

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

IF 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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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.



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Nevertheless, Jeremiah found hope in his misery. As you read, notice how he preaches to himself the truths of God's character and plan.¹ 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.



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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



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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



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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?



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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 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.

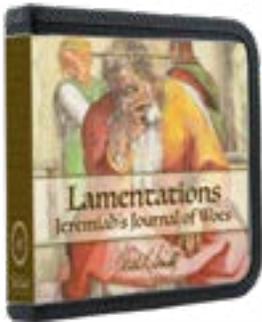


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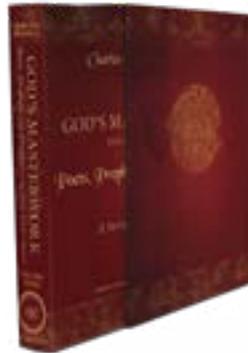
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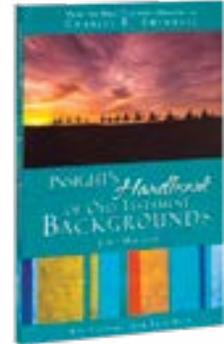
Tools for Digging Deeper



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Jeremiah's Journal of Woes
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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.

