WRITE YOUR OWN

LAMENT PRAYER

Life is hard. We don't always know how to pray. This practice uses the language of the Psalms to help us find our words.

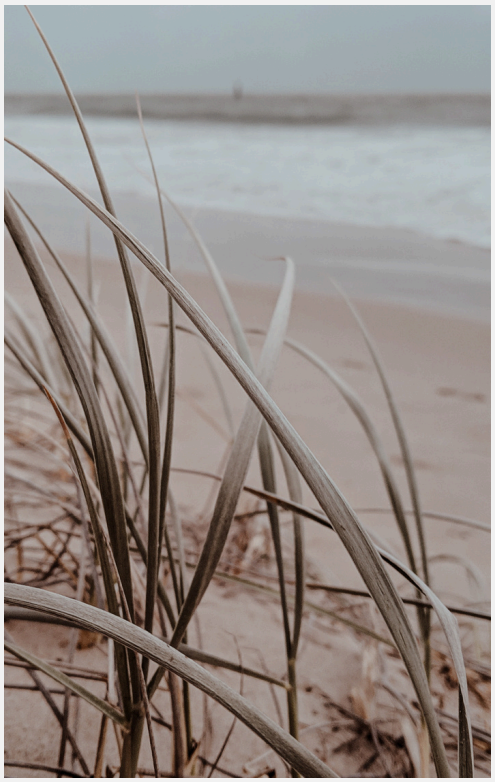


HOW TO WRITE A LAMENT PRAYER

AFTER PSALM 88

Begin by finding a quiet place to pray. Gather any supplies you'd like, such as a candle, box of Kleenex, pen, journal or Bible. No need to finish your Psalm today. Feel free to complete this practice over time.







IN THIS EXERCISE, WE WILL BORROW THE LANGUAGE AND EMOTIONAL BRAVERY OF THE PSALMISTS BY WRITING A POEM OF LAMENT. THE PSALMS SHOW US THAT NO EMOTION IS OFF-LIMITS. PRAYER IS A SAFE PLACE TO PROCESS OUR ANGER, JOY, SORROW, ANXIETY, OR CONTENTMENT. AS YOU WRITE YOUR OWN PSALM, DON'T WORRY ABOUT STRUCTURE OR FORM. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A WRITER TO CREATE A MEANINGFUL PRAYER. WHAT MATTERS IS THE HONEST EXPRESSION OF EMOTION BEFORE OUR LOVING GOD. HE IS WITH YOU. HE LOVES YOU. HE RECEIVES YOUR WORDS AS WORSHIP.

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READ PSALM 88

Take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and rest. Become aware that God is with you, welcoming all of you to prayer. When you are ready, read Psalm 88 (MSG) slowly.



God, you're my last chance of the day.
I spend the night on my knees before you.
Put me on your salvation agenda;
take notes on the trouble I'm in.
I've had my fill of trouble;
I'm camped on the edge of hell.
I'm written off as a lost cause,
one more statistic, a hopeless case.
Abandoned as already dead,
one more body in a stack of corpses,
And not so much as a gravestone–
I'm a black hole in oblivion.
You've dropped me into a bottomless pit,
sunk me in a pitch-black abyss.
I'm battered senseless by your rage,
relentlessly pounded by your waves of anger.
You turned my friends against me,
made me horrible to them.
I'm caught in a maze and can't find my way out,
blinded by tears of pain and frustration.

I call to you, God; all day I call.
I wring my hands, I plead for help.
Are the dead a live audience for your miracles?
Do ghosts ever join the choirs that praise you?
Does your love make any difference in a graveyard?
Is your faithful presence noticed in the corridors of hell?
Are your marvelous wonders ever seen in the dark,
your righteous ways noticed in the Land of No Memory?

I'm standing my ground, God, shouting for help,
at my prayers every morning, on my knees each daybreak.
Why, God, do you turn a deaf ear?
Why do you make yourself scarce?
For as long as I remember I've been hurting;
I've taken the worst you can hand out, and I've had it.
Your wildfire anger has blazed through my life;
I'm bleeding, black-and-blue.
You've attacked me fiercely from every side,
raining down blows till I'm nearly dead.
You made lover and neighbor alike dump me;
the only friend I have left is Darkness.

What stands out to you as you read the Psalm? Which words or phrases connected with you? Which words or phrases bothered you?



MAKE A LIST

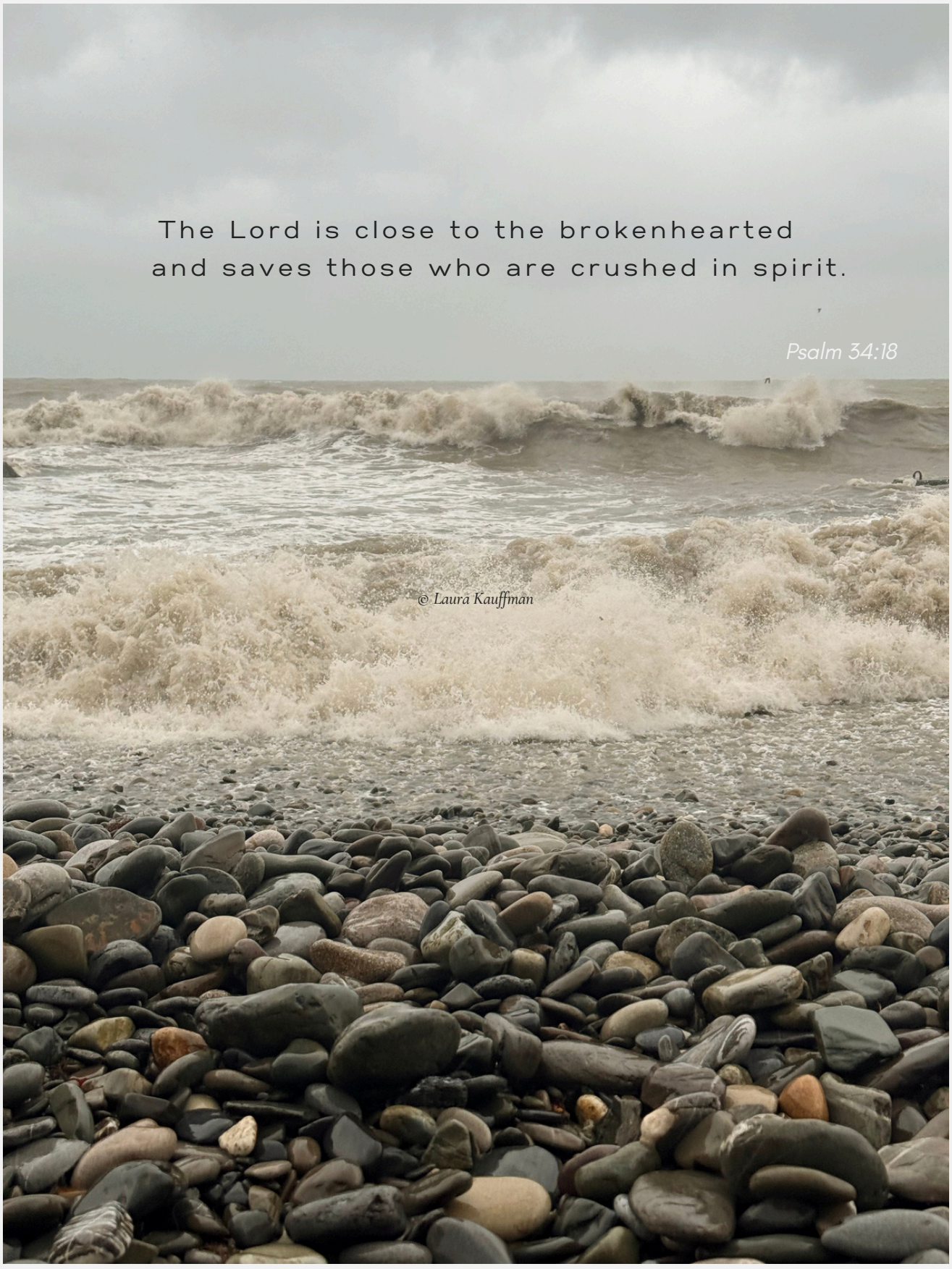
The Psalm is broken into three movements: a list of traumas, a plea for help, and the author's honest experience of God. Use the three columns below to make a similar list. Fill in your experience during this season.

MY PAIN	MY PLEAS	MY GOD

WRITE YOUR PSALM

Convert your list into lines, using sentences, phrases, or one run-on paragraph. Let the things you wrote above inform your poem. There is no wrong way to pray. There is no need for resolution. Let the words flow freely, knowing God receives your lament as worship.

End your time of prayer by reading your psalm to God (or a trusted friend), laying it on an altar, or simply saying "amen."



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