

LWYL PRACTICES

LAMENT FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND CITY

“Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.” When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. Then I said...

Nehemiah 1:3-5

THINGS ARE NOT GOING WELL...

Nehemiah opens with a scene that reveals a practice that those who love where they live have engaged for centuries. It's called lament, and is a prayer practice that Jesus himself engaged in and one that permeates the collection of prayer poems found in the Bible called Psalms. Lament involves noticing and naming the brokenness that is present in life and the places where life unfolds, and also consists of remembering and naming God's never ending presence and faithfulness, even when "things are not going well."

HOW TO PRACTICE LAMENT FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND CITY

Consider inviting a few friends or family members to do this with you.

1. Spend time each week intentionally paying attention to your neighborhood and city.

IDEA

Walk or drive to school, work and the other places you go in silence. Set your phone to "do not disturb", turn off the radio and simply notice. What do you see? What do you hear? Where do you encounter obvious signs, or hints, that "things are not going well?"

2. Write down what you notice along the way in your phone's notes app, a Field Notes like notebook or in the space below.

3. Set aside time to slowly read through your list (you might do this over multiple days). Allow yourself, like Nehemiah, to feel the weightiness and pain of what you noticed, and allow that to guide you into unfiltered, unhurried conversation with God.

IDEA 

Write out your prayer of lament.

1. Name the brokenness.
2. Ask God to help.
3. Remember and retell an instance of God's active presence and rescue.
4. Ask God to restore the "things that are not going well" in your neighborhood or city.
5. Affirm your trust in God, and give thanks for what God will do..

4. Pay attention to how Jesus invites you to enter the pain of something that you noticed as someone who's joining him to help heal the world. This may take some time to emerge (Nehemiah said it took him "days."). But keep listening, praying and paying attention, and when the specific invitation comes, write it down, share it with trusted friends and begin to act on it.