



**ENTER** God's presence

- <sup>1</sup> I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;  
he heard my cry for mercy.
- <sup>2</sup> Because he turned his ear to me,  
I will call on him as long as I live.
- <sup>3</sup> The cords of death entangled me,  
the anguish of the grave came over me;  
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
- <sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the Lord: "Lord, save me!"
- <sup>5</sup> The Lord is gracious and righteous;  
our God is full of compassion.
- <sup>6</sup> The Lord protects the unwary;  
when I was brought low, he saved me.
- <sup>7</sup> Return to your rest, my soul,  
for the Lord has been good to you.

– Psalm 116:1-7

Almighty God, Lord of the seasons and years, you are constant in love and mercy toward us. You are the same, yesterday, today and forever. When life confronts us with change that we don't understand and with loss that is crippling, strengthen us with your grace that we may navigate forward one day at a time, for you are with us always and the way to life in all its fullness. Grow us deeper in your life and grace as we spend time together in your Word today. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



**SHARE** life together

1. Share your highs and lows with each other?
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. What is your reflexive response to change – resist it, fight it, embrace it or other? Why?
4. What's the biggest change/loss that you have experienced in 2020?

The only real constant in the world is change. To cope with that we develop a reflex response. You don't think about it, you don't plan for it, you can't seem to stop it. It just happens.

Week beginning:  
**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2020**

Worship series:

**New Terrain**



**VERSE** for the week

The faithful love of  
the Lord never ends!  
His mercies never cease.  
Great is his faithfulness;  
his mercies begin afresh each  
morning.  
I say to myself,  
"The Lord is my inheritance;  
therefore, I will hope in him!"

**Lamentations 3:22-24**



**REMEMBER** this week

God's grace is  
sufficient for you today  
and it will be  
sufficient for you tomorrow.

When life's challenges hit, when we are confronted with a shifting and changing landscape and life-scape, most of us revert to our reflexive response. Some respond by giving up, taking flight or curling up in a ball saying, "I can't take it." Others fight the change angrily or aggressively. Still others respond with a cool indifference, having developed a protective shell around their hearts that nothing can penetrate. Then there are those who thrive on the challenge saying "Bring it on!" In this season when we have lost so much and stand to lose perhaps a whole lot more, when we grieve all that is no longer available to us and the future uncertainties loom large and are overpowering, what is your reflexive response? Navigating change is tough. Finding a 'new' normal is tedious. Living through grief and loss is painful. Wherever you are in that today, God promises his steadfast love, his faithful presence and his unfailing strength. It's a gift to help you stay true as you navigate new terrain and thrive in life's changes, especially grief and loss.



**LISTEN** attentively

**Read Lamentations 3:19-33**

- 5. What do you find challenging/confusing/comforting about this text?**
- 6. When are you tempted to doubt the Lord's compassion and steadfast love?**
- 7. How would you describe the terrain of 2020 that you have had to navigate? Easy, slow going, frustrating, hard, scary, treacherous, other? What has made it that way?**
- 8. Why does recalling what God has done—in His Word or in our own lives—help us remember what is true about God?**

Whenever we face crisis moments in life, we have a reflexive response. Often it is to go back to a default position; what we believe about ourselves and what we believe about God. Maybe your default response is to cry and curl up in a ball, feeling really depressed because life is so unfair. Maybe it is to get angry at God or others around you because life is so cruel. Maybe it is to wonder whether God really loves you and is for you, or to wonder what you did wrong to deserve God's anger or even punishment in your life. We all have a reflexive response to the losses and changes of life. Whatever your grief response is, God is big enough to deal with your questions, your complaints, your anger. He invites you to pour out what you feel. In fact laments are a gift because they give voice to our pain, and allow us to anchor our lives to the truths we believe.

- 9. The Bible is full of "laments". Just read the Psalms. Laments are passionate expressions of grief or sorrow often asking God for help. What in your life are you currently lamenting? How are you seeking God's assistance or deliverance?**
- 10. Think of a time in your past when you experienced severe crisis, trouble or affliction? What was your reflexive response at that time? Was that response helpful/not helpful? If a similar circumstance arose today, would you respond differently? Why/Why not?**
- 11. What does it mean that the Lord is your "portion" or "inheritance?" How is that a cause for hope?**



**GROW** deeper

**Read Lamentations 3:1-5**

Jeremiah finds himself trying to navigate new terrain. A once thriving city now lies in ruins. A once proud city has been decimated. The prophet Jeremiah is walking through a ghost town lamenting what has been lost. He knows that what he is experiencing is as a result of God's judgment on a rebellious and idolatrous people. But it's not just about the city. It's not just about the fact that the temple was burned down and the city walls were destroyed. It's not just that there is a world wide pandemic like we haven't seen in a long time that is affecting millions. It's personal. It's overwhelming. It's impact on families and people is significant. And it affects Jeremiah personally; he has no peace or happiness (v 17), no endurance or hope

(v 18), and the grief of the moment is relentless – “**My soul continually remembers it [the affliction] and is bowed down within me**” (3:20). Then something changes with the word ‘but’ in verse 21 that shifts his perspective.

12. What changes so that Jeremiah moves from being without hope (v. 18) to possessing hope (v. 21)?
13. What are some things Jeremiah reminds himself about God in vv. 22-33? How is the knowledge of God such a ground of hope and comfort?

Jeremiah points us toward a very important and practical step to help us thrive when life changes and we are faced with navigating new terrain. Hope does not come from circumstances but from what we know to be true despite the circumstances around us. In other words, you live through loss and grief and suffering by what you believe, not by what you see or feel. Jeremiah points us to the one whose mercy never ends, whose loving kindness is personal. The beautiful thing about this passage, is that Jeremiah doesn't look too far forward. When life is difficult, he doesn't hold on to the promise of the Messiah, or the future restoration of the Kingdom...he holds on to the one he knows, whose mercies are new each day. In other words, whatever you are facing today, God will give you sufficient grace to make it through the day. And tomorrow, that mercy will begin afresh again, giving you enough for the day.



**LIVE** purposefully

14. How honest are you with God in your prayers? What keeps you from lamenting to God?
15. What verse or phrase from 19-31 most applies to your life right now?
16. What do you need to remind yourself of or need the LifeGroup to remind you of about God at this time as you navigate grief or loss in your life.
17. Who around you do you need to remind this week that God's grace is enough to get them through the loss and grief of this moment?



**PRAY** intentionally

- Praise God for his unfailing love and mercy which never changes, which are new in your life each day. Thank Jesus for his presence with us as we navigate grief, loss and change in our lives. Ask the Holy Spirit, to fill you with grace that is sufficient for the challenges of life each day.
- Pray for those who are not coping well in this time of change that is filled with loss and grief.
- Ask God to use you to be a companion of his presence in the life of someone struggling to navigate these changing times.
- Pray for LifeWay Westside as we seek the right location to begin forming relationships to plant a new community of faith.



**BLESS** one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], God's grace is sufficient for you today and it will be sufficient for you tomorrow. Amen**