



good **GRIEF**

2024

Grace
Fellowship
Church





Thank you for taking the time to attend this year's Counseling & Discipleship Training. We recognize the sacrifice it takes to be able to participate in a conference like this and we're grateful for the opportunity to host and serve you each weekend.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 tells us, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." We have received much grace, and it is our joy to pass on what we have been freely given!

Our prayer is that your walk with the Lord is strengthened and challenged, equipping you to be able to walk with others in grace and truth—to the praise of His glory!

If you have questions or need some assistance, look for people in shirts that say "VOLUNTEER." They are servant-leaders of GFC and would be happy to assist you in any capacity .



Erin Greenwood
Interim Director of Counseling
Grace Fellowship Church

Reminders



WiFi: **Grace Public**



Lunch on Saturday is not provided, but if you need recommendations, check out the Saturday Lunch Options page of your notes.



Online notes and other conference info will be updated at: **graceky.org/cdt**



We will be recording the sessions. When they are ready, we will email a link to the video recordings of the track you registered for.



Resource Center Hours

September Weekend: Friday: 4:00PM-8:45PM / Saturday: 7:30AM-5:00PM

Saturday Lunch Options



The Blind Squirrel

8537 U.S. Hwy 42, Suite 6, Florence, KY - 1.6 miles



Valle Escondido (Mexican)

8863 US 42, Union, KY - 2.0 miles



Boomtown Biscuits (Biscuit-based meals)

9039 US 42, Union, KY - 2.3 miles



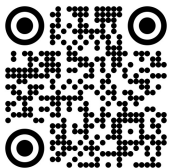
Panera Bread (Bakery/Soup & Sandwiches)

9085 US 42, Union, KY - 2.6 miles



Grandma's Pizza

8449 US 42, Florence, KY 41042 - 1.6 miles



Mai Thai (Thai)

7710 US 42, Florence, KY - 3.0 miles



The Farmstead Market & Cafe

9914 Old Union Rd, Union, KY - 2.9 miles

Schedule & Table of Contents

- 1 *Schedule*
- 2 *Learning About Lament (Vroegop)*
- 5 *Learning to Lament (Vroegop)*
- 8 *Ministering the Book of Lamentations (Brandt)*
- 11 *Understanding Waiting (Vroegop)*
- 14 *Embracing Waiting (Vroegop)*
- 17 *When You Feel Abandoned by God: Psalm 88 (Bigney)*
- 22 *Oh My Soul: The Necessity of Talking to Ourselves (Brandt)*
- 25 *How to Pray When the Pain Will Not Leave (Brandt)*
- 28 *Stepping into the Darkness (LaRuffa)*

Friday Schedule

Sep 13, 2024

5:25PM-6:30PM | Learning About Lament
Mark Vroegop

6:30PM-6:45PM | BREAK

6:45PM-7:45PM | Learning to Lament
Mark Vroegop

7:45PM-8:00PM | BREAK

8:00PM-9:00PM | Ministering the Book
of Lamentations
Brad Brandt

Saturday Schedule

Sep 14, 2024

8:00AM-9:05AM | Understanding Waiting
Mark Vroegop

9:05AM-9:25AM | BREAK

9:25AM-10:25AM | Embracing Waiting
Mark Vroegop

10:25AM-10:45AM | BREAK

10:45AM-11:45AM | When You Feel Abandoned
by God: Psalm 88
Brad Bigney

11:45AM-1:00PM | LUNCH BREAK

1:00PM-2:00PM | O My Soul: The Necessity
of Talking to Ourselves
Brad Brandt

2:00PM-2:20PM | BREAK

2:20PM-3:20PM | How to Pray When the Pain
Will Not Leave - Learning from
Psalm 13
Brad Brandt

3:20PM-3:35PM | BREAK

3:35PM-4:35PM | Stepping into the Darkness
Peter LaRuffa

Ministering the Book of Lamentations

Helping People Find Hope When Hope Seems Gone

Pastor Brad Brandt / Wheelersburg Baptist Church

Introduction

- The Background of Lamentations
- The Acrostic Structure of the Book
- The Significance of Chapter 3

I. Perspective #1: Hope sought (vv. 1-18).

A. Jeremiah affirms that he is suffering.

B. Jeremiah affirms that the Lord is over his suffering.

1. He took away my light (vv. 1-3).
2. He took away my health (vv. 4-6).
3. He took away my freedom (vv. 7-9).
4. He took away my life (vv. 10-12).
5. He took away my respect (vv. 13-15).
6. He took away my peace and prosperity (vv. 16-18).

II. Perspective #2: Hope gained (vv. 19-24).

A. Jeremiah made himself think about the Lord's attributes.

1. He meditated on the Lord's love and compassion (v. 22).
2. He meditated on the Lord's faithfulness (v. 23).
3. He meditated on the Lord's sufficiency (v. 24).

B. Jeremiah chose to talk to himself rather than listen to his feelings.

III. Perspective #3: Hope shared (vv. 25–48).

A. Jeremiah encouraged others to affirm what he affirmed (vv. 25–39).

1. The Lord is good (vv. 25–27).
2. The Lord is sovereign (vv. 28–30).
3. The Lord is compassionate and loving (vv. 31–33).
4. The Lord sees injustice (vv. 34–36).
5. The Lord is the One who decrees both calamities and good times (vv. 37–39).

B. Jeremiah encouraged others to respond as he responded (vv. 40–48).

1. Let's take inventory and return to the Lord (v. 40).
2. Let's acknowledge our sin to the Lord (vv. 41–42).
3. Let's acknowledge our desperation for the Lord (vv. 43–48).

IV. Perspective #4: Hope in the real world (vv. 49–66).

A. In the real world, you see things that break your heart (vv. 49–51).

B. In the real world, you experience things that break your heart (vv. 52–54).

C. In the real world, you must talk to the Lord about the things that break your heart (vv. 55–60).

1. He hears our cry (vv. 55–56).
2. He takes away our fear (v. 57).
3. He takes care of our concerns (vv. 58–60).

D. In the real world, you must turn over to the Lord the people who are breaking your heart (vv. 61–66).

The Bottom Line: When the night is darkest, even a little light makes a big difference.

When You Feel Abandoned by God

Psalm 88

Pastor Brad Bigney / Grace Fellowship Church

I. Psalm 88 Shows Us the Reality of Just How Dark It Can Feel and How Long it Can Last – Even for a Believer

A. Show Your Counselee How a Season of Darkness Can Happen Even to a Mature Believer

This is Heman and the Sons of Korah writing this Psalm! These are mature worship leaders who have written other Psalms like Ps. 84 and Ps. 45, so they have a history of knowing, loving, and trusting God. Yet, they find themselves in an incredibly dark place.

B. Show Your Counselee How the Darkness Doesn't Always End Quickly

This Psalm is for when the darkness drags on, because Psalm 88 seems to be talking about a prolonged season of suffering or some kind of chronic illness.

John MacArthur Study Bible – The title of this Psalm, “Mahalath Leannoth,” could be referring to a musical instrument or it could be symbolic of a chronic illness or suffering, because the Hebrew word “Mahalath” can mean to writhe or to be in anguish.

Ps. 88:15 "I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth up..."

V. 15 seems to indicate that whatever was going on in his life has been going on for a long time now.

- Maybe your counselee has been struggling for years with **INFERTILITY**.
- Maybe they're struggling with one failed **ADOPTION** process after another.
- Maybe they've spent years now of sleepless nights, tossing and turning over an **ADULT CHILD** who is not doing well.
- Maybe your counselee has been living with an **ALCOHOLIC** or someone **ADDICTED** to drugs.
- Maybe they're **GRIEVING** the death of a child, a parent, or a spouse, and the absence of their presence is still overwhelming.
- Maybe, despite all the medical advances we enjoy here in America, your counselee now lives with some kind of **CHRONIC** health issue that makes doing even basic, simple things in life painful and difficult.

Psalm 88 is a gift from God to every person who experiences suffering that drags on to the point that it throws their soul into turmoil, because they're more aware of the absence of God and unanswered prayers than they are comfort.

II. Psalm 88 Shows Us How Genuine Faith Can Be Tested and Forged in the Dark

A. Show Your Counselee How the Psalmist Still Prays to God Even though He's Gotten No Answer

V. 1 "O LORD, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You."

The Hebrew word for “cry” is the word “tsaq” that means a shout of desperation from someone who’s in distress.

V. 2 “Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry.”

The Hebrew word for “cry” at the end of v. 2 is not the same as v. 1. This Hebrew word is the word “rinnah” that refers to a loud utterance of emotion – especially when it’s inarticulate.

The Psalmist is saying, “Incline Your ear to my emotional babbling! I can’t even form complete sentences but I’m crying out to You!”

V. 13 “But to You I have cried out, O LORD, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.”

The Hebrew word for “cry” in v. 13 is yet another Hebrew word, different from what we saw in v. 1 and v. 2, because I think this chapter is trying to show us that you can’t express the depth of this kind of sorrow with just one word. So the Holy Spirit comes at it from several different angles.

The word for “cry” in v. 13 is a word that means to cry out for help intensely. It’s only used 22x in the Bible: 8x in the book of Job and 10x in the Psalms of lamentation.

V. 9 “LORD, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You.”

The word “stretched out” means to spread out something or to open it from a closed or folded position.

That's faith in the midst of darkness! He is still lifting open hands to God, despite how long the suffering has lasted and how silent God has been. He has not resorted to clenched fists! Don't be overly critical of everything your counselee says. Even the best theologian will reveal some frayed edges during a prolonged darkness. Some of what's coming out of the Psalmist's mouth in Psalm 88 is ugly and inaccurate theology about God. But this man has lost his faith.

B. Show Your Counselee How the Psalmist Still Prays Without Any Felt-Sense of God's Presence or Favor in His Life

Notice! He's not crying out to God daily because he has a warm, fuzzy feeling. He's already told us that he does not feel God's presence or favor. In fact, he feels like God is against him and has become his enemy. And yet, faith can be forged in times like this.

"In the darkness we have a choice that is not really there in better times. We can choose to serve God just because He is God. In the darkest moments we feel we are getting absolutely nothing out of God or our relationship to Him. But what if then – when it does not seem to be paying or benefitting you at all – you continue to obey, pray to, and seek God, as well as continue to do your duties of love to others? If we do that – we are finally learning to love God for Himself and not for His benefits. And when the darkness lifts or lessens, we will FIND that our dependence on other things besides God for our happiness has shrunk, and that we have new strength and contentment in God Himself. We'll find a new fortitude, unflappability, poise, and peace in the face of difficulty."

~ Tim Keller, *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*, pp. 248–249

Darkness does not have to destroy you. It could, in fact, be the defining moment that takes you to a spiritual place you've never been before. But the real hope for your counselee is found outside of Psalm 88! Oh, use Psalm 88 to help them see that they're not the first to suffer darkness, but don't leave them there!

III. You'll Need to Remind Your Counselee that the Darkness of Psalm 88 is Never the Last Word for a Child of God

If your counselee is a Christian, then Psalm 88 is never the ultimate or final experience, because they have something the Psalmist never had in the midst of his darkness. Your counselee has a Savior who experienced ultimate darkness for them on the cross.

This Psalm may be the darkest Psalm in the Bible, but it's not the darkest chapter in the Bible!

Matt. 27:45-46 "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'"

Conclusion

Psalm 88 gives us a context for the prolonged pain and suffering that some of our counselees are experiencing, but please don't leave your counselees in Psalm 88! You'll need to point them to our Savior – who was called a "Man of Sorrows," acquainted with grief.

The Bible never promises that we'll never feel abandoned by God. It promises that we never are abandoned by God, because Jesus experienced ultimate darkness and abandonment for us on the cross.

Oh My Soul: The Necessity of Talking to Ourselves

Pastor Brad Brandt / Wheelersburg Baptist Church

I. We learn from the Psalms that we must talk.

A. We must talk to the Lord (“O God” – Ps. 42:1).

B. We must talk to other people (“O people of Zion” – Ps. 95:1–3).

C. We must talk to ourselves (“O my soul” – Ps. 42:5, 11).

1. If we talk to ourselves too much, people might put us in a straitjacket.

2. If we fail to talk to ourselves, we put ourselves in a straitjacket.

II. We learn from the Psalms that we must talk to ourselves.

A. We must say, “O.”

B. We must say, “My.”

C. We must say, “Soul.”

III. We learn from the Psalms that we must talk to ourselves in specific ways.

A. We learn from Psalms 42–43 that we must talk to ourselves when life is hard.

1. I must ask myself why I am downcast.
2. I must tell myself to hope in God.
3. I must remind myself that I will again praise the God who is my salvation.

B. We learn from Psalm 103 that we must talk to ourselves when life is good.

1. I must tell myself to bless the Lord, and especially His name (vv. 1, 22).
2. I must remind myself of His benefits (vv. 2-5).

C. We learn from Psalm 104 that we must talk to ourselves when God seems small.

1. I must tell myself to praise God for His greatness (vv. 1, 35b).
2. I must tell myself to reflect on His great works (vv. 2-35a).

D. We learn from Psalm 62 that we must talk to ourselves when people attack us.

1. I must tell myself to wait in silence for God alone (v. 5a).
2. I must remind myself that my hope comes from God who is my rock (vv. 5b-7).

E. We learn from Psalm 116 that we must talk to ourselves when God delivers us.

1. I am permitted to ask the Lord to deliver my soul (v. 4).
2. I must tell my soul to acknowledge the Lord's goodness when He does (vv. 7-8).

F. We learn from Psalm 146 that we must talk to ourselves when we're not sure who to trust.

1. I must tell myself to praise the Lord as long as I live (vv. 1-2).

2. I must remind myself (and others) that people will pass away, but He will always be there (vv. 3-10).

Make It Personal: Let's resolve to make "O my soul" a regular part of our vocabulary.

How to Pray When the Pain Will Not Leave

Learning from Psalm 13

Pastor Brad Brandt / Wheelersburg Baptist Church

According to Psalm 13, when you're in great pain you need to pray and bring to God three things: your questions (vv. 1-2), your requests (vv. 3-4), and your praise (vv. 5-6).

1. Begin by bringing your questions to God (vv. 1-2).

"How long, LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?"

² How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (Psalm 13: 1-2).

A. When we feel overwhelmed, this is not natural for us.

1. We tend to turn away from God rather than to Him.
2. We're prone to try and figure things out on our own.

B. When we feel overwhelmed, we need to do what David did.

1. David asked the Lord how long he would feel abandoned.
2. David asked the Lord how long the inner turmoil would last.
3. David asked the Lord how long his enemy would prevail.

2. Then bring your requests to God (vv. 3-4).

"Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

⁴ and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall."

A. Here's what he asked.

1. Look and answer.
2. Give me light.

B. Here's why he asked.

1. I am afraid I'm going to die.
2. I am afraid of what the enemy will say about me (and You) if that happens.

3. Finish by bringing your praise to God (vv. 5-6).

"But I trust in Your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in Your salvation. ⁶ I will sing the LORD's praise, for He has been good to me."

A. David ends by affirming the truth regarding God.

1. He affirms the truth of who God is.
2. He affirms the truth of what God does (He saves).
3. He affirms the truth of what God has done in the past.

B. David ends with action verbs.

1. He verbalizes, "I trust."
2. He verbalizes, "My heart rejoices."
3. He announces, "I will sing."

Make It Personal: Some suggestions on where to go from here...

1. Memorize Psalm 13 (and other psalms).
2. Put Psalm 13 into practice.
3. Share Psalm 13 with others... gently.
4. Learn and live in light of God's promises.
 - a. We have the promise of a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - b. We have the promise of a good outcome (Rom. 8:28-29).
 - c. We have the promise of forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
 - d. We have the promise of God's provision (Matt. 6:33).
 - e. We have the promise of God's guidance (Prov. 3:5-6).
 - f. We have the promise of a harvest (Gal. 6:7-10).
 - g. We have the promise of wisdom (James 1:5).
 - h. We have the promise of sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:10).
 - i. We have the promise of answered prayer (1 John 5:14-15).
 - j. We have the promise of a life to come (Rev. 21:1-8).

