

**Practicing Lament: A Mixed-Methods Socio-Rhetorical Study of Grief in
Lamentations 1:1–11 and a Qualitative Analysis of Lived Experiences of Grief**

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Statement of the Research Problem

The process and stages of grief are a normal response to loss. However, the stages of grief are not just steps to go through for healing, but are descriptions of an ambivalent ebb and flow of many emotions that encompass grief. Dr. Kübler-Ross looked to provide the medical world with an understanding of what death and dying look like, not as a textbook, as she states, but as an interpretation of an individual's grief when given the news that death is coming.¹ The stages she suggests, however, became the backdrop for the West's efforts to redefine the hermeneutical understanding of the grief process.² A great example of the ebbs and flows of grief comes from the COVID-19 pandemic, when the world experienced both individual and societal grief, creating tremendous confusion about how we are to navigate this normative emotion healthily.³ The scope of processing grief has been advanced by many in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, social work, counseling, and even some faith-based programs that use a social-science approach to integrate with faith (e.g., Grief Share, Healing through Faith) to help people process grief. So why is there a problem with how we interpret the process of grief today, and why does it require a biblical hermeneutic to interpret the scriptural process of grief? The answer is that the community of faith has failed to allow the living word of God to serve as the bridge by which we communicate our grief to a transcendent God, without losing our relationship with

¹ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. *On Death and Dying*. (Great Britain, UK: Routledge, 1973) Introduction.

² Kübler-Ross. *On Death and Dying*. Routledge, 1973, Introduction.

³ Williamson-Webb, Jacqueline. "Grief Disrupted: A Phenomenological Study of how African Americans Experienced Grief without Traditional Rituals during the COVID-19 Pandemic." Order No. 32284059, Liberty University, 2025. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; ProQuest One Academic, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/regent.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/grief-disrupted-phenomenological-study-how/docview/3273106865/se-2>.

God, whom we desire to break through to comfort us during our grief. Thus, the research will answer the question: What has gotten in the way of hearing the biblical hermeneutic for interpreting grief properly from God's word? Research will show how the community of faith allowed the secular to interpret the sacred process of grief and its meanings, guiding our faith foundations in God. Thus, this is not a new process for addressing grief, but rather an interpretation of why lamenting our loss, pain, betrayal, sorrow, hurt, mourning, separation, sin, depression, anxiety, and just raw grief is important for helping maintain our relationship with God. Therefore, the three thesis questions are: why is having a proper interpretation of grief critical to our foundation of faith? How does understanding the biblical aspects of grief help us when we are grieving? Last, what is the role of grief in the formation of our evangelical⁴ Christian faith?

Research Methodology

The study will employ a mixed-methods survey design to explore the lived experience of grief using both quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative part of the research will use a cross-sectional design.⁵ Participants who complete a five-item, self-administered questionnaire structured around biblically derived themes present in Judeo-Christian grief

⁴ Robert E. Webber *The younger Evangelicals, Facing the Challenges of the New World*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002) 14. The word evangelical refers to a community in Western Christianity that maintains a biblical foundation (four areas: biblical, theological, historical, and cultural), affirms the theological authority of scripture, engages in the historical movements of the church, and, lastly, is a cultural formation. It is this cultural formation that has resulted in the erosion of the true biblical understanding of grief. Today, we seek the process of self-help over comfort from the Holy Spirit.

⁵ Tom Clark, Liam Foster, Luke Slona, and Alan Bryman *Bryman's Social Research Methods*, Sixth ed (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021) 50-54. This approach will allow for cross-sectional analysis of demographic variables and participants' answers. Thereby enabling the display of patterns of association.

narratives, such as burden, lament, community support, and hope, will help explore how these themes shape participants' experiences of grief. Quantitative items will use a five-point Likert-scale response to assess perceived grief intensity, frequency of emotional expression, functional impact, and perceived social support. Qualitative components consisted of brief, open-ended prompts across three areas, inviting participants to describe their expressions of grief, experiences of support, and processes of meaning-making. These short-answer responses will be used to develop a phenomenological understanding of their perceived meaning of grief.

The three qualitative components will connect to the best of the published scholarship on the matter, but in no way are these items being surveyed to subscribe to this scholarship's thesis about grief. First, expressions of grief can be understood through the five stages of grief outlined in Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's book *On Death and Dying*. The second area for exploration is the experience of grief, drawing on Nicholas Wolterstorff's book *Lament for a Son*. Lastly, the idea of meaning-making resonates with Robert A. Neimeyer's book *Meaning Reconstruction & the Experience of Loss*, as this process aligns well with Christian foundations of grief through laments.

Anonymously, the survey data will be collected to reduce response bias and encourage candid reflection. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics for demographic variables (frequencies and percentages) to identify patterns in grief intensity and perceived support. Qualitative responses will be examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring constructs related to spiritual coping, relational dynamics, and empirical meaning. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings will enable triangulation and a more holistic understanding of grief as both an emotional and an interpretive experience. Participation in the survey is voluntary, and informed consent is understood by all who proceed to request a survey

and return it completed. Further, those who were asked to take the survey did so of their own free will, without pressure from the researcher or prior connections resulting from pastoral counseling over grief.

Research Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. The foundation of the quantitative survey instrument is intentionally kept brief to limit the amount of data to be analyzed and avoid overwhelming the study with excessive statistical data. As such, the instrument is not intended to serve as a diagnostic tool for grief-related disorders. Rather, it is to show how to apply the social sciences as a pillar of biblical research. Further, the use of biblically structured language may influence participant responses by resonating more strongly with individuals who identify with Christian or faith-based frameworks, potentially limiting participation among those from more non-religious backgrounds.

Additionally, reliance on self-reported data requires the researcher to trust respondents to answer truthfully about the data being collected, to minimize the risk of recall bias, social desirability bias, or underreporting of grief severity. Therefore, a cross-sectional design limits its ability to conclude changes in grief over time or causal relationships between variables. Finally, qualitative responses will vary in length and depth, which may limit the richness of thematic analysis for some participants. However, the value of this work will show how to apply the social science process alongside biblical exegetical analysis centered on a specific theme, thereby connecting the two disciplines for a more purposeful study.

Lastly, research on grief would benefit from longitudinal designs, broader validation efforts, and comparative studies that use both faith-specific and secular grief instruments, applying biblical research in conjunction with the social sciences, as shown. In conducting social

science research, it is important to communicate the why, how, and what behind the questions asked when collecting data for the study. Quantitatively, we are to explain the hypothesis behind the question.⁶ Qualitatively, the questions help drive understanding of the experiences, and by having several participants write answers, comparisons can be made to communicate and connect the theoretical work from the data.⁷

Overview of Survey Questions

In this brief overview section, there will be a short explanation of why this question was asked, how it helps drive foundational understanding of our subject, grief, and, lastly, what the hypothesized outcome is. You may find the complete survey in Appendix A.

The demographic data collected were used to provide four variables for quantitative and qualitative analysis. Two of these four questions are basic in most studies: gender and age. However, from secular studies we know that men and women grieve differently, but has this been tested against the Christian community of faith?⁸ The idea behind collecting age as demographic data is to understand if age plays a role in the depth and understanding of grief. The

⁶ Tom Clark, *Bryman's Social Research Methods*, 2021, 147.

⁷ Tom Clark, *Bryman's Social Research Methods*, 2021, 358-361.

⁸ Timothy Johns. 2025. "Guilty or Innocent? The Biblical Framework that Addresses Man's Heart Desires in Suffering." (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/guilty-innocent-biblical-framework-that-addresses/docview/3283136882/se-2?accountid=13479>. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. This dissertation fails to supply a foundational understanding of whether men grieve differently from women. It does communicate that a foundation of suffering comes from a fallen, sinful world, but does not supply why men are more stoic in their grief process. The last work on this subject was in 1994 by Carol Staudacher titled: *Men & grief: a guide for men surviving the death of a loved one: a resource for caregivers and mental health professionals*. Thus, it may be time to study this process as a practical theological gap within the community of faith today by asking: How should Christian Men Grieve in Light of the Gospel Message?

last two demographic questions may provide greater insight into the interpretations and experiences of how grief affects people of faith. Asking those participating in the study how long they have suffered from this grief is crucial to see how grief can linger, which may explain the depth of the relationship or the pain of the betrayal in a relationship. Last, the connection to the grief was from the loss of a spouse, child, or close friend, or a betrayal from a relationship, work, or spiritual community. This demographic question provides the foundation for the relationship underlying the grief.

Next, the why behind the quantitative questions, which use a Likert-scale framework, and the qualitative questions, which seek to understand the phenomenological meaning through the three short-answer responses. Question one seeks to measure the weight and burden of the grief in relation to how the scriptures often speak of sorrow as a burden carried by the heart (cf. Psalm 38:4). The statement asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, how heavy does your grief feel at this time? The idea of heavy helps to describe the burden of suffering with grief. The five-choice scale communicates the weight of the grief: Very light, Light, Moderate, Heavy, Crushing. The chosen words communicate the current weight of the grief, helping to describe the person's ability to carry it. For those who were in a strong, loving relationship or experiencing the loss of a child, the hypothesis is that these would be moderate to crushing. At the same time, those dealing with fewer relational issues and more friendship or betrayal would be light to moderate, unless the grief from betrayal was from a spouse or friend in a long-term relationship. The study looked through the biblical lens of Lamentations 1:1-11 as our foundation; thus, the foundation of this question in the survey connects well with the depths of descriptive language found in these first eleven verses of Lamentations. In this study, we are hypothesizing that grief and sadness are not merely psychological states to be managed but biblically affirmed human responses to loss,

shaped, interpreted, and transformed through relational, communal, and theological meaning. Scripture, therefore, offers a theologically normative framework for communicating the understanding of human grief. Therefore, this framework allows for the complexification of theological reflection to accompany each process, bringing out the meanings, values, and beliefs that would otherwise go unnoticed.⁹

Lamentations is a response following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Sources say that Jerusalem fell in or around July, on the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz.¹⁰ Lamentations is written in Hebrew and follows a poetic literary style.¹¹ The concepts surrounding Lamentations are communicated through three literary styles of lament: "individual lament, communal lament, and the funeral dirge."¹² These three concepts are important to this study's hermeneutical interpretation and to the author of Lamentations' intent in communicating an understanding of the importance of lamenting loss. The study is grounded in a social rhetorical approach to Lamentations 1:1-11; the words used to describe the current situation provide the basis for grief as a normative emotion. The poetry of the book of Lamentations is filled with sensory aesthetic patterns. These patterns use emotion-fused thought, self-expressive speech, or purposeful action language.¹³ Lamentations' sensory aesthetic reveals grief not as a process

⁹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Norfolk, UK: SCM Press, 2016) 20.

¹⁰ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk through the Bible: A Unique Reference tool to help you easily understand each book of the Bible, its historical context, and place in Scripture*. (Nashville: TN, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983) 208.

¹¹ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk through the Bible: A Unique Reference tool to help you easily understand each book of the Bible, its historical context, and place in Scripture*. (Nashville: TN, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983) 207.

¹² Faithlife, *Logos Bible Software*, version 7.0 (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016).

¹³ Joshua D. Henson, *Exegetical Analysis*, 94.

described through stages as psychology depicts it, but as a human internal response to loss, separation, and/or conflict.

The opening scene depicts a city under siege under the cover of darkness.¹⁴ Moreover, this lonely city (Lam 1:1) is described as a widow, for whom no one comes to comfort. Grief is then an emotion that, when experienced, feels like a journey that must be taken alone. The phrase "no one comes to comfort" (Lam 1:2) conveys the sense that the burden of this pain is borne alone. Thus, grief is crushing and heavy, just like the image painted by the writer of Lamentations of a city that lies in ruin. Therefore, the first question the survey seeks to measure is intended to help understand the weight of grief on those who have lost a significant part of their lives. As we read, this city is described as once great among nations; thus, when we lose a person great in our lives, it feels as though the depth of the pain is more than one can bear. Now the one in grief cries out to God about the affliction (Lam. 1:9) of this pain, communicating it as an attack from the enemy. The enemy in this case is "death" or "separation." Therefore, the opening question is intended to help the researcher understand the depth of one's grief in relation to the grieving process as an attack that is not understood in terms of its "why."

An example of this is found in Lam. 1:1 "How lonely sits the city, that was full of people! The phrase "how lonely" describes the one who sits in their grief, waiting for comfort to be understood. The second word in Lam. 1, "lonely", has the Hebrew root 772 (badad), which means "isolation" and "separation".¹⁵ Thus, the opening of the lament gives the image of isolation and separation as the sensory language of loss and grief.

¹⁴ F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1962) 52-53.

¹⁵ Faithlife, *Logos Bible Software*, version 7.0 (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016).

Question two seeks to understand whether the practice of lament is helpful to the one in grief. This question has a follow-up qualitative response that provides a theoretical understanding of how Christians practice pouring out their grief. The quantitative question asks: how often, in their grief, do they express it to God through prayer, words, tears, silence, or reflection? The choices are: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Continually. These choices communicate a process by which Christians and the Children of Israel have expressed their grief and pain to God. The question seeks to determine whether the person of faith is routinely engaging the divine through prayer, words, and tears. The latter two, silence and reflection, if practiced and selected, may indicate an avoidance mentality toward grieving the divine, resulting in a response of "never" or "rarely." If sometimes, often, or continually is chosen, it would suggest that the individual is engaging with the divine to find comfort and answers for their grief. The idea of prayer, words, and tears communicates an outward response to the inner emotions of the heart, spilling out as depicted in Lam 1:2, where she weeps bitterly and is described as bitter in Lam 1:4. When one is bitter, the outpouring of that emotion is felt and heard by many in the community. The author of Lamentations' description of no one to comfort her in her bitterness provides sensory aesthetic patterns that help explain why we do not know how to comfort the one in grief.¹⁶ Thus, will this question provide us with an approach for understanding and assisting those in grief? The qualitative response to this question is key to our understanding of how to better respond to those in grief.

¹⁶ Joshua D. Henson, *Exegetical Analysis*, 94. Sensory aesthetic patterns are emotionally *fused thought, self-expressive speech, and purposeful action*. Therefore, focusing on phrases and words in these three areas is crucial for mining the process of grief from a biblical hermeneutical foundation.

The qualitative question asks the participant to explain the ways they most often express their grief. This thematic response advances our hermeneutical phenomenology by elucidating their process of making sense of the world while in grief.¹⁷ Words have meaning, and aligning these words with a scaling question helps enhance understanding of the question in relation to the current praxis of grief. Thus, allowing meaning to be conveyed through the words the participant chose to describe their healing process enables comparison with the one grieving in Lamentations. The influence of interpretivism in this process is significant; thus, five common concerns must be addressed.¹⁸ These five items will be used to guide the qualitative response interpretations against the whole study.

Chapter 1 of Lamentations appears to depict two individuals communicating. The first eleven verses are a prophetic figure, and then the last twelve verses personify a female voice that engages in a dialogical lament over communal devastation.¹⁹ What Dr. Lee's work points out is that the two voices in Lamentations 1 move from a mournful song to prayer, transforming grief into a theological protest and an oral appeal to God. Thus, in question three of the survey, the

¹⁷ Tom Clark, *Bryman's Social Research Methods*, 2021, 25. Phenomenology is the philosophical approach that focuses on how individuals make sense of the world around them and, in particular, how the philosopher can communicate how this allowed one to overcome their own preconceptions to better understand the phenomena associated with human consciousness and was first applied by Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), recognized in 1960 once his work was translated from German to English.

¹⁸ Tom Clark, *Bryman's Social Research Methods*, 2021, 354. First, look through the eyes of those being studied. Second, provide full descriptions emphasizing context. Third, the importance of process in their social life. Fourth, be flexible. Fifth, ground the concepts in the data of the study.

¹⁹ Nancy C. Lee. 2000. "The singers of Lamentations" Order No. 9978441, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/regent.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/singers-lamentations-cities-under-siege-ur/docview/304675872/se-2>. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. 10.

quantitative question asks: in relation to scripture that acknowledges that grief can affect one's strength and daily walk (cf. Lamentations 1:1-11; 3:17): To what extent has grief affected your ability to carry out daily responsibilities and relationships? The question again builds on where the person in grief is in the process of grief. The possible responses are: Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Greatly, and Completely. The first two answers, if chosen, show that their grief is not impacting their day-to-day ability to move forward. The last three answers provide us with a picture of the weeping widow, who has no protection as enemies and adversaries surround her in her grief. When one has lost a spouse and is faced with financial loss and instability as a result of the loss, the prophet's lament paints this picture with the words found in verse three: Judah has gone into exile because of affliction, and hard servitude; she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.²⁰ Thus, because of the loss, life has become harder. The protection of a way of life once filled with joy is now understood as gone, and the one in grief is left to figure out how to move forward in a very dark environment. Thus, question three seeks to understand this very construct, which scripture portrays as an inability to move forward in life because life has gotten harder now that loss or separation has occurred.

In question four, the quantitative research builds off of question three. It seeks to understand engagement with a community of support for the one experiencing grief by asking: The Bible emphasizes bearing one another's burdens (cf. Galatians 6:2). How supported do you feel by others (family, friends, faith community) in your grief? Possible answers: Deeply supported, Well supported, Moderately supported, Slightly supported, or Not supported. The reason for this question is to understand whether the one in grief feels like the one in verse three,

²⁰ The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, Lamentations 1.

or whether the person in grief feels that their community has come to their aid and is helping them move forward during this period of grief. A community of support is vital for processing grief and having a group to lean on during a season of pain. A recent period we can all relate to was the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. People faced death alone, and then those who lost a loved one during this season were left to grieve alone because of policies that kept a community of support separate.²¹ The amount of grief the world faced during this season left a trail of data to be mined on how important community is to the process of healing and moving forward in grief.

The first half of verse seven supplies us with the importance of the meaning of community support when the one lamenting says, "Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and wandering all the precious things that were hers from days of old." When grief comes, we seek to remember the best of times with the one who has passed. Scripture provides this message, but centers it on being cared for by God during a period of wandering and suffering. This one aspect of this lament points to a time when, although suffering was a part of life, times were good. Many facing grief speak of the times that were, but it was the individual who helped get them through a period of suffering. The one lamenting points to God, who provided for Israel's needs while they were wandering in the wilderness.

The follow-up qualitative response question for question four asks: In a few sentences, explain what has been most present or most absent from the support you have received during your grief. The purpose is to understand what is supplying their support, and if they feel like there is no support now, and therefore communicate the second half of verse seven: "When her

²¹ Jacqueline Williamson-Webb. 2025. "Grief Disrupted: A Phenomenological Study of How African Americans Experienced Grief Without Traditional Rituals During the COVID-19 Pandemic," (Liberty University), <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/grief-disrupted-phenomenological-study-how/docview/3273106865/se-2?accountid=13479>. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was none to help her, her foes gloated over her; they mocked at her downfall." A person who feels like no support is present may feel like no one cares, or that this period of grief is payback for how they have lived. This is a failure to understand God's providence in that all things work to the glory of God, even death. In loss, we are reminded of relationships, and in relationship, we are reminded of love. In love, we are reminded of the responsiveness of support from another. However, death is viewed as an unmitigated evil, the very antithesis of all that is good.²² However, we will all face the loss of a person close to us, and when we suffer loss, the question that this study seeks to understand is whether it is easier with a community of support or without. The responses will supply this meaning, but the answers to the quantitative part of question four will shed light on the level of support people feel like they are receiving from their community.

The last question of the survey is a qualitative response centered around the idea of how they understand the communication found in Scripture, holding both sorrows and hope together (cf. Romans 8:18) by communicating in a few sentences and sharing how grief has shaped their understanding of hope, faith, and their interpretation or meaning of this formation of the grief process. This final qualitative response question gets to the heart of what grief means to the one who is grieving. The question will be whether they communicate about hope or about the affliction of the enemy of death, which robs them of their hope. Thus, it will supply us a picture of what or who hope is from the one in grief. For the Children of Israel, it had become their property of the promised land (Lam 1:10-11) and what it yielded them. Later, they started selling

²² Richard J. Neuhaus, *As I Lay Dying*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002) 3. This book presents the Bundren family's journey to bury their matriarch as a fragmented exploration of how individuals construct and justify meaning through personal perspective. The novel's thesis suggests that truth is subjective and unstable, revealed through competing inner voices shaped by grief, pride, and isolation.

all their possessions to eat. The response will provide an image of what sustained them in their times of plenty, whether it was earthly relationships and things, or God. Hope can only be sustained by God, not humanity or things of this world. The author of Lamentations alludes to this construct by moving from being cared for in their times of wandering and suffering to now selling their things for earthly food. Thus, when God supplied their sustenance, although it was the same each day, it sustained them because it was consistent. Now, their lack of reliance on God to sustain them in difficult days led them to feel that God was turning against them. This loss of relationship with God caused their sense of not having support to face earthly loss. Therefore, the research will seek to show that those who feel no sense of earthly support from a community will lack a sense of Godly support and hope for moving forward in this season of grief. This is the picture of Lamentations 1:1-11, as the author says in verses nine and eleven: "O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!" "Look, O Lord, and see, for I am despised." Is this the image of a person without a community of support and without hope in God to help them weather this season of grief?

In *Lament for a Son*, Nicholas Wolterstorff portrays grief not as a problem to be solved but as a reality to be endured, where love and loss remain inseparably bound. He resists the urge to offer neat theological explanations, instead showing that lament is a faithful response that gives voice to pain before God. Grief, in his account, is persistent and unpredictable, surfacing in ordinary moments and reshaping one's sense of time, memory, and identity. However, within this suffering, he suggests that the depth of grief reflects the depth of love, making sorrow itself a testimony to relational significance. Ultimately, the work invites readers to embrace lament as an

authentic spiritual practice that honors both the brokenness of loss and the enduring presence of love.²³

Survey Results

The surveys were collected via Google Forms. The link and request for participation were placed on social media sites connected with the researcher. Those who clicked the link were taken to the survey, where they engaged with the material until they reached the end. At the end of the survey, there was a submit button that saved all their responses into a file.

When examining the survey results in relation to our three main research questions, the goal is to communicate a hermeneutic of phenomenological understanding that enables interpretation of the meaning of grief and God's ability to hear the pain of those in grief. It will be vital to extract meaning from the qualitative short-answer responses while treating the quantitative questions as variables to understand the depth of grief in relation to them. The three main research questions at the start of this research were: Why is having a proper interpretation of grief critical for our foundation of faith? How does understanding the biblical aspects of grief help us when we are grieving? Last, what is the role of grief in the formation of our evangelical Christian faith? These questions will help those who have not experienced grief gain a deeper understanding of those who are dealing with grief. This may help reshape the cultural foundations of our Christian formation in grief, so that we do not medicate it but allow it to permeate our community, so the Holy Spirit can work in and through the community of faith to comfort those in pain.

²³ Nicholas Woltherstorff, *Lament For A Son* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002). This paragraph is a summary of the book's thesis and a praxis we must recover and communicate: through God's love, we can endure the challenges of grief and loss, for He alone supplies the hope to face life's trials.

The demographic data from four surveys included two males and two females. This will give us a good balance of support to help us understand both males and females who have experienced grief. The age range of those who took the survey was 34 to 77. The two older participants were female, and the two younger participants were male. The length of time that these individuals have carried their grief is from four years to thirty-three years. The males have carried their grief for the shortest amount of time, as they are the two younger individuals in the study. The last demographic question concerned the connection to grief, being death or betrayal. Interestingly, this yielded three to the death of a spouse, one to the death of a friend, and one to a betrayal. One of these individuals is carrying grief that touches two categories in this question (See Chart 1).

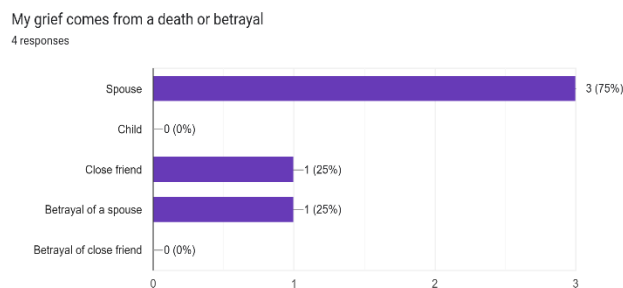


Chart 1

Weight of the Burden (Quantitative) Scripture often speaks of sorrow as a burden carried by the heart (cf. Psalm 38:4). On a scale of 1 to 5, how heavy does your grief feel at this time?
4 responses

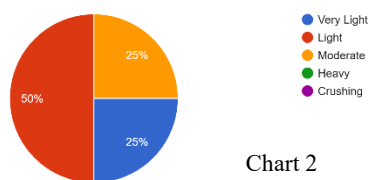


Chart 2

Now, the first question of the survey sought to ask (See Chart 2): On a scale of 1 to 5, how heavy does your grief feel at this time? Respondents reported ranging from very light to moderate. The one who listed moderate has carried their grief for just six years, while the one carrying their grief the shortest amount of time seems to be further along in their grief process. This, in turn, removes the idea that time is the healer of grief. For the one who is dealing with moderate grief in relation to Lamentations would likely feel like Judea, who has gone into exile because of their affliction. To be exiled is to still struggle with your current situation. Further, to be exiled is to

feel disjointed, like a stranger in a new environment. Those who listed light, to very light, would likely be those who no longer sit alone and weep bitterly like the widow depicted in verse one of Lamentations. However, the one who has carried their grief the shortest time may offer the answer to why their grief is light, providing us with a path to healing.

Question two of the survey asked (See Chart 3): How often do you find yourself expressing your grief (through prayer, words, tears, silence, or reflection)? This question was

Practice of Lament (Quantitative + Qualitative) The Bible contains many laments that give voice to pain before God (cf. Psalm 13). How often do you find...ough prayer, words, tears, silence, or reflection)?
4 responses

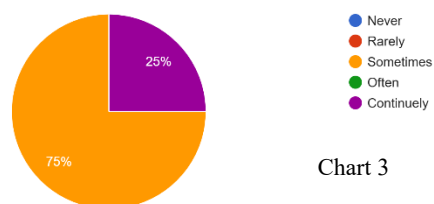


Chart 3

intended to determine whether the individual had engaged in any faith-based practices with God related to their grief. The one who answered "light" in the previous response is the one who communicated consistently in this response, and this individual has been carrying their grief the shortest time. We can conclude that consistent engagement through outward responses of prayer, words, and tears may have helped them offload their grief and find comfort from and through these external expressions in relationship with God. A statement that they supplied in their short answer was that it was their "prayers and tears, and the thankfulness for the memories, and asking for strength and guidance" that allowed them to find comfort. Consistent engagement with God through prayers and tears, while remembering, connects to Lamentations 1:7, where the author speaks of the memories of the children of Israel's wanderings, which were precious even amid affliction, because God supplied their needs. Thereby, a continuous engagement with God during our grief will lead to finding peace amid the affliction of loss and betrayal.

Impact on Daily Faithfulness (Quantitative) Scripture acknowledges that grief can affect one's strength and daily walk (cf. Lamentations 1:1-11; 3:1... carry out daily responsibilities and relationships?
4 responses

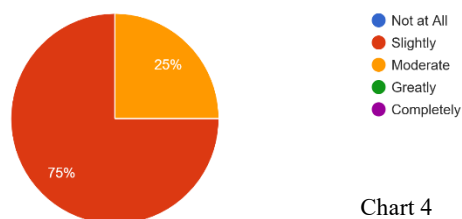


Chart 4

Question three asks

(See Chart 4): To what

extent has grief affected

your ability to carry out

daily responsibilities and

relationships? The question

seeks to understand the impact of grief on the day-to-day relationships and aspects of life. The one who answered moderately has carried this pain for thirty years. This is a long time to be impacted by grief. One thing of note about this individual is that they report being deeply supported by family and friends in response to question 4. Having a community of support to lean on in times of grief is crucial to moving forward. The author of Lamentations 1:1-11 repeatedly stated that no one was coming to the widow's aid. If you are grieving and have no community of support, then you can resonate with the one lamenting about having no one to come to their aid. The church needs to be a community that engages those in grief so they can feel the presence of the Spirit of God, communicated to them in their pain by those who seek to be messengers of mercy.²⁴

Question four is often asked in clinical settings to gain perspective on the level of community support an individual has in relation to their current outlook. Asking this question helps the researcher, clinician, or pastor understand the level of support those dealing with grief are receiving. If someone had answered this question with little or no support, the researcher

²⁴ D. A. Carson, 1984 *Matthew*, Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 134. Specifically, verse seven of the "Be Attitudes" embraces forgiveness for the guilty and compassion for the suffering. Thus, to help those in their grief is to show mercy. Where is the evangelical church at on showing mercy to those in their grief? Much research is needed on the practice of showing mercy to those who are grieving to determine whether this is linked to healing.

would have been warranted in trying to assist them in finding a community of support to help them move forward. Lamentations 1:1-11 conveyed how bleak the current outlook for Jerusalem appeared. The phrases in Lam. 1:2, “she has none to comfort her” and “her friends deal

treacherously with her,”

communicate a dangerous outlook

for the one in grief. Those who

took the survey responded with

deeply supportive and well-

supportive categories (See Chart 5). Those who took the survey would not be like the widow weeping bitterly, but like a child who finds comfort from their parent amid their pain.

Presence of Community (Quantitative + Qualitative) The Bible emphasizes bearing one another's burdens (cf. Galatians 6:2). How supported do you feel...s (family, friends, faith community) in your grief?
4 responses

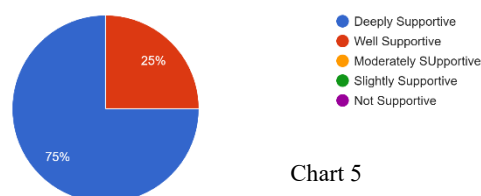


Chart 5

The three qualitative responses convey a thematic understanding of grief as a process; the code label for this question is expression.²⁵ The question asked the participants to write out their response to this statement: How often do you find yourself expressing your grief (*through prayer, words, tears, silence, or reflection*)? Write out your response: The theme that runs through all four individuals is: “strength comes through prayers and tears,” “drawing strength from my faith, powerful scriptures, prayer at ALL TIMES,” “engaging twice a month prayer, words, tears, silence, and reflection,” “prayer, lament, and music.” The use of music in this process was not asked for, but was listed by one of the respondents. Music is a powerful tool for healing many burdens. Expression of grief through prayer, laments, music, and poetry supports an outward expression of the inward emotion of grief, helping to relieve the feeling of being overwhelmed, as these statements reveal. In Lam. 1:1-11, we are given this understanding because the one

²⁵ Tom Clark, *Bryman's Social Research Methods*, 2021, 534. The question asks respondents to write out their process of expressing their grief.

lamenting the city's destruction expresses their grief through sensory aesthetic patterns.²⁶ This allows them to express their pain outwardly. Encouraging those who are experiencing grief to express it through written prayers, descriptive words, laments, songs, poetry, etc., will help them communicate outwardly what they feel inwardly, hopefully relieving their pain.

Qualitative response question two asked them to explain, in a few sentences, what has been most present or most absent in the support they have received during their grief. The label given here is support. The first listed: “lack of sharing with others, mostly I guess from a lack of trust of those around me;” The second stated “compassion and love;” The third, communicated a strong network of family and friends;” The fourth, “most present has been my male friends, men of God, and my wife is aloof to my pain and grief;” Interesting that out of the four three listed both what has been present and what has been absent which gives insight into the importance of having a safe place and a community to communicate this pain. The one that listed compassion and love was cross-referenced with their quantitative question to understand that they had a deeply supportive community. Those who listed what was absent allow us to understand areas of gaps that may be captured to engage. Both men communicated areas of trust or a lack of someone close picking up on their grief. For men who are experiencing grief of any kind, it would be vital to help them unpack this pain and help them be able to communicate this to those closest to them in order to strengthen their community.

The last qualitative response question asked participants to communicate, in a few sentences, how grief has shaped their understanding of hope and faith, and their interpretation or meaning of the grief process. The following responses are under the label of meaning. The first

²⁶ Joshua D. Henson, *Exegetical Analysis*, 94. Sensory aesthetic patterns are emotionally *fused thought, self-expressive speech, and purposeful action*. This process may help to express the inward reality in a healthy way for others to understand.

response stated that they “have seen firsthand the presence of God's hand during their difficult time.” The second individual stated that grief had shaped their understanding of hope by teaching them that hope does not deny pain; it holds on to God while pain is still present. This is a powerful message about grief, as this person has carried it for more than thirty years. The third participant communicated that it had pushed them deeper into their faith. Hebrews 7:25 came alive to them 18 years ago. Reminded them that God lives to pray for them! Moreover, His presence is with them through the Holy Spirit for guidance and comfort. He does come to them in their grief, supports them, and points them forward to greater healing through the Spirit. What a strong testimony of healing over eighteen years. True meaning comes through the Holy Spirit as a means of comfort and guidance in grief. Lastly, the fourth individual alluded to the weaving of a tapestry of understanding by stating that they go to God’s training plan: of “tribulation-patience-experience-hope.” Further, they also hold onto the hope of eternal life and reunion one day. Lastly, the narrative of grief is seen as part of the story God is weaving for His glory. This story can be seen as a tapestry of grief that allows hope to be the main picture.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that grief, when interpreted through a biblical hermeneutic, is not merely a psychological process but a deeply theological and relational experience. Grounded in Lamentations 1:1–11, the findings show that lament is essential for maintaining a faithful relationship with God amid loss. Rather than resolving grief through linear stages, Scripture presents it as an ongoing dialogue with God, where sorrow is expressed, held, and transformed.

The mixed-methods data reveal that individuals who consistently engage in lament practices, through prayer, tears, and reflection, alongside support from a faith community, experience greater movement toward healing and hope. In contrast, the absence of spiritual

expression and communal support often leads to prolonged isolation, reflecting the desolation portrayed in Lamentations.

Ultimately, grief serves a formative role in shaping evangelical faith by teaching believers to hold sorrow and hope in tension. Therefore, the church must recover lament as a vital communal practice, equipping believers to bring their grief before God, where comfort, meaning, and enduring hope are found.

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Appendix 1: A Social Rhetorical Survey for Understanding Grief

Demographics

Circle Gender: male/female.

Current Age _____

How long have you suffered with this grief? _____ years, _____ months.

Circle your answer about your grief. My grief comes from the death of a spouse, child, or close friend, or my grief is because of a betrayal in a long friendship, work situation, or spiritual community.

Check the box that best aligns with your level of grief.

1. Weight of the Burden (*Quantitative*)

Scripture often speaks of sorrow as a burden carried by the heart (cf. Psalm 38:4).

On a scale of 1 to 5, how heavy does your grief feel at this time?

- 1 ☐ Very light
2 ☐ Light
3 ☐ Moderate
4 ☐ Heavy
5 ☐ Crushing

2. Practice of Lament (*Quantitative* + *Qualitative*)

The Bible contains many laments that give voice to pain before God (cf. Psalm 13).

How often do you find yourself expressing your grief (*through prayer, words, tears, silence, or reflection*)?

- 1 ☐ Never
2 ☐ Rarely
3 ☐ Sometimes
4 ☐ Often
5 ☐ Continually

In a few sentences, explain the ways you most often express this grief.

[illegible]

If you need more space, please use the back of the survey.

3. Impact on Daily Faithfulness (*Quantitative*)

Scripture acknowledges that grief can affect one's strength and daily walk (cf. Lamentations 1:1-11; 3:17).

To what extent has grief affected your ability to carry out daily responsibilities and relationships?

- 1 ☐ Not at all
- 2 ☐ Slightly
- 3 ☐ Moderately
- 4 ☐ Greatly
- 5 ☐ Completely

4. Presence of Community (*Quantitative + Qualitative*)

The Bible emphasizes bearing one another's burdens (cf. Galatians 6:2).

How supported do you feel by others (family, friends, faith community) in your grief?

- 1 ☐ Deeply supported
- 2 ☐ Well supported
- 3 ☐ Moderately supported
- 4 ☐ Slightly supported
- 5 ☐ Not supported

In a few sentences, explain what has been most present or most absent from the support you have received during your grief.

5. Hope and Meaning (*Qualitative*)

Scripture often holds sorrows and hopes together (cf. Romans 8:18).

In a few sentences, share how grief has shaped your understanding of hope, faith, and your interpretation or meaning of this formation of the grief process.
