

PRAYERS WHEN YOU CAN'T FIND THE WORDS

REPEATING THEMES

As I've used the lament Psalms in my praying, I've noticed that there are elements which keep coming up. First, they describe the distressing situation clearly and honestly... with emotion. Secondly, they often express truths about who God is. Images such as, 'my refuge' and 'my shield' pepper the laments. My favorite is 'my rock'—not as in a stone you can pick up and chuck. 'Rock' as in timeless, stable and immovable. Often the Psalmist will exhort his/her own soul to remember and trust these things about God. Finally, they include direct requests for God to act. There is no hopeless fatalism here.

GETTING STARTED

When we, or those we love, are in dark times, it is sometimes hard to know what to say in our prayers, other than 'please make it stop!' What's more, it's harder than normal to settle in to prayer because we feel anxious and upset. I've found using the words of the lament Psalms themselves helpful. Lines like:

"Save me Oh God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire where there is no foothold" (Psalm 69.1-2).

If you find it hard to pray someone else's words, you can use some of the repeated patterns in the lament Psalms to shape your prayers. Here are some simple steps to get started:

1. **Stop**

Stop, slow down and just sit for at least two minutes, taking some deep breaths. Ask for Jesus' personal presence and Spirit to comfort and lead you.

2. **Notice**

Start to notice what's going on for you at present. It may be helpful to write some things down as you notice them. Put your worries and wailings into words. Notice your emotions, how your body is reacting, the things you've been doing and the things your mind has been

dwelling on. Put them into words.

3. Speak

Start telling God about what you've found. Just speak to God about it, lay it out before God. It may be messy and raw. It may involve tears, questions and desperate cries. The idea is to bring your real self to God by putting what's going on for you into words.

4. Remember

Remember, who the real God is—particularly the God you know in the gospels of Jesus and the concrete ways God has been faithful to you in the past. Often scripture will come to mind.

5. Ask

As you talk to God about your situation and remember who God is, ask God to act. Put into words what you would really love to see happen. Ask for specific help. This may be the point at which you confess any sin you've noticed (name it specifically) and joyfully receive forgiveness.

6. Hope

Talk to God about what you hope for on the other side of this. Thank God for the ultimate hope we have in Christ, seeing clearly rather than dimly, seeing God face to face, no more tears, evil, death, or sin, ourselves perfected.

The point of all this is to deepen your relationship with your God by bringing your real self to God. It is a relationship in which you are fully known and unfailingly loved. We can turn towards God in those times when we feel like we are just hauling ourselves through the days.

GRAEME CHISWELL

Graeme is the Discipleship Director at City on a Hill Melbourne. His passion is equipping Christians to be firmly established as disciples of Jesus—able to help others become and grow as disciples too.

City on a Hill was planted in 2007 as an Anglican congregation in Docklands, Melbourne, Australia.

Since then, City on a Hill Melbourne, Melbourne West, Melbourne East, Geelong, and Surf Coast have each been licensed as Authorized Anglican Congregations in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, and operate as one church under a cooperative parish agreement.

Our founding and Lead Pastor, Guy Mason, is licensed as 'Priest in charge' for City on a Hill, and each of our local Lead Pastors are ordained Anglican ministers.

We are thankful for the support of the Melbourne Diocese and their commitment to church planting. As we pursue our vision, it is our hope that we continue planting local churches in new cities within the Anglican Communion to reach the next generation with the gospel of Jesus.

Today, City on a Hill is a movement of men and women who are gathered across seven churches, in four cities, in two states, all united around one mission – "to know Jesus and makes Jesus known".

City on a Hill is a leading force in the Missional Church movement in Australia.

PRAYER:

Loving God,

Slow us down to listen to you and notice that you are present with us.

Help us to notice the things going on around us – especially the worries and fears that keep us that haunt our sleep.

Help us to be bold enough to tell you our hurts and pains and share our joys and tears.

Comfort us with the memories of all the ways you have cared for us in the past and all the significant people you have sent to mentor us.

Give us the words to tell you our innermost thoughts. Hear our prayers.

As we experience your presence in our lives, help us to be hopeful. Help us to treat you as our friend and confidante. AMEN.