

## **Dr. Leslie Allen, Lamentations, Session 15, Lamentations and Christianity Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Allen, Lamentations, Session 15, Lamentations and Christianity, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Leslie Allen's Session 15 explores the Christian perspective on the book of Lamentations.** It draws parallels between Lamentations and Jesus' grief over Jerusalem, highlighting the necessity and spiritual value of lament. **Allen identifies several key points, including God's sensitivity to suffering, the need to verbalize grief, and the sanctification of human grief as exemplified by the book's title and funeral laments.** The lecture emphasizes that Lamentations provides a scriptural model for grieving, acknowledges room for protest and grievance, and discusses the concept of the "wounded healer." **Ultimately, Allen suggests that grief, while painful, can lead to growth and a deeper understanding of life's essentials, citing examples like Charles Darwin and drawing from works on grief and suffering.** The source concludes by suggesting that one might even find a "grace disguised" within the experience of grief.

**2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Allen, Lamentations, Session 15 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Lamentations).**



**Allen\_Lam\_Session1  
5.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 15, Lamentations and Christianity

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Leslie Allen's Session 15 lecture, "Lamentations and Christianity."

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Leslie Allen on Lamentations and Christianity

##### Overview:

Dr. Allen's lecture explores the relevance and interpretation of the Old Testament book of Lamentations from a Christian perspective. He moves beyond a purely historical reading to consider its enduring value for believers facing suffering. He presents 15 key points to illustrate this.

##### Main Themes and Ideas:

##### 1. New Testament Counterpart:

- The weeping of Jesus over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) is presented as a New Testament parallel to Lamentations. While Lamentations looks back at past suffering, Jesus looks forward to future suffering, both expressing grief and a hint of guilt.
- Quote: *"As Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, if you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes."*

##### 1. Permanent Value for the Suffering Faithful:

- Drawing on Brevard Childs, Allen argues that Lamentations isn't just a historical account but a resource for every generation of believers facing unbearable hardship.
- Quote (paraphrasing Childs): *"The book of Lamentations serves every successive generation of the faithful, the suffering faithful, for whom history has become unbearable."*

##### 1. Canonical Significance: God's Sensitivity to Suffering:

- Lamentations aligns with other parts of scripture in showing that God is sensitive to suffering. Examples include Exodus 2:23-25 and Exodus 3:7-9, where God hears the cries of the Israelites in Egypt.

- Quote: *"God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them."* (Exodus 2:24-25)
- There is a lesson for God's people to learn in the exhortation to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Exodus 12:15). As Ecclesiastes 3:4 states, there is *"a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance."*

#### 1. **Necessity to verbalize Grief**

- Allen emphasized the spiritual value of lamentations as a lengthy exposition of grief, drawing from Dorothee Surla's *Suffering* that *"the first step towards overcoming suffering is to find a language that leads out of the uncomprehended suffering that makes one mute."*
- Allen recommends Marguerite Mouvard's *The Path Through Grief* and shares the poem *"When the waters of loss rose, I built an ark of words, took two of every part of speech, and rode the flood."*

#### 1. **Quest for Interpretation and Evaluation:**

- Lamentations represents a quest to find meaning in suffering. In the specific context of Lamentations, the mentor encourages the people to take responsibility for what had happened and to realize that they were to blame in this particular case.

#### 1. **Sanctification of Human Grief:**

- The Hebrew name for Lamentations, *Kinot* (funeral laments), highlights the necessity and even the "celebration" of grief processes. It acknowledges the physical and emotional manifestations of grief as valid and important.
- Quote: *"Grief is necessary. Those grief processes are necessary...that human process of working through grief slowly but surely, the Kina, this funeral lament, with all its physical manifestations of tearing your clothes and bursting into tears and so on."*

#### 1. **Scriptural Model for Grieving:**

- Lamentations provides a scriptural model for grieving. Other models include Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 1:10 and Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:37-39, indicating the temple as a place where prayer laments can be heard.

### 1. **Grief as a Long and Cyclical Process:**

- Grief is not linear but often circles back, bringing renewed sadness and a sense of loss. Allen cites C.S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed*, which notes that "*grief is like a bomber circling round and dropping its bombs each time the circle brings it overhead.*" Ups and downs are normal during bereavement.

### 1. **Room for Protest and Challenge:**

- Lamentations acknowledges the validity of protesting and even challenging God in the face of suffering (e.g., the repeated "Why, why?" questions).

### 1. **Room for Grievance and a Call for Justice:**

- It's acceptable to express grievance against those who have caused harm and to call for justice. Allen cites Lamentations 1:9 and 3:59-66, as well as 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 and Revelation 6:9-10, as biblical examples. He references a scene from P.D. James' *Original Sin*, illustrating the need for a "*God of Vengeance*" when persecuted.

### 1. **Turning Point, Not Closure:**

- Lamentations 5 represents a turning point – glimpses of hope emerging from the darkness. However, these glimpses must be self-realized, not imposed by well-meaning but unhelpful platitudes. Allen cautions against misusing Romans 8:28, which is best applied in the context of genuine hardship and suffering.

### 1. **The Wounded Healer:**

- The mentor in Lamentations embodies the concept of the "wounded healer" (Carl Jung, Henri Nouwen). His own scars qualify him to help others. However, Allen also acknowledges the risk of being overwhelmed by others' suffering and needing time out.

### 1. **Need for Adequate Time in Grieving:**

- It is important to allow adequate time for grieving, since "*grief has its own timetable.*" Patience is required.

### 1. **Grieving Can Cause a Risk to Faith or Life:**

- Allen cites the example of Charles Darwin, who lost his faith after the death of his daughter, and emphasizes the risk of suicide if grief is not properly addressed

(Dorothee Sulla). He shares a story of a young man he visited as a chaplain, highlighting the importance of "*tears, talk, and time*" in the healing process.

**1. A Grace Disguised:**

- Drawing on Gerald Sittser's *A Grace Disguised*, Allen concludes that grief, though painful, can ultimately lead to growth and a deeper appreciation for life. He quotes Jesus "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted*" and shares that sorrow indicates that people who have suffered loss are living authentically in a world of misery.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Allen's lecture presents a nuanced and theologically rich understanding of Lamentations, emphasizing its enduring relevance for Christians facing suffering. He advocates for acknowledging grief, providing space for lament, and finding meaning and growth even in the midst of profound loss.

## 4. Study Guide: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 15, Lamentations and Christianity

### Lamentations and Christianity: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How does Jesus's weeping over Jerusalem in Luke 19 offer a New Testament parallel to the grief expressed in Lamentations?
2. According to Brevard Childs, what is the enduring significance of Lamentations for successive generations of believers?
3. How do passages in Exodus (2:23-25; 3:7-9) demonstrate God's sensitivity to suffering, echoing a theme found in Lamentations?
4. What is the significance of the Hebrew name *Kinot* for the book of Lamentations?
5. How does the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel provide a scriptural model for grieving in the Old Testament?
6. According to C.S. Lewis, how does the cyclical nature of grief impact individuals?
7. What scriptural examples does Allen provide to support the concept of calling for justice against human enemies who are doing us wrong, found in Lamentations?
8. What does the "turning point" in Lamentations 5 represent in the grieving process?
9. How can offering platitudes like "It's all for the best" or quoting Romans 8:28 be unhelpful to someone who is grieving?
10. How can sorrow enlarge the soul, as mentioned in Gerald Sitzler's book, *A Grace Disguised*?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem's impending destruction, mirroring the grief in Lamentations over Jerusalem's past destruction. While Lamentations looks back, Jesus looks forward, but both share an expression of profound grief.

2. Childs argues that Lamentations provides a resource for every generation of suffering faithful for whom history has become unbearable. It moves beyond a simple historical account to offer solace and meaning.
3. These passages show God hearing the cries of the Israelites and taking notice of their suffering, demonstrating His active involvement and sensitivity to their plight. This echoes the petitions in Lamentations to "Look and See."
4. *Kinot* means "funeral laments," highlighting the book's emphasis on the necessity of human grief and the physical and emotional expression of that grief. It underscores the sanctification of human grief.
5. Hannah's story provides a model of deep distress, prayer, and bitter weeping, demonstrating the validity and intensity of grief before God. It also reveals the promise that can come from such displays of faith.
6. Lewis describes grief as a "bomber circling round," indicating its cyclical nature and the way grief can unexpectedly resurface even after periods of relative calm. This highlights the unpredictable nature of the grieving process.
7. Allen cites 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Revelation 6:9-10, and Jesus's parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18. These examples show that scripture supports calls for justice against those who persecute or do wrong to others.
8. It represents a point where, although the pain may be just as intense, there is a glimpse of hope for a positive future. It's the beginning of a dawn where the darkness slowly begins to lift away.
9. Such platitudes can dismiss or invalidate the griever's feelings and fail to acknowledge the depth and complexity of their suffering. Also, it's important to remember the difficult context in which Romans 8:28 was spoken.
10. Sorrow can strip away pretense, vanity, and waste, forcing us to ask basic questions about what is most important in life. It can lead to a simpler, more meaningful life, characterized by increased compassion and appreciation for the ordinary.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of Lamentations as a model for processing grief. How does it validate emotions like sorrow, anger, and despair, and what comfort can it offer to individuals and communities experiencing loss?
2. Explore the theme of God's sensitivity to suffering as portrayed in Lamentations and other Old Testament texts like Exodus. How do these passages inform our understanding of God's character and relationship with humanity in times of crisis?
3. Analyze the role of the "wounded healer" in Lamentations and in contemporary pastoral care. How can personal experience of suffering equip individuals to minister to others, and what are the potential pitfalls of this role?
4. Examine the tension between faith and doubt in the context of grief, drawing on examples from Lamentations, the story of Charles Darwin, and Elie Wiesel's reflections on the Holocaust. How can individuals maintain or rebuild their faith in the face of profound loss?
5. Evaluate the concept of "a grace disguised" as it relates to grief and suffering. Is it possible for positive outcomes to emerge from painful experiences, and what factors contribute to this transformation?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Lamentations:** A collection of five poetic laments grieving the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army.
- **Echa:** The Hebrew name for Lamentations, derived from the book's opening word, meaning "How!" or a shriek.
- **Kinot:** Another Hebrew name for Lamentations, meaning "funeral laments," highlighting the book's focus on grief and mourning.
- **Mentor:** In the context of Lamentations, the speaker or guide who leads the congregation in expressing their grief and seeking meaning.
- **Canonical Significance:** The importance of a book or passage within the broader context of Scripture and its alignment with other biblical themes and teachings.
- **Hermeneutical Approach:** An interpretive method that seeks to understand the meaning of a text in its historical and literary context, as well as its relevance to contemporary readers.
- **The Wounded Healer:** A concept popularized by Carl Jung and Henry Nouwen, referring to individuals whose own experiences of suffering enable them to offer healing and compassion to others.
- **Grievance:** A feeling of resentment or anger over perceived injustice or mistreatment. In Lamentations, it refers to the expression of these feelings towards enemies and calls for justice.
- **Turning Point:** A moment of significant change or realization in the grieving process, often marked by a glimpse of hope or a shift in perspective.
- **A Grace Disguised:** A concept explored by Gerald Sitzler, suggesting that even in the midst of profound loss, there is the potential for growth, transformation, and ultimately, a deeper understanding of God's grace.

## 5. FAQs on Allen, Ezekiel, Session 15, Lamentations and Christianity, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Lamentations and Christianity: An FAQ

- **How does the New Testament relate to the Old Testament book of Lamentations?**
- Dr. Allen highlights Luke 19:41-44, where Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, foreseeing its future destruction. This parallels Lamentations' backward gaze at Jerusalem's fall, both expressing deep grief and a sense of guilt (or foreknowledge of guilt) regarding the city's fate. Lamentations grieves what has been, and Jesus grieves what is to come.
- **What lasting value does Lamentations offer beyond its historical context?**
- Brevard Childs suggests that Lamentations serves as a voice for every generation of suffering faithful when history becomes unbearable. It provides a language and a model for expressing grief in times of dire trouble, making it relevant beyond the specific events of 586 BC.
- **How does Lamentations align with other parts of Scripture?**
- Lamentations echoes themes found throughout the Bible. It emphasizes God's sensitivity to suffering, similar to Exodus 2:23-25 and 3:7-9, where God hears the cries of the Israelites in slavery. Also, Lamentations reinforces the importance of empathy, aligning with Romans 12:15 ("rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep") and Ecclesiastes 3:4 ("a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance").
- **Why is verbalizing grief so important, according to the speaker?**
- Drawing from Dorothee Surla's work, the speaker emphasizes that finding a language for suffering is the first step toward overcoming it. Verbalizing grief, as Lamentations demonstrates, allows individuals to process pain and articulate their feelings, preventing it from becoming an overwhelming and isolating experience, possibly leading to suicide. As quoted by Marguerite Mouvard, "When the waters of loss rose, I built an ark of words, took two of every part of speech, and rode the flood."

- **Does Lamentations offer any guidance on finding meaning in suffering?**
- Yes, Lamentations, particularly through the mentor figure, suggests finding meaning by taking responsibility for past actions. This doesn't apply to all forms of grief, but in the context of Lamentations, it reflects a need for the people to acknowledge their role in the events that led to Jerusalem's destruction, similar to the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- **Why is Lamentations called *Kinot* (funeral laments) in the Hebrew tradition, and what does this signify?**
- The name *Kinot* emphasizes the sanctification of human grief. By naming the book after funeral laments, rather than a more religiously appropriate name, Jewish tradition acknowledges the necessity and validity of the raw, physical, and emotional expressions of grief. It celebrates the human process of working through sorrow.
- **Does Lamentations provide models for healthy grieving?**
- Yes, Lamentations itself serves as a scriptural model for grieving. The stories of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:10 and Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:37-39 demonstrate the importance of prayer, expressing grief to God, and seeking solace in the temple, or a sacred place. These models offer examples of individuals and communities turning to God in their distress.
- **What insights does Lamentations offer on the grieving process and the role of hope and justice?**
- Lamentations acknowledges that grief is a long and cyclical process, much like C.S. Lewis's analogy of grief as a bomber circling and dropping bombs. It also validates the need for protest and grievance, even against God, and calls for justice against enemies. However, it also hints at a "turning point," a glimpse of hope for a positive future, though not a complete closure. This hope is self-realized, not merely platitudes from well-meaning friends.