

# *Lamentations*

## *Leader Guide*

(NASB and ESV)

HOPE AND HEALING  
IN THE AFTERMATH  
OF REBELLION  
AGAINST GOD

*Lamentations Leader Guide (NASB and ESV)*

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## USING LEADER GUIDES

Leader Guides are intended for you, the leader, to guide your Precept Upon Precept® and In & Out® discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the content of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from their study. The guides offer effective plans for leading discussions.

The Holy Spirit is your guide as you prepare. He is the one who knows what your group needs to apply to their lives. Pray for them as they study and for yourself as you prepare to lead the discussion.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV edition of the courses. ESV words follow the NASB after a slash / or are set off with parentheses.

### Leader Guides include the following:

- Lesson emphasis
- A logical order for the discussion
- Discussion questions
- Suggested visual aid(s)

### Practical tips for using the Leader Guide:

- **Don't simply "do" the lesson.**  
Stay with the lesson until you have a good understanding of it. This will give you a better grasp of how the Leader Guide takes you through the lesson.
- **You don't have to ask every question in the guide.**  
Often one question will be covered while discussing another question so there is no reason to ask it. Your goal is not to ask every question, but to ask enough questions to make sure your group understood the lesson and to help them apply the truths to their lives.

### Using the Leader Guide with In & Out

#### When your entire group uses In & Out

Compare an In & Out lesson with the Leader Guide. Use what relates to the In & Out lesson as a guide for the discussion. Don't teach what's not in In & Out lessons. Remember your goal in the discussion is for your group to discuss what they've learned, not for you to lecture on what you learned.

#### For groups studying both Precept Upon Precept and In & Out

Use the Leader Guides as designed for PUP, knowing that the In & Out assignments will be covered in the discussion. Make a note in the Leader Guide of what is not in the In & Out.

| <b>PRINTED<br/>PAGE NO.</b> | <b>L E S S O N S</b>           | <b>PDF<br/>PAGE NO.</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1                           | LESSON ONE: Lamentations 1–2   | 5                       |
| 7                           | LESSON TWO: Lamentations 3     | 11                      |
| 13                          | LESSON THREE: Lamentations 4–5 | 17                      |

To locate a particular lesson in the pdf, click on  in the grey bar on the left side of the window. Bookmarks will appear for each of the lessons. Select the lesson you need.

**LAMENTATIONS  
LEADER GUIDE  
Lesson 1**

**Lesson focus:**

- Lamentations 1–2
- Sin and its consequences

How does Lamentations begin?

How lonely sits the city

What city, and why is it lonely?

Jerusalem

It was full of people in its past.

It had been great among the nations, but is now a forced laborer / slave.

According to Deuteronomy, Kings, and Jeremiah, why this change in Jerusalem?

Ask your group what they learned from the other passages in the lesson.

Deuteronomy 28:1–29:1

God told His people Israel that they would be blessed if they obeyed His commandments. He also said that there were curses for disobedience.

Deuteronomy 29:22-29

The Lord afflicted in His anger and wrath because they forsook / abandoned His covenant and worshiped other gods.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13

The Law was to be read regularly so that all in Israel heard it.

2 Kings 23:1-3

In the time of Josiah, the last righteous king of Judah, God's Law was found and read to the people. Again they entered into a covenant with the Lord to obey, but it didn't last long.

Jeremiah 25

Jeremiah spoke for the Lord to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem for over 23 years.

He called them to turn from evil or judgment was coming, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The repeated response was that they didn't listen.

Jeremiah 36:1-8

This was the same year as Jeremiah 25:1. It was 605 B.C., the year Nebuchadnezzar began his sieges against Jerusalem.

They had a multitude of transgressions; they sinned greatly.

Many think that Jeremiah wrote Lamentations also.

Lead your discussion back to Lamentations by asking what a lament is.

It's defined in the lesson on page 1.  
An expression of grief, of mourning, of sorrow

What is the lament in chapter 1 about?

Jerusalem's affliction, none to comfort

What is the lament in chapter 2 about?

God's wrath against the city and its inhabitants

**LAMENTATIONS 1**

Ask your group what they learned from this chapter.

*NOTE: It's good if there is enough discussion without you having to ask more specific questions. But if you do, you can use some like the following:*

Review the contrasts in verse 1.

How lonely sits the city—that was full of people

Like a widow—once great among the nations

Princess among provinces—has become a forced laborer / slave

At the end of this guide is a simple list of some main points from Lamentations 1 and 2 which you can use as a visual aid for your discussion.

What was the condition according to verses 2-4?

There was none to comfort her because all her lovers and friends became treacherous toward her. They became her enemies.

Judah went into exile  
Affliction  
Harsh servitude  
Lives among the nations  
No rest  
Overtaken in distress  
Roads and gates are desolate  
Groaning, affliction, bitterness

Why did this happen, verses 5-9?

Because of the multitude of her *transgressions*—revolt against God’s standard, rebellion  
Jerusalem greatly *sinned*—missed the way, failed to do what was expected  
She didn’t consider her future. (ESV—She took no thought of her future.)  
Therefore, she fell astonishingly / terribly.

What had the people of Jerusalem known that they transgressed and sinned against?

God’s law

You might ask how this applies now. Do people have access to God’s Word? What happens when they transgress what He says?

People don’t consider the future results of sins.  
The fall can be astonishing / terrible like it was for Jerusalem.

What’s repeated in Lamentations 1:9?

She had no comforter.

What’s repeated in verses 9 and 11?

It’s a call to the Lord for Him to look and see what’s happening:

Affliction because of enemies  
They entered her sanctuary and took precious things for food  
Despised

How much did the lamenter hurt? How was this pain / sorrow described?

No pain / sorrow like his, and the people of his city Jerusalem

It was inflicted by the Lord—as He said.

Who do verses 12-19 seem directed to?

Those who passed by Jerusalem and saw the desolation

What's repeated in verses 16 and 17?

There was no one to comfort.  
Jerusalem was surrounded by enemies.

What do verses 18 and 20 contain?

Confession of the rebellion against the righteous Lord.

How do verses 20-22 end this first lament?

As in verses 9 and 11, there was the cry for the Lord to look and see the distress and death.

Then came confession.

Verse 21 repeats that there was no one to comfort.  
Then the Lord was asked to bring on the enemies what happened to Jerusalem.

Relate to Jeremiah 25:12-17 and 27-33.

After Judah served Babylon for 70 years, then the Lord judged Babylon.  
All the nations will eventually drink of the Lord's wrath.

It was right for the lamenter to address verses 21 and 22 to the Lord.

How does this chapter relate to life today? Is there any application?

Give your group time to discuss.

## LAMENTATIONS 2

Who and what are described in verses 1-10?

The Lord's anger toward Jerusalem and its inhabitants

He

- Covered (ESV—set under a cloud)
- Cast
- Not remembered
- Swallowed up
- Not spared (ESV—not a separate action “swallowed up without mercy”)

- Thrown down / broken down
- Brought down
- Profaned / dishonor
- Cut off / down
- Drawn back / withdrawn
- Burned like a flaming fire, consuming
- Bent His bow
- Slain / killed
- Poured out His wrath (fury)
- Became like an enemy
- Destroyed / laid in ruins
- Multiplied mourning and moaning (lamentation)
- Violently treated His tabernacle, because it was defiled with idols  
(ESV—laid waste his booth, his meeting place, his sanctuary)
- Caused to be forgotten / made them forget
- Despised / spurned
- Rejected / scorned
- Abandoned / disowned
- Not restrained

And He gave no more visions to the prophets.  
He stopped speaking to the people who repeatedly didn't listen to His Law, His words.

#### Verses 11-17

What are these verses about?

Jeremiah's personal lament  
In the city streets there was no food

The prophets should have spoken to expose iniquity, but they didn't.  
Relate this to Jeremiah 14:13-18.

Verse 15 gives a description of Jerusalem's former glory seen by those who passed by.  
The enemies thought they had swallowed her up, but it was the Lord who used them to do it.

So the Lord did what He said, Deuteronomy 28–31—the consequences of not listening to God's Word.

#### Verses 18-19

What is in these verses?

Cries to the Lord  
Pour out your heart like water in His presence.  
Lift your hands to Him for the life of your little ones.

It seems that this is prayer for relief.

Verses 20-22

What does verse 20 repeat?

1:9, 11 and 20. It's the cry for the Lord to look.

All the people are starving in the city, even eating their offspring / children.  
Relate this to Deuteronomy.

Ask your group what they learned from this chapter that they can apply to their lives.  
How does this relate to anyone who is suffering the consequences of his own sin?

To end your discussion, ask what your group learned from the Psalms at the end of this lesson.  
Encourage them to use these Psalms as prayers to the Lord.

## **Lamentations 1**

None to comfort

Lonely  
No rest  
No help

Sinned greatly

## **Lamentations 2**

The Lord's anger

He became like an enemy

Cry to Him for life

**LAMENTATIONS  
LEADER GUIDE  
Lesson 2**

**Lesson focus:**

- Lamentations 3
- The man who has seen affliction

**REVIEW**

Using the Lamentations At A Glance chart as a visual aid, ask your group about the flow of thought in Lamentations 1–3.

Lamentations 1                      How lonely sits the city...!

The focus is on Jerusalem's distress and affliction as it was being destroyed. Its destruction was because the people rebelled against the Lord. There was none to comfort; all had become enemies.

Lamentations 2                      How the Lord has covered...Zion...in His anger!  
(ESV—How the Lord in his anger set Zion under a cloud)

The Lord's wrath on Jerusalem is the focus in the first part of this chapter. Then it shifts to how the people were suffering because God's purpose, His Word, was accomplished.

In both of these chapters, the cry to the Lord is for Him to see and look at what's happening to them. Also, in both chapters is an acknowledgment of Jerusalem's rebellion or sin.

**LEVITICUS 26**

What is this chapter about? What reasons are given for Jerusalem's judgment from God?

As in Deuteronomy, studied in the first lesson, this passage from God's Law promised blessings for obedience and punishment for disobedience.

Verses 1-13

Eat your food to the full  
Live securely on your land  
Peace, no sword pass through your land  
Multiply people  
God's dwelling among you  
His covenant confirmed with them

Verse 14—but if you do not obey, reject / spurn My statutes, break My covenant  
These are the things Israel did and were suffering for in Lamentations.

The Lord said He would punish Israel seven times more / sevenfold for their sins.

They would be in the land of their enemies. They would rot away.

The fierceness of God’s anger seemed to increase—they fell astonishingly  
because they sinned greatly and didn’t consider / take thought for their  
future. The judgment corresponded with the sin.

If they had listened to His Word, they would have known what they were  
facing.

Verse 40—if they confess their iniquity...then I’ll remember My covenant  
The land will make up for its Sabbaths by lying desolate while they make amends  
for their sins in the enemies’ land.

He didn’t reject them; He remembered them, His covenant with them.

As your group discusses what they learned from this lesson, you might note the progression of  
thought in Lamentations 3. There is a sample visual aid at the end of this guide. Or note the main  
points about the Lord.

### **LAMENTATIONS 3**

What is the lament about? How does it compare or contrast with Lamentations 1 and 2?

#### Verses 1-18

This is more of a personal lament.

“I am the man who has seen affliction because of / under the rod of His wrath.”

He was one who lived in the midst of Jerusalem’s affliction.

He lived there while God’s wrath was over his city.

It seems that this one lived through the starvation in Jerusalem’s streets.

The Lord’s hand was turned against him.

This one felt as though even his cries to the Lord, his prayers, were shut out by God.

He felt that God no longer listened to him.

This is a man who forgot happiness, whose strength and hope had perished.

He experienced physical, spiritual, and mental/emotional affliction.

Ask your group if they, or anyone they know, have ever felt like this.

If so, then they can learn from this text about this situation.

Verses 19-24

What are these verses about? What is the solution for hopelessness?

As this man remembered, focused on, the Lord's lovingkindness and compassion, then his hope was restored.

He remembered:

- The Lord's lovingkindness / steadfast love never ceases
- His compassion don't fail (ESV—his mercies never come to an end)
- They're new every morning
- He's great in faithfulness

When his soul remembered, then he said that the Lord is his portion.

His hope was renewed.

Give time for your group to discuss application here.

How do the other Bible references in the lesson help with understanding that the Lord is my portion?

Numbers 18:20

Aaron the high priest of Israel was not given an inheritance or portion of the promised land. The Lord was all He needed. He was his portion—satisfying his need for provision.

Psalm 73:25-28

As with the man of Lamentations 3, this psalmist's flesh and heart might fail.

And like in Lamentations 3, God is his strength and portion forever.  
He made the Lord his refuge, his safe place.

Psalm 142

When David's spirit was overwhelmed / fainted, like the man in Lamentations 3, he cried to the Lord. He focused on His refuge and portion in the land of the living.

His situation was similar.

How can these truths help in times of hopelessness?

Remember who the Lord is.

Focus on Him being the portion and refuge of life.

Remember His lovingkindness and compassions—new every morning.

If one is suffering the consequences of someone else's sin, there is hope.

Even if one is suffering because of his own sin, there is still hope.

Verses 25-39

Who are these verses about?

The pronouns changed and refer to any person.

The Lord is good to:

Those who wait for the Lord

The person who seeks Him

The one who waits silently for Him

This is the result of remembering the Lord.

The Lord, as Leviticus promised Israel, does not reject them forever.  
After He brings grief for sin, then His compassion / mercies and lovingkindness /  
steadfast love are still there.

He's the Most High God. His judgments are just. He doesn't approve of injustice.  
No one can complain to the Lord when that one suffers because of his own sins.

Ask if your group has any application to discuss.

Sometimes it's good to sit alone in humility and consider where you are and why.  
Remember God's promises.

Verses 40-47

What are the pronouns in these verses? Who and what is this about?

This is a call to God's people to examine their ways and return to Him.

Considering the flow of thought in Lamentations, this is a main point.

There was no one to comfort Jerusalem and her inhabitants.

She was the lonely city.

The Lord poured out His wrath on her because of her rebellion, sin.

This one, who lived in the midst of God's wrath on his city and people, found  
hope again when he looked to the Lord.

He called the others who were left, or his people as a whole, to return to the Lord.

These verses contain confession, a call to confession.

Verses 48-66

Does the thought change because the pronouns do?

Singular pronouns are used again referring to this one who has seen affliction because of the rod of God's wrath.

But his thought continues from verse 42—God had not pardoned / forgiven.

He cried because of the destruction of his people.

It was not going to stop until God looked down from heaven.  
Relate to 1:9, 11, 20 and 2:20.

In verse 56, he said that the Lord heard his cry. It's a contrast with the beginning of this chapter in verse 8. Discuss why the change.

He tells of the Lord drawing near to him, even though his city and people suffered destruction from the Lord's anger. It was justice.

He asked for personal judgment of his case from the Lord.  
Is that because he remembered the Lord's lovingkindness / steadfast love and compassions / mercies?

Verses 52-63 describe schemes against this man by those around him.

*NOTE: Many think that Jeremiah wrote this about himself because of the similarities in these verses (and others) and situations in the book of Jeremiah. But the Lord did not tell us specifically who this "lamerter" was. The message of this chapter is the same regardless of one's interpretation of "who" the lamenter is.*

Compare verses 64-66 with Lamentations 1:21-22.

Both of these chapters end with a call for vengeance from the Lord.

Recompense / repay them according to the work of their hands—justice.  
We should deal with our own hearts and trust the Lord to deal with our enemies.

To end this discussion, ask your group what they learned from this lament which they can apply to their lives. What did they learn or remember about the Lord? How will that help their lives?

This chapter takes one from being focused on one's own misery to focusing on the Lord, His compassion and justice.

**The man who saw affliction because of God's wrath**

Bitterness, hardship, prayer shut out  
Forgot happiness, no strength or hope

Remembered, then hope  
God's lovingkindness / steadfast love and compassions / mercies, faithfulness

Wait for Him, seek Him  
He's just

Examine our ways, return to the Lord

He saw my affliction  
Judge my case

**LAMENTATIONS  
LEADER GUIDE  
Lesson 3**

**Lesson focus:**

- Lamentations 4–5
- Restoration

**REVIEW**

Using the “Lamentations at a Glance” chart as a visual aid, ask your group about the flow of thought in Lamentations 1–3.

Lamentations 1                      How lonely sits the city...!

The focus is on Jerusalem’s distress and affliction as it was being destroyed. Its destruction was because the people rebelled against the Lord. There was none to comfort; all had become enemies.

Lamentations 2                      How the Lord has covered...Zion...in His anger!  
(ESV—How the Lord in his anger set Zion under a cloud)

The Lord’s wrath on Jerusalem is the focus in the first part of this chapter. Then it shifts to how the people were suffering because God’s purpose, His Word, was accomplished.

In both of these chapters, the cry to the Lord is for Him to see and look at what’s happening to them. Also, in both chapters is an acknowledgment of Jerusalem’s rebellion or sin.

Lamentations 3                      I am the man who has seen affliction...His wrath.

This is a personal lament of one going through affliction. He remembered the Lord’s faithfulness, compassion / mercies, and lovingkindness / steadfast love, and then has hope.

There is a call to examine and return to the Lord, calling on His name.

**LAMENTATIONS 4**

You might continue to use the “At a Glance” chart as a visual aid to discuss the last two chapters. Remind your group that they can use this “At a Glance” chart later when they want to look again at Lamentations.

How does this chapter, lament, begin?

How dark the gold has become (ESV—has grown dim), the pure gold has changed!

*NOTE: Some in your group might have read in commentaries that the Hebrew word for “How” is the name of this book in the Hebrew Bible. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 all begin with this word which is a term of dismay.*

What is this chapter about?

The effects of famine and starvation  
The end came for Jerusalem.

### Verses 1-11

Lead your group to discuss the contrasts in verses 1-8. What are the contrasts, and what do they mean?

The present situation was contrasted with the past glory of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

There are different interpretations for verse 1 as to what the gold and stones are referring to. Some think the temple was in mind, and other think it's figurative language referring to the people of Jerusalem.

Verse 2 is clear about the gold. The sons of Zion were weighed against fine gold. They were as precious as pure gold, bright, shiny, and glorious.

The second exclamation is the end of this verse; they became like earthen jars / pots. Those were made by potters for common everyday use, and were discarded without much regard.

Jackals feed their young, but the people of Jerusalem became so cruel that they did not feed and ate their own children.

Those reared / brought up in royal purple embraced the ash pits, royalty to extreme poverty.

Jerusalem's sin and overthrow are contrasted with that of Sodom. It was worse and took longer.

Snow, milk, corals, lapis lazuli / soot and wood—pure and beautiful to dirty and hard

As a visual aid for this discussion, you might list a few things about the people and the Lord, like on the sample at the end of this guide.

How do these contrasts relate to the ones in Lamentations 1:1-3?

Jerusalem's greatness was contrasted with its devastating end.

What are verses 9-11 about?

This speaks of starvation as a result of God's wrath on Jerusalem.

Who is verse 12 about? What does this say about Jerusalem?

No one believed that Jerusalem could be conquered.

This might be a reference to what happened when King Sennacherib of Assyria tried to enter it during Hezekiah's reign. God protected His city at that time.

But the time came when He sent Nebuchadnezzar to enter and conquer it.

#### Verses 13-20

Why did this happen?

Because of sins and iniquities

Who is named in these verses?

Prophets and priests

They shed blood of the righteous in Jerusalem, and were greatly responsible for leading the people into sin.

*NOTE: Commentators don't agree on the interpretation of who verses 14-16 are about, the prophets and priests or the people toward them.*

They were defiled by blood and unclean.

Some think this refers to the prophets and priests of verse 13, and others think it's about the people. Even those among the nations didn't want them.

The Lord scattered them.

The people of Jerusalem looked to a nation to save them.

This might be a reference to Egypt who was a force against Babylon at the time of this disaster.

The pursuers, Babylon, become the subject in verses 18-20.

Jerusalem's end came.

Even the Lord's anointed was captured by them.

This might be a reference to King Zedekiah who was King of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed it. He fled and was captured.

At this point, you might ask how this relates to Deuteronomy 28:64-67.

The Lord foretold centuries before this happened that His people would be scattered among the nations and have no rest there. They had no assurance of life.

#### Verses 21-22

Who are these verses about?

This chapter ends with a contrast as it began with contrasts. This is between Edom and Zion.

Edom rejoiced over Zion's judgment, destruction.  
But the time will come when the same will happen to them.  
Zion's exile has an end, and Edom's punishment is coming.

Some think that Edom is a representative of all nations, but the text seems to single out this one nation as distinct.

So how does this chapter end for Jerusalem?

There is an end to her punishment and exile.

How does this relate to the Isaiah 40 and Jeremiah 32 and 33 references in the lesson?

#### Isaiah 40

After 39 chapters of the Lord telling of coming judgment through Isaiah, He then said to comfort His people with kind words (ESV—speak tenderly) to Jerusalem. Her iniquity was removed / pardoned—there was a completion of her judgment.

What He says will happen. His Word stands forever.

### Jeremiah 32

God spoke these words to Jeremiah in the last year of the siege on Jerusalem, about a year before it was destroyed. It was close to the time of Lamentations 4.

Nothing is impossible for the Lord.

He told His people that He was going to give them to Babylon.  
But He also spoke of gathering them from captivity, giving them a new heart to know Him and restoration of their land.

### Jeremiah 33

Even during the siege, He spoke of His promise of a new covenant with His people who had rebelled against Him and were in the midst of judgment for it. He promised to heal and rebuild, to cleanse and pardon, to do good for them and give them peace. He promised to restore man and beast to the land.

They will live in safety (ESV—dwell securely) when the Lord their righteousness is the term for Jerusalem.

This promise has a future fulfillment still to come.

He'll fulfill the good word as He fulfilled the word of judgment.  
His covenants with David and the good Levitical priests cannot be broken.

You might ask your group what they learned about the Lord and His Word which they can apply to themselves. Ask what they've learned about sin and its consequences from this study.

## LAMENTATIONS 5

What is this chapter about? How does this book end?

This is a prayer for the Lord to remember...look and see Jerusalem's reproach / disgrace and restore.

### Verses 1-18

What does the lamenter want the Lord to see?

Jerusalem's inhabitants were like orphans.  
They had no rest.  
Others rule over them.  
There is no one to deliver them.

The few who are left are suffering greatly from famine.

The crown has fallen.

What is the cause? How is it stated in verse 16?

Woe to us, for we have sinned.

Verses 19-22

How does this book of laments end?

The focus is on the Lord's rule and His throne. His crown never falls.

The last request is for Him to restore and renew Jerusalem and its people.

Ask how the cross-references from Day Five in the lesson relate.

Jeremiah 17 and 31 and Ezekiel 36

The Lord, the hope of Israel, from His throne on high can heal and save.  
He remembers His people Israel and will have mercy on them. He alone can restore.

He promised a covenant with them.  
His law on their hearts, new hearts  
He, their God, and they, His people  
Forgiveness  
His Spirit within to cause them to walk in His statutes  
Live in the land

How does verse 22 compare with Lamentations 3:21-24, 31-32?

The Lord has not utterly rejected His people as the lamenter might have felt at the time. He doesn't reject His people forever. If He causes grief to them, then He'll also have compassion based on His lovingkindness / steadfast love.

His lovingkindnesses / steadfast love never cease, and His compassions / mercies never fail. They're new every morning.

His faithfulness is great, faithfulness to fulfill His Word, His promises.

Now ask your group how this relates to them. Give time for sharing how the truths in this study have helped them.

If you have time, use the “At a Glance” chart to review the main points of the laments in this book.

| <b>Precious sons of Zion</b>   | <b>The Lord</b>  |
|--|--|
| <p>Like gold<br/>                     Reared in purple<br/>                     Purer than snow<br/>                     Whiter than milk<br/>                     Corals, lapis lazuli</p> <p>Iniquity and destruction<br/>                     Worse than Sodom</p> <p>End came</p> <p>Woe, for we have sinned</p> | <p>Accomplished His wrath<br/>                     Scattered</p> <p>Called to remember, look and see</p> <p>Rules forever<br/>                     Throne from generation to generation</p> <p>Why forget, forsake?</p> <p>Called to restore and renew</p> |