. Jeremiah poured out his anguish by writing some of the finest poetry in the Hebrew Bible.

Just as the fall of Israel symbolizes the greater fall of humanity, Jeremiah's elegiac couplets symbolize all our laments as we journey through a world that has lost its way. But Jeremiah's laments don't leave us in darkness. Through them we find the light of hope in the God of hope who enters our pain with us.



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## Jeremiah's Journal of Woes

### Survey of Lamentations



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

We study the Word because it conveys to us the heart and mind of God. That's why it profits us. It equips us to complete the spiritual endeavors to which God has called us. Take a moment now to seek God's presence and blessing for your time in His Word.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Look over Chuck Swindoll's chart of the book of Lamentations to help you grab hold of the key ideas and get a bird's eye view of the flow of the book. Note what you find surprising or interesting or puzzling. Getting the big idea of a biblical book helps kickstart your study of it. Also, visit [insight.org](http://insight.org) to see Chuck's overview of Lamentations.

## LAMENTATIONS

	Jerusalem's Desolation	The Lord's Anger	Jeremiah's Grief	The Lord's Anger	Jeremiah's Prayer
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5
Underlying Emotion	Lonely, groaning	Angry, exhorting	Broken, weeping	Desperate, anguished	Weary, pleading
Short Prayers	1:20–22 “See us!”	2:20–22 “Look at us!”	3:55–66 “Judge them!”	4:20 “Avenge us!”	5:21 “Restore us!”
Theme	Mourning over sin; the severity of God's judgment; hope in His mercy				
Key Verses	1:1, 5	2:14, 17	3:16–24	4:11–12	5:5, 19–22
Christ in Lamentations	Jesus, like Jeremiah, wept over the sins of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:27–38; Luke 13:34–35).				




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Throughout this series, be sure to note the varying perspectives from which the speaker writes. Below, we will examine three brief passages using the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method.<sup>1</sup>



## Jeremiah's Journal of Woes

### Survey of Lamentations




A City Now Deserted Lamentations 1:1–4	
Jeremiah opens his letter with a panorama of Jerusalem's devastation to help the reader take in the full scope of the tragedy.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
Observe <i>Lamentations 1:1–4</i> . What are the key ideas and main subjects?	Record one timeless truth about God or God's ways from this passage.
 <b>Application: Living the Truth</b>	
<p>We apply biblical truth to our lives by appropriately responding to it. Sometimes, the Bible informs; other times, it inspires. Sometimes, it warns; other times, it directs. That means we obey its directives, heed its warnings, trust its promises, and embrace its truths.</p> <p>With that in mind, translate the timeless truth you recorded into an appropriate response. Record why it's important and how you can incorporate this truth into your life.</p>	

*Father, amid unsafe days, You remain all-powerful and able to protect. In uncertain times, You remain all-knowing, leading us aright. In the unprecedented difficulties, You remain absolutely sovereign. Remind us that our times are in Your hands. —Chuck Swindoll*



## Jeremiah's Journal of Woes

### Survey of Lamentations




His Mercies Never Cease Lamentations 3:19–25	
Amid his tears, Jeremiah recalls the faithfulness of God and commits himself to the good hand of his Father.	
 <b>Observation</b>	 <b>Interpretation</b>
Observe <i>Lamentations 3:19–25</i> . Summarize its message below.	Record one or two timeless truths from this passage.
 <b>Application: Reflecting the Character of God</b>	
Translate one of those timeless truths into an appropriate response by which you can express your love to Jesus or your neighbor. Why did you choose that response?.	

*Father, our dependence on You is total, not partial. Our need for Your forgiveness is constant, not occasional. Our gratitude for Your grace is profound, not casual. Our love for You is deep, not superficial or shallow. Equip us with genuine humility and heartfelt compassion. O Lord, we're not alone though we often feel aloneness. We are Yours. Your Spirit lives in us. —Chuck Swindoll*



## Jeremiah's Journal of Woes

### Survey of Lamentations

Joy Has Left Our Hearts Lamentations 5:15–19	
Here, Jeremiah gives one final expression to the pain he, along with the whole community, feels. Notice how they turned to God. In Lamentations, Jeremiah exemplified the vital practice of preaching God's Word to oneself.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
Observe <a href="#">Lamentations 5:15–19</a> . What emphases do you see in this passage?	Note a couple of the timeless truths in the passage that prove especially instructive.
 Application: Receiving Divine Influence	
Just as you did with the previous two passages, convert one of the timeless truths above into an obedient response. Reflect. Tailor that response to your current circumstances just as you tailor it to the truth of God.	

*Thank You, Father, for Your great care over us. We don't deserve what You do for us, but we accept it. It's called grace. Thank You for meeting our needs when we have often not given to Your work. You've been faithful to give even when we haven't. Indeed, Your mercies are new every morning. In Christ's majestic name, amen. —Chuck Swindoll*

#### ENDNOTE

- To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY FOUR

### None but the Lonely Heart

*Selections from Lamentations 1*

*It's still the job of the preacher to remind men and women of the consequences of wrongdoing. Those reminders fit my life just as they fit yours. I do wrong, I suffer consequences. My message today: because the ancient Israelites did wrong, they suffered the consequences. I don't want us to ever forget it.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HETHER it be fear, vanity, distraction, or hard-heartedness, people too often wall off their agony to keep their eyes dry. Many have felt the temptation to refrain from weeping. Some have even made it a habit, but they have done so to their own hurt.

If we learn anything from Jeremiah's journal of woes, we learn of the need to lament—to let ourselves weep over what's broken, what's wrong. We live in a world that often proves itself lamentable. When we refuse to lament, we refuse to embrace our own humanity. As beings stamped with God's image, we mirror His nature when we lament over what is truly lamentable.

Jeremiah lamented the preventable consequences of disobedience to God. Such destruction ensued as God turned away His favor to unfold His controlled, still dreadful, judgments on His people.

The first chapter of this five-chapter book immediately introduces us to the causes and outcomes of those judgments. In doing so, it instructs us and reminds us about our holy God who knows what He's about.



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## None but the Lonely Heart

*Selections from Lamentations 1*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before embarking on this study, pray that God would soften your heart and open your mind to receive from His Word. Nature and time do not keep the heart soft or attentive to divine things. Only the Spirit does that. That's why we always express our need for God's help to trust Him and obey Him.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jerusalem's downfall occurred in 586 BC when Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar finally decided to decimate the city after two decades of slowly chipping away at its political independence. For centuries, God had warned His privileged people of the consequences of disobedience. But they yawned. They followed their own hearts. God led Babylon to destroy Jerusalem.

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations to sear the event and its lesson in history's memory bank. We wouldn't see it while reading Jeremiah's lines in English, but Lamentations in its original language has multiple acrostics incorporated into its poems.

Chapters one, two, and four contain twenty-two verses each because each begins with the consecutive letters of the twenty-two-letter Hebrew alphabet. Chapter three contains sixty-six verses with every three verses beginning with consecutive letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter five breaks the acrostic pattern, perhaps indicating literarily Jerusalem's chaos.

Because most people in ancient times would have heard the poem read aloud rather than reading it personally in silence, the acrostic structure would have resonated in the ear. The form aided memory. How vital to remember the failures of the past so we can avoid them in the future!



## None but the Lonely Heart

*Selections from Lamentations 1*



### Observation: The Lonely Consequences of Wrongdoing

Biblical authors often used repetition to emphasize key points.<sup>1</sup> Observation helps us notice this repetition as we slowly and repeatedly read the text—often in multiple translations. Chuck Swindoll's favorite Bible translations are the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible.

In Lamentations 1, Jeremiah repeated the idea of loneliness—sometimes repeating the same phrase as well as using varying images. For example, he wrote, “Among all her lovers, there is no one left to comfort her” (Lamentations 1:2).

Carefully observe [Lamentations 1](#) and look for statements and images that deal with Jerusalem's loneliness. Note below what you find.

*This is written to people who were free, who had known the blessing and the pleasure of God. Jeremiah had been sent to warn them. But they closed their ears to the prophet's words. Even their priests had no place for the living God in their preaching and in their ministry, if you can call it that. Now, we read the consequences on one page after another after another. It need not have been. —Chuck Swindoll*

Now record the emphasis Jeremiah intended to convey through his repetition of the idea of loneliness.



## None but the Lonely Heart

*Selections from Lamentations 1*

Night after night, Jeremiah must have replayed the terrors of shattered walls, emptied storehouses, and lifeless bodies. “It need not have been” and “if only they had taken God seriously” must have run through his mind over and over again. God is a holy God who will not let Himself be taken lightly.



### Interpretation: Divine Judgment

In chapter one, sometimes the voice of the speaker is a bystander, but primarily the “speaker” is the city itself. Sometimes the bystander or city speaks to God or about God. For example, Lamentations 1:9 reads, “LORD, see my misery. . . . The enemy has triumphed.”

Once more, read *Lamentations 1* and this time look for statements about God and to God. Summarize what these statements teach us about God’s character and ways. Use your Bible study tools, like [Netbible.org](http://Netbible.org), to help you interpret these verses. Record below the truth from this passage that remains with us today.

*May I remind all of us our God is a jealous God. He’s a holy God. He doesn’t share His glory with any other. He’s not one among many gods. He is the one and only God. The Bible is not one among many references to His mind and His will. The Bible is THE reference.*  
—Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: The Ancient Warnings

God’s people had received the warnings of disobedience and promises of obedience centuries prior to Jeremiah’s prophesying and Babylon’s devastation. Moses uttered these warnings and promises on Mount Gerizim just before he journeyed to Mount Nebo, gazed at the promised land, and breathed his last.





## None but the Lonely Heart

### *Selections from Lamentations 1*

The promises and warnings from one of Moses' last sermons help us understand the key themes of Lamentations. First, review the promises of [Deuteronomy 28:1–7](#). Rather than destruction and exile in 586 BC, the people of Jerusalem would have received what benefits had they only obeyed God?

Second, review the warnings of [Deuteronomy 28:15–20, 25–26, 36–37, 45–52](#). Summarize how these warnings portray the reality of Jerusalem's experience in 586 BC.

The physical blessings and curses of ancient Israel correspond with spiritual realities. Had they trusted, obeyed, and enjoyed God, they would have received the blessings. But they didn't. Their physical chaos for departing from God symbolizes what had happened when the whole human race rejected God: spiritual death.

Jesus came first to correct the curse of our spiritual death. On the cross, Jesus took upon Himself the curse for our wrongdoing (Galatians 3:13–14). Those who trust in Him now receive a foretaste of His spiritual blessings. They will one day inherit an uncursed earth and gain unhindered access to the fullness of God (Revelation 21–22).



## None but the Lonely Heart

*Selections from Lamentations 1*



### Application: Death in the City

The toxic spirituality and spoiled morality of Jerusalem reflects what happens to all people who ignore and resist God's truth. Chuck Swindoll gives two practical ways to appropriately respond to Lamentations 1 in light of your own city, culture, and historical situation.

#### *Our Times Need to Grip Us Emotionally*

Jeremiah said, "For all these things I weep; tears flow down my cheeks" (Lamentations 1:16). We need to pray for and weep over the spiritual and moral decay in our own cities. Record below a prayer for those in your city and culture who have turned from God or neglected God.

#### *Our Times Need to Alert Us Spiritually*

The spiritual leaders in Jeremiah's day shrouded spiritual truth. They preferred darkness to light—eyes shut versus eyes open. Chuck encourages us to keep awake spiritually, to spot where the culture strays, and to stay alert. What's one action you need to take to keep alert to spiritual deception and moral degradation?

Jesus Christ has promised us a city designed and built by God Himself. We don't stake all our hope in this life or the city of our residence. Streets of gold await us (Revelation 21:21). The Holy Spirit has empowered us to exist in the present as a bright light amid heavy darkness.



## None but the Lonely Heart

*Selections from Lamentations 1*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for preserving the laments of Jeremiah. Thank You for teaching me that it is okay to lament, for coming to me in my laments, and giving me hope beyond my laments. Thank You for lifting the curse from me and giving me Your Holy Spirit as a down payment of the inheritance You have promised. In Christ's holy name I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a [copy](#) of the book for your library. Chuck also uses the [New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#). It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.



# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY FIVE

### Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

#### *Selections from Lamentations 2*

*Why do we feel so uneasy addressing the wrath of God? What makes us cringe when we think about it? God's not cruel or arbitrary. All God's anger—all His indignation—is righteous. There's a good reason for it.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**F**EW might know it, but the Bible speaks often about God's wrath—His righteous indignation. That doesn't mean God is an angry deity who delights in inflicting pain. It does mean, however, that if we want to truly know God, we must acquaint ourselves with this attribute of His nature.

To ignore, deny, or sugarcoat the wrath of God muddies the gospel or, worse, gives people false ideas about the gospel—namely, that God doesn't care about sin. God *does* care deeply when people suffer because of sin.

Would a loving God turn a blind eye toward the slaughter of races, the victimization of children, or any other horror we might name? No, God hears the blood of innocents crying out for justice, and our righteous God will judge evildoers and set things right in the end. God's wrath toward evil is not limited, however, only to those evils that most humans deem "extreme."

In God's eyes and by God's standards "everyone has sinned" (Romans 3:23) in heart and mind, by word and deed, via action and inaction. Because the "wages of sin is death" (6:23), every person needs to be rescued from judgment. God sent His Son to bear our sin and offer us salvation from God's wrath by believing in Him. Without a clear understanding of God's wrath, the gospel doesn't make sense . . . and Christ's death would have been meaningless.



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## Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

### *Selections from Lamentations 2*

The apostle Paul demonstrated the close tie of God's wrath and the gospel when he stated:

*For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:9–10 NASB)

Without Christ, we are destined for judgment. Thankfully, with Christ, we have life.

Lamentations 2, the focus of this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, compels us to come to grips with God's wrath. To understand it. To respect it. To consider how we all deserve it and would receive it were it not for Christ's death and free gift of forgiveness.

At the end, we will come to appreciate the penetrating truth: the one who is forgiven much, loves much.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to meditate upon Paul's claim regarding Scripture:

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*  
(2 Timothy 3:16–17 NASB)

In light of Paul's words above, record a prayer below requesting God's blessing on your time in His Word.



## Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

*Selections from Lamentations 2*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Let's review the Bible study method Chuck uses when he opens the pages of Scripture. It's the same four-step process we use in these studies.

- 1) *Observation*: We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book.
- 2) *Interpretation*: We understand what the text means by delving into word studies, ancient culture, history, and theology.
- 3) *Correlation*: We compare the passage with other biblical passages that address similar topics whether they be historical, theological, or applicational.
- 4) *Application*: We integrate into our lives biblical truths and principles so that we obey Jesus' commands, believe Jesus' promises, and walk with Jesus always.<sup>1</sup>

Keep these aims in mind as you walk through Lamentations 2.



### Observation: Wrath's Calamity

When you observe Lamentations 2, pay special attention to two characteristics of this chapter.

First, notice all the imagery. Hebrew poetry contains many word pictures to make a point—often the same point. For example, Lamentations 2:9 says, “Jerusalem's gates have sunk into the ground.” The city's loss of physical protection signifies her loss of divine protection. Second, notice the numerous verbs that portray how God has acted or what God has caused in His righteous indignation toward sin.



Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

*Selections from Lamentations 2*

Observe [Lamentations 2](#) now and make notes on those two characteristics.

The Poet's Word Pictures	God Has . . . God Has . . . God Has

Now reflect upon the key idea behind the images and God's actions. Summarize the key idea below.

God's wrath always comes after a prolonged period of His patient warnings. His wrath is never an arbitrary explosion of uncontrolled rage. God's wrath derives from a calculated and purposeful determination to act against wrongdoing. God does not delight in wrath or its outcomes. Like Peter said, "He does not want anyone to be destroyed" (2 Peter 3:9).



## Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

*Selections from Lamentations 2*



### Interpretation: The Reasons of Wrath

In this chapter, Jeremiah speaks about the reasons behind God's wrath. We'll explore that topic as well as God's emphatic declaration that He orchestrated Babylon's desolation of Jerusalem. Remember to consult your Bible study *tools*, such as the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* which is one of Chuck's favorites.

### Hollow Words

Look at *Lamentations 2:13–14*. Explain the significance of these two verses and how they relate to our subject of God's wrath.

Not even Jerusalem's prophetic class—those privileged with spiritual authority—heralded divine truth. Instead, most of them tickled ears to gain applause and esteem and shekels. Our hearts naturally bend away from God. So everyone must actively abide in God's Word to keep on God's path. The Israelites veered off that clear path . . . and how great was their crash!

*God's wrath is always judicial. Every time His wrath appears, there's good reason for it. He's expressing His righteous indignation. He's administering justice. Also, God's wrath is something people choose for themselves. God is not wishing that any would perish.*  
—Chuck Swindoll





## Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

*Selections from Lamentations 2*

### The Hand Holding the Hammer

God wanted to ensure that everyone knew it was He who, ultimately, orchestrated Babylon's decision to destroy Jerusalem. How did Jeremiah express this truth in [Lamentations 4:16–17](#)? Why would God want everyone to know that He stood behind Babylon's assault? To answer this question, consider how God's righteousness correlated directly with Israel's faithlessness.

In eternity past—before creation—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit existed together as God three-in-one. Anger and wrath had no place . . . only the rapturous expression of joy, love, and peace.

Amazing to think how we can join that divine dance because of the Father's love, the Son's forgiveness, and Spirit's power. At the end of all things, God's judgment will have been fully expressed. In the new heaven and earth, the redeemed will forever enjoy all the good things of the Alpha and Omega.



### Correlation: Whoever Believes in the Son Has Eternal Life

Recall how ancient Israel's physical experiences with God's promises and warnings signified spiritual realities. God displayed His righteousness in His physical destruction of Jerusalem when its people rejected Him. This display resembled the spiritual death we all inherit and earn due to our sinful nature and willful rejection of God.



## Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

*Selections from Lamentations 2*

We all need God's gift of forgiveness. Jesus secured that forgiveness and offers it to anyone who desires it. John 3:36 captures these truths powerfully. Read this [verse](#). Meditate on it and, below, expand upon the significance of each phrase and explain how the verse as a whole correlates with the truth we learned in Lamentations 2.

Our choices in this life carry consequences far weightier than most realize. Enjoying and following the Son before our death means we will eternally enjoy Him after death. Whoever dies without the Son endures eternity without the Son. Jesus called this the "second death" (Revelation 2:11).

What gratitude surges in those who have the key of knowledge that opens the door to eternal paradise! What urgency we feel to spread that message of God's free gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus!



### Application: Cry Out to God

Sometimes a Bible passage contains imperatives that we can theologically translate into directives for following Jesus in our day. Chuck places our attention on Lamentations 2:18–19 which states,

*Cry aloud before the Lord. . . .  
Let your tears flow like a river  
day and night. . . .  
Pour out your hearts like water to the Lord.*

Every consequence of ignoring or rejecting God proves devastating, worthy of our tears. It breaks the heart of God more than it breaks ours.



## Coming to Terms with God's Wrath

*Selections from Lamentations 2*

As ambassadors of Christ, we pray that Christ restores. He hears our prayers. Take time now to pray—very specifically—for those in your life, city, and country who are hurting themselves by rejecting God. Record below the names of those for whom you are praying.

Because of Jeremiah's lament, we can more deeply appreciate the severity of God's wrath as well as treasure His love and forgiveness. Now, let yourself delight in wondrous amazement as did the apostle John who wrote:

*See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!*  
(1 John 3:1)



### A FINAL PRAYER

Take a few more moments to reflect upon the truths you learned in this study. Plant them in your heart and let them take root as godly convictions. Write a fitting prayer below to end your time in Lamentations 2.

#### ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a [copy](#) of the book for your library. Chuck also uses the [New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#). It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.



# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY SIX

### What to Remember When You Hit Rock Bottom

*Selections from Lamentations 3*

*I hope you receive a ray of hope from Jeremiah's words in Lamentations 3, that God's peace will touch you along with a good measure of anticipation of what God may be doing around you and, equally important, within you.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**I**F Jeremiah ever felt he had hit rock bottom, it would have been when he penned Lamentations—that “elegy in a graveyard.” It almost certainly caused him more pain than the time Zedekiah ordered Jeremiah to be dropped into a deep cistern-turned-mud-pit (Jeremiah 38).

During rock-bottom days, our heart tugs at us and our mind shouts at us to force us deeper and deeper into the dark abyss of self-pity. That abyss could've trapped Jeremiah as he reflected upon the horror of Jerusalem's devastation. But it didn't.

Jeremiah didn't let the dark of night keep him from looking toward the light of day. He remembered God and directed his heart toward Him. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study on Lamentations 3, we will explore Jeremiah's pivotal moment . . . should the time come when we must live during devastating circumstances as Jeremiah did.



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## What to Remember When You Hit Rock Bottom

*Selections from Lamentations 3*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a moment to reflect upon these four verses from Psalm 119:

*I used to wander off until you disciplined me;  
but now I closely follow your word.  
You are good and do only good;  
teach me your decrees. . . .  
My suffering was good for me,  
for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.  
Your instructions are more valuable to me  
than millions in gold and silver. (Psalm 119:67–68, 71–72)*

Use the psalmist's prayer above as inspiration for your own prayer as you prepare to study God's Word. Record your prayer below.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Lamentations 3 reveals how hopelessness did not conquer the prophet. Now, *hope* isn't the first or final word in Lamentations' five chapters. The sting of Jerusalem's destruction still throbbed too much at the time Jeremiah wrote these words in his journal.



## What to Remember When You Hit Rock Bottom

*Selections from Lamentations 3*

Nevertheless, Jeremiah found hope in his misery. As you read, notice how he preaches to himself the truths of God's character and plan.<sup>1</sup> Why is it important that we practice preaching to ourselves? What can we gain from it? Write in the space below about your experience with this spiritual discipline.

*Remind yourself every morning how God's loyal love is fresh. —Chuck Swindoll*



### Observation: I Will Remember This

Lamentations 3 contains sixty-six verses and retains the acrostic pattern used in the first two chapters. Only in chapter three, every group of three verses begins with the same consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

### Peace Has Been Stripped Away—Lamentations 3:1–21

Just as we observed in Lamentations 2, Jeremiah heaps “He has” upon “He has” as he refers to what the Lord has done. This time, however, Jeremiah aligns himself with Jerusalem's pain by journaling how he himself has received the Lord's judgment.

Pay attention to this perspective as you observe [Lamentations 3:1–21](#). Note especially how Jeremiah simply stated his pain without dismissing it, distorting it, or disdaining it.



## What to Remember When You Hit Rock Bottom

*Selections from Lamentations 3*

### The Lord Is My Portion—Lamentations 3:22–33

Lamentations 3:22 launches the reader into a reflection of hope. Jeremiah had told his heart and soul to “remember this” in 3:21. Now we will read what we all should remember when we’ve hit rock bottom. Read [Lamentations 3:22–33](#). Do so slowly. Absorb it. After you have internalized it, briefly summarize its key ideas below.

### Let Us Examine Our Ways—Lamentations 3:34–66

In [Lamentations 3:34–66](#), Jeremiah began reasoning with himself even as he sank back into despair. Observe this passage now. Pay special attention to the internal debate in 3:34–42. Summarize the debate and record any other observations you find interesting as you wrap up observing this chapter.

*When the monotony of anguish and heartbreak takes over, one easily moves into the realm of hopelessness. It's a dangerous place to be. I call it dangerous because that is where our adversary loves for us to be. He loves it when you lose hope. He loves it when a preacher loses hope. To keep from losing hope, to fight our adversary, we must begin by remembering the Lord. —Chuck Swindoll*



## What to Remember When You Hit Rock Bottom

*Selections from Lamentations 3*



### Interpretation: His Mercies Never Cease

Did you notice how verses 25–27 each speak of God’s goodness and of the goodness of following God. That’s because each verse begins with the Hebrew word for “good” to keep the acrostic style. In Lamentations 3:22–32, Jeremiah told himself to remember key truths like God’s goodness. Here’s a list of the key truths:

- 1) His faithful love never ends.
- 2) His mercies never cease.
- 3) His faithfulness is great.
- 4) His goodness comes to those who depend on Him.
- 5) His salvation belongs to those who wait patiently on Him.
- 6) His compassion follows our grief.

Because of these truths, we can receive God as our inheritance. He has made Himself available to us. Jeremiah lifted his eyes above his affliction to focus on the benefits of having God as his portion. How can these truths help Jesus-followers today if we were to hit rock bottom?

*Enter into a world where God has a chance to speak. Listen to Him. Remember how His mercies are new every morning. Remember His faithfulness. —Chuck Swindoll*





## What to Remember When You Hit Rock Bottom

*Selections from Lamentations 3*



### Correlation: Once Far Off, Now Brought Near

Let's continue exploring the theme of remembering. Paul spoke of its immense importance in Ephesians 2:11–22. He exhorted his readers to remember the jaw-dropping reality of the believer's inheritance: God's adoption of us through Christ's sacrifice for us. Read that *passage* now. Notice immediately Paul's command "Don't forget" (NLT), or "Remember" (NASB).

End with a brief reflection of gratitude for the access to all God's goodness you now have through Christ as well as for His pledge to grant you that access eternally.

Better than possessing gold coins, palatial homes, global esteem, a prize-winning genius, or world-dominating power; we get God. Christ is our inheritance. We need not fear the lot we have in life. The paradise of God awaits those who wait on Him.



### Application: Getting Focused

To help us apply the truths of Lamentations 3, Chuck urges us to *focus on our focus*. When you feel pulled toward the rock bottom of self-pity and despair, how does your own focus change for the worse? What shapes your mind-set or grabs your attention during those seasons? Are you in a season like that right now?



## What to Remember When You Hit Rock Bottom

*Selections from Lamentations 3*

How can you shift your focus from darkness to the light of Jesus' character, ways, and promises? Focusing on Jesus can help you battle through the night until the light of day comes.

Just as we individually go through times darkness, the whole world entered a period of darkness at the fall of humanity. The prophet Isaiah called it the "shadow of death" (Isaiah 25:7). When Christ resurrected, He ushered in the dawn according to Paul (Romans 13:12). The light is already shining. Day is almost at hand.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for giving me the light of hope in a world so full of darkness. Thank You for giving me rock-solid truths and unshakeable hope that get me through those times when I hit rock bottom. Thank You for preserving these laments from Jeremiah's journal of woes. They teach me and encourage me. For we can turn to You at any time. In Christ's name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a *copy* of the book for your library. Chuck also uses the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.



# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY SEVEN

### Ugly Scenes of Utter Humiliation

*Selections from Lamentations 4*

*Those in Jerusalem who were given leadership responsibilities let the people down. They lied to them. They misrepresented the truth. And they called a lie, truth. God assigned more guilt to them for their misuse of authority. Jeremiah, however, proved himself faithful. Regardless how others responded to Jeremiah, he always told the truth. That took commitment. He wasn't looking to be popular.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**F**OLLOWING Jesus must never devolve into mechanical rituals—like heartless singing or thoughtless rehearsing. Jesus-followers must avoid placing their faith in God's gifts rather than God Himself. Disciples need to be careful not to confuse personal aspirations with divine intentions.

True worshipers, instead, aim their hearts at God's person, submit their wills to God's plan, and shape their minds with God's Word.

Such traits picture an authentic, vibrant spiritual life. But most people in Jeremiah's day portrayed an altogether different image: they trusted gold over God, politics over prayer, empty talk over honest walk. The Lord of Hosts had had enough. In 586 BC, He put an end to their vanities.

Jeremiah preserved the ugly scenes, and it doesn't get any uglier than Lamentations 4. Nevertheless, vital truth awaits those who patiently excavate this chapter for divine wisdom, which we'll do in today's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study.



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## Ugly Scenes of Utter Humiliation

*Selections from Lamentations 4*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Think over these words from the original hymnal of God's elect, the psalter:

*Oh, the joys of those who do not  
follow the advice of the wicked,  
or stand around with sinners,  
or join in with mockers.  
But they delight in the law of the LORD,  
meditating on it day and night.  
They are like trees planted along the riverbank,  
bearing fruit each season.  
Their leaves never wither,  
and they prosper in all they do.  
But not the wicked!  
They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.  
They will be condemned at the time of judgment.  
Sinners will have no place among the godly.  
For the LORD watches over the path of the godly,  
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction. (Psalm 1)*

Use Psalm 1 above as well as what you've already learned in Lamentations to guide your time of prayer as you begin this study.



## Ugly Scenes of Utter Humiliation

*Selections from Lamentations 4*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Two verses, elsewhere in the Old Testament, capture theological foundations that undergird Lamentations 4. These verses are:

*When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice.  
But when the wicked are in power, they groan. (Proverbs 29:2)*

*Unless the LORD builds a house,  
the work of the builders is wasted.  
Unless the LORD protects a city,  
guarding it with sentries will do no good. (Psalm 127:1)*

Summarize the key ideas in these verses and how they might anticipate what you will soon read in Lamentations 4.

As we will see, the wicked rulers led the whole city of Jerusalem to trust in the city's prestige and longevity, power and prosperity. Even with prophetic warnings and unmistakable facts about Babylon's encroachment, the people took repose in a bed of lies.

God is the God of truth. No lies. He made humanity to reflect His truth-telling and truth-believing character. So He does not let lies march on and on. There will always come a time when He says *ENOUGH!*



## Ugly Scenes of Utter Humiliation

*Selections from Lamentations 4*



### Observation: The Gold Has Lost Its Luster

Biblical authors often used contrasts to make their points. Jeremiah in Lamentations used this rhetorical device in combination with images to emphasize just how destitute Jerusalem had become. The images include gold, children, princes, and eagles. Be warned, the scenes are ugly.

Pay attention to those images and contrasts as you observe [Lamentations 4](#). Note below what you find interesting, key ideas, and even puzzles which you may want to explore further.<sup>1</sup>

Did you notice the contrast at the very end? Jeremiah contrasted God's posture toward Edom and Zion in [Lamentations 4:21–22](#). Summarize this contrast and note how Jeremiah inserted hope in these verses.

It took faith and courage for Jeremiah to warn the people of Edom that their time of judgment would come. Jeremiah knew that God would hold the Edomites accountable for their moral debauchery, hostile striving, and giddy delight over Jerusalem's downfall . . . because God is not only the God of Jerusalem and Israel but the Lord of heaven's armies who will judge all the earth.



## Ugly Scenes of Utter Humiliation

*Selections from Lamentations 4*



### Interpretation: Misplaced Trust

A key theme in this chapter revolves around misplaced trust. The inhabitants of Jerusalem foolishly put their trust in sacred structures, ear-pleasing teachers, nonchalant spiritual leaders, and political alliances.

Take a moment to review those verses that speak of this misplaced trust: [Lamentations 4:1, 12–13, 17, 20](#). Carefully *study* and meditate upon their errors. What did they do that led to God's judgment? Clearly, the church is not a political entity like ancient Judah, but how might we today keep from making similar errors in our relationship with God as ancient Jerusalem had done?

In short, the inhabitants of Jerusalem simply took God out of their sights. They failed to understand a most essential truth about God: God is a personable God who seeks a personal relationship rather than an impersonal, religious transaction.



### Correlation: This Man Should Die

Let's explore two scenes from the majestic book of Hebrew prophecy: Jeremiah. These two scenes picture how the spiritual authorities condemned truth-telling Jeremiah and exalted truth-garbling Hananiah. These two scenes also illustrate the wrongs for which God eventually judged Jerusalem.

Read [Jeremiah 26:7–11](#) and [Jeremiah 28](#). How do these narrative scenes illustrate the theological truths couched in the poetry of Lamentations 4?



## Ugly Scenes of Utter Humiliation

*Selections from Lamentations 4*

Jeremiah feared God more than he feared hostile people. Jeremiah trusted God more than he trusted the deceptions of the human heart. Jeremiah spoke to the people so they might turn to the God behind the speaker rather than fawn at the feet of the speaker himself.



### Application: Two Traits from Jeremiah's Life

To wrap up this study, let's consider the godly example of Jeremiah. Chuck Swindoll extracted two traits from Jeremiah's life that apply to all Jesus-followers today. Reflect upon them below.

- 1) *Regardless how others responded to him, Jeremiah always told the truth.* He uttered straight talk. That takes commitment because many will not want to hear God's message.
- 2) *Regardless what others did to him, Jeremiah never retreated.* He never ran scared of the pain. That takes courage because many will use a fist to silence the messenger.

Which of the two connect with your situation in life right now? Articulate below how the Spirit, through this study of Scripture, is prompting you to respond to His message. Get specific. Record your appropriate faith-response below.

*God told Jeremiah, "I called you to live at your best, to pursue righteousness, to speak truth, to sustain a drive toward excellence." Sure, Jeremiah got discouraged from time to time. I realize it's easier to be average, to live without enthusiasm. Easier, but not more fulfilling. God calls you, follower of Jesus, to a life of special purpose far beyond what you're capable of living in your own power. Difficulties will come. Don't quit! —Chuck Swindoll*





## Ugly Scenes of Utter Humiliation

*Selections from Lamentations 4*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for Jeremiah's example, for his faith, and for his words. Divine truth drips even from his laments. Help me to learn from them. Help me to learn from his experience. I believe, Lord, but I need You to strengthen me where I'm lacking. I want to tell the truth. I don't want to retreat. In Christ's name, amen.*

### ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a [copy](#) of the book for your library. Chuck also uses the [New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#). It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.



# LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

## STUDY EIGHT

### Jeremiah's Mournful Swan Song

*Selections from Lamentations 5*

*Lamentations chapter five, from start to finish, is a prayer offered to God. Jeremiah poured out his heart to the Lord for all that he had been dealing with regarding Jerusalem's destruction. Staring at a devastation following a terrible calamity is just a dreadful experience. Nevertheless, remember this: no matter how bad and sad the scene around us may be, God is always present and the same.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SOMETIMES, the heat of our pain grows so hot that it garbles our thoughts. Raw emotions unsettle our speech. Words become less measured. They might even fly out like steam from a boiling kettle. When Jeremiah penned the end of his journal, he had reached that point.

In the Hebrew language, the fifth chapter of Lamentations has no acrostic form like the previous chapters. Jeremiah wrote with more spontaneity. Some have speculated that the literary disruption reflects the spiritual and physical chaos Jeremiah had witnessed.

Amid high emotions, Jeremiah retained a presence of mind that is worth our attention. His theological foundations had led him to lift his eyes beyond the monstrous pain to the God of the heavens who controls it all.

In the last study of this *Searching the Scriptures* series on Lamentations, we will explore how Jeremiah did not let the pain keep him from expressing his confidence in God and seeking help from God.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before we explore Lamentations, we need to pause a moment to pray. Just as we pause and prepare ourselves for an important conversation, we do well to do the same before studying God's Word. The only difference here, however, is that we ask help from the One we're about to talk with. Do that now.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Profitable Bible study requires time and concentration and empathy.<sup>1</sup> Literary keys unlock interpretive insights. Putting ourselves in the place of the author expands our theological perspective. Be sure to practice these study tools as you read Lamentations 5.

*God has given us His Word not just to satisfy idle curiosity. He's given us His Word to give us insight into our lives. In fact, to transform us to be more like Him, to see life as He sees it.*  
—Chuck Swindoll



### Observation: Why Have You Abandoned Us for So Long?

Observe [Lamentations 5](#). Note how Jeremiah directs his words to God. Pay attention to his imagery. Watch how his subject shifts from the destitution of the people to the unchanging character of God to a desperate plea. Record your observations below.



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Lamentations 5 contains four imperatives from Jeremiah—all directed to God. List those imperatives below.

- 1) 5:1a \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) 5:1b \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) 5:21a \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) 5:21b \_\_\_\_\_

Did you notice the distinctiveness of Lamentations 5:19 compared to the other verses?

*But LORD, you remain the same forever!  
Your throne continues from generation to generation.*

It's a theological jewel about the nature of God. His character never changes. His rule will forever endure.



### Interpretation: Remembrance and Restoration

Reflect upon and *research* the significance of Jeremiah's imperatives in *Lamentations 5:1, 21*. Explain how these imperatives inform us theologically as well as practically.



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A vital logical connection exists between Lamentations 5:19 and 5:20. The same exists between 5:21 and 5:22. Think carefully over these two pairs of *verses*. What is the logical connection? Why is it significant and how is it instructive for us today?

*I find it marvelous that the Lord doesn't pick up my mood, that the Lord doesn't see the frame of mind I'm in and then take His cue from that. No, His mercies are new every morning. His plan is set. His character is holy. His purpose is pure. His ways are right. So all the way through life, no matter how bad or how sad our situation may get, you can count on this: the Lord you worship and serve remains the same forever. He is always present.*  
—Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: You Are My King and My God

Psalm 44 captures similar themes that thread the entire book of Lamentations, especially chapter 5. The writer of Psalm 44 also wrote the prayer using the characteristics of poetic lament common to this genre of Hebrew literature. The psalmist, like Jeremiah in Lamentations, aims at God's redemption and restoration.

Read the *psalm* now. Think through it. Pray through it. Record what you find interesting and important as it relates to your study of Lamentations.



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Could you feel the weight of the psalmist's faith even with its mix of frustration and desperation? Never hesitate to take your full self to God—the good and the bad, the pretty and the ugly. We have no need for a mask. God sees all of us. Express your trust and adoration as well as your pain, confusion, and turmoil. They aren't contradictory. God knows us and hears us.



### Application: Concluding Principles

To wrap up our time in the book of Lamentations, Chuck shares four principles built both on the book of Lamentations as well as the life of its author, Jeremiah. The four concluding principles are:

- 1) *Some are called to ministries that are demanding, painful, and unappreciated.* Ease and convenience rarely accompany serving others and preaching the gospel. Our calling from God requires grit.
- 2) *Those who are called to minister to hardhearted people must guard against becoming like them.* We have strength from God's Spirit to sustain us through the grind. People don't dictate our attitude. God does.
- 3) *No matter how bad and sad the scene around us may be, God is always present.* Jesus abides with us and walks beside us through it all. That is His promise.
- 4) *No matter how bleak things may seem and how weak you may feel, prayer is always essential.* Jeremiah never hesitated to bring his need to God, and nor should we!

Which of these principles grabs you most? Why is it important that you remember that principle? How do you need to apply it to your life?

Until Jesus makes all things new, uncertainty and chaos will always fill the world we live in. Lament will not go away until Jesus Himself wipes away every tear from our eye. Until that day, we can continue to go to God for direction, comfort, and hope. We can turn to Him in our laments as Jeremiah taught us. We can trust Him through our laments as Jeremiah showed us.



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### A FINAL PRAYER

Take time now to write your closing prayer based on the teachings that have been most important to you throughout this eight-part series.

#### ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a [copy](#) of the book for your library. Chuck also uses the [New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#). It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.

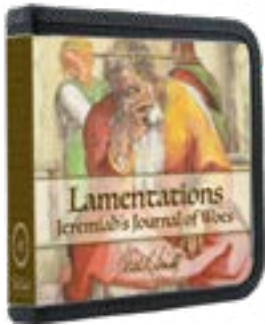


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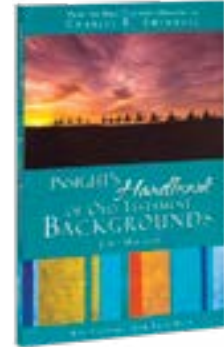
### Tools for Digging Deeper



**Lamentations:**  
Jeremiah's Journal of Woes  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
CD series



**God's Masterwork, Volume Three:**  
Poets, Prophets, and Promises—  
A Survey of Job–Daniel  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
CD series



**Insight's Handbook of  
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey, director of *Searching the Scriptures* Studies, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

