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# Resolving anger toward God : lament as an avenue toward attachment

Kimberly N. Snow  
*George Fox University*

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Resolving Anger Toward God: Lament as an Avenue Toward Attachment

by

Kimberly N. Snow

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology

George Fox University

in partial fulfillment

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Resolving Anger toward God:  
Lament as an Avenue toward Attachment

by  
Kimberly N. Snow

has been approved  
at the  
Graduate School of Clinical Psychology  
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Approval

Signatures:

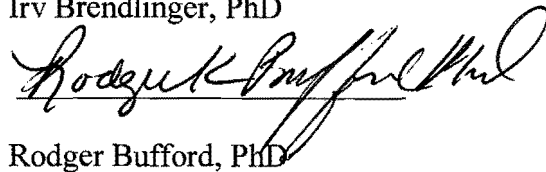


Mark McMinn, PhD, Chair

Members:



Irv Brendlinger, PhD



Rodger Bufford, PhD

Date: 5/12/2010

Resolving Anger Toward God: Lament as an Avenue Toward Attachment

Kimberly N. Snow

Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology at

George Fox University

Newberg, Oregon

Abstract

Preliminary investigations have found anger toward God to be positively related to various psychological problems, as well as physical, spiritual and religious problems (Exline & Martin, 2005). Until recently, however, the topic of anger toward God has been vastly overlooked by psychologists. Within the psychological literature, interventions specifically targeting negative feelings toward God remain to be explored. The current study tested an intervention based on the biblical psalms of lament (Zornow, 2009). The lament psalm intervention consisted of 20 devotional readings and weekly experiential assignments, delivered electronically over a four-week period. The study was completed by 192 college students at Christian institutions across the United States. The majority of participants, 76%, were female, and 84% of the sample was of European American descent. Overall, participants ascribed a high level of importance to their religious beliefs. Religious affiliation was predominantly Christian.

It was hypothesized that the intervention would result in decreased feelings of anger and complaint toward God, as well as increased intimacy with God over time, as demonstrated by a

significant time by experimental condition interaction effect. It was also hypothesized that the intervention would be related to changes in religious coping over time, also tested by an interaction effect. Furthermore, it was believed that participants who scored high on measures of both communion with God and complaint with God at Time 1 would receive the greatest benefit from the intervention (Beck, 2006). In order to test these hypotheses, participants in the lament psalm intervention were compared with participants in two control groups. Contrary to the hypotheses, repeated measures ANOVAs revealed no significant interaction effects.

Further analysis was conducted in order to examine participants who reported a high level of compliance with the intervention. Maximum compliance with the lament psalm intervention was related to increased ratings on Communion with God, as measured by a subscale of the Attachment to God Inventory,  $F(2, 101) = 3.71, p < 0.05$ . No other significant interaction effects were found. Findings suggest that full participation in a lament psalm intervention may result in benefits such as increased feelings of intimacy toward God.

## Acknowledgments

This work is dedicated to Adam Snow, Mary Starr and Michelle Watson.

And to all of my loved ones who believe in the power of authentic relationship.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

“I love God.” This phrase has been uttered by countless believers throughout time. These words have reflected the adoration and commitment of devout believers of various faiths. But what about the other side of human emotions? What about anger or frustration toward God? Anger toward the divine is nothing new, though it may remain a taboo subject among certain religious groups. Anger, confusion, disillusionment, and frustration with God have affected numerous people throughout centuries. Within the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms is full of honest discourse with God that reflects the gamut of emotions. For example, recorded as the 13<sup>th</sup> Psalm, we find the following words of angst and desperation: “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?”(The Book of Psalms, 2000, NIV).

Relationship with the divine is a topic that has been long explored, both by theologians and social scientists. However, the topic of anger and disappointment toward God, though valued within religious literature, has been mostly neglected within psychological research until recently. A number of articles pioneering the subject have now emerged (e.g., Exline & Martin, 2005; Wood, Worthington, Exline, Yali, Aten & McMinn, 2010). Related topics of psychological inquiry include religious coping, religious strain, religious doubts, and God-images (Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar & Ano, 2005).

Anger toward God is certainly not an uncommon phenomenon. A recent study examined the prevalence of anger toward God in a large national sample revealing that 62% of Americans sometimes experience anger toward God, while 2.5% reported that they are often angry with God (Exline, Park, Smyth, & Carey, 2011). According to this data, anger toward God is a relevant topic affecting a majority of Americans at some time during their lives, while a minority of individuals experience anger toward God on a frequent or persistent basis. Beyond being a widespread phenomena, Exline et al. (2011) concluded that anger toward God is measurable within a variety of contexts and populations.

### **Relevance of Anger Toward God**

To grasp the importance of anger toward God, it is helpful to consider the broader phenomenon of religious struggle. Religious coping has received greater attention in the literature to date. When people are faced with stressful life events or crises, they often turn to religion as a resource for coping. In fact, studies have shown that a majority of Americans employ religious coping during difficult times (Schottenbauer, Klimes-Dougan, Rodriguez, Arnkoff, Glass, et al., 2006). Religious coping is multidimensional; it refers to the vast array of ways that people think, feel, and behave regarding their religious beliefs following a stressful event (Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998).

Many methods of religious coping have been identified and categorized; for example, Pargament refers to positive and negative religious coping, referring to patterns of religious coping that have been associated with either positive health benefits or health risks (Zinnbauer, & Pargament, 2005). Four broad categories of religious coping have been defined as: (a) passively *deferring* control of life to God, (b) *self-directing*, seeking control through personal

initiative rather than through God, (c) *pleading* in order to work through God via petitioning, and (d) *collaborative*, partnering with God in problem-solving (Pargament, 1997). These four categories are not easily confined to either positive or negative religious coping, but are better judged on the basis of situational appropriateness. Positive religious coping may include a collaborative approach, seeking comfort by God, and looking to religion to help with letting go of anger, hurt, and fear. Negative religious coping may be characterized by punitive religious reappraisals, reappraisals of God's powers, and spiritual discontent (Pargament et al., 1998). While anger toward God may fall within either the positive or negative camp, it is likely that persistent unremitting anger toward God is a form of negative religious coping, and thus correlated with numerous health risks.

Anger toward God has been associated with psychological problems, emotional distress, and poorer adjustment to major life stressors such as bereavement, cancer, and homelessness (Exline et al., 2011; Exline, Yali, & Lobel, 1999; Smith & Exline, 2002; Wood et al., 2009). For example, disappointment and anger toward God have been positively correlated with anger, depression, stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, insecure attachment and entitlement (Exline & Martin, 2005; Strelan, Acton, & Patrick, 2009; Wood et al., 2009). It has also been negatively correlated with optimism and life satisfaction (Wood et al., 2009). Spiritual struggle, as assessed by a measure of negative religious coping, has been significantly correlated with anxiety, depression, paranoid ideation, obsessive-compulsiveness, and somatization, among other psychopathologies (McConnell, Pargament, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2006; Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar, & Ano, 2005). Although these data have been primarily correlational in nature, it is clear that anger toward God is a theme running through the psychological distress of some

individuals. Interestingly, it even appears to be a relevant topic in the lives of individuals who describe themselves as non-religious (Exline et al., 2011).

One preliminary study showed that people who described themselves as less religious tended to report more anger involving God (or the idea of God) than their religious counterparts. When asked about their religious beliefs these individuals endorsed “atheist/agnostic” or “none/unsure,” yet further analysis revealed that these individuals had believed in God’s existence (or the possibility of God’s existence) at some time prior to the study (Exline, Fisher, Rose, & Kampani, 2004). In a study of undergraduate students, 9% of respondents said they resolved their negative feelings toward God by deciding not to believe in God (Exline, 2002). These findings suggest that anger toward God may result in a loss of faith, perhaps even misotheism, a recent term denoting a belief system of hatred toward God (Holmes, 2000; Schweizer, 2010).

Religious commitment and perceived closeness to God have been correlated with lower levels of anger toward God (Exline et al., 2011). In some cases, religiosity and perceived closeness to God may serve as protective factors, guarding against the experience of anger toward God. The possibility remains as well that these findings are based on impression management; that is, individuals who believe that anger toward God is morally unacceptable may be reticent to admit having such feelings (Exline & Martin, 2005).

Finally, research has demonstrated a correlation between negative religious coping and poorer physical health and adjustment to illness (Exline & Martin, 2005; Gall, Kristjansson, Charbonneau, & Florack, 2009). In a study of medically ill elderly patients, two items evaluating negative religious reappraisals were found to predict mortality: “Wondered whether God had

abandoned me” and “Questioned God’s love for me” (Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2001). In another longitudinal study, anger toward God was correlated with poorer recovery of patients with various medical diagnoses. Recovery was evaluated by performance on activities of daily living, with anger toward God accounting for 9% of the variance in activities of daily living (Fitchett, Rybarczyk, DeMarco, & Nicholas, 1999). Although there have been few studies examining the causal links between anger toward God and physical health, the results of these studies are worth noting. Though it is possible that anger toward God predisposes a person to health problems, it is also reasonable to think that serious health problems may elicit feelings of anger toward God. As Kubler-Ross demonstrated in her work, both rational and irrational anger are a normal part of great suffering. For people facing imminent death, anger characterizes the second stage of healthy grieving; according to Kubler-Ross, “anger is displaced in all directions” (Kubler-Ross, 1997).

It is important that anger toward God be conceptualized to a greater degree in order that interventions might be explored and utilized for patients who may otherwise be suffering physically, psychologically, and spiritually as a result of unresolved anger toward God.

### **Suffering and Anger Toward God**

Anger toward God can occur following any kind of suffering, particularly when the individual perceives the suffering unfair. In a study of homeless individuals, a majority (60%) of respondents reported that becoming homeless “led to problems in their relationship with God” (Smith & Exline, 2002). It has been suggested that misfortune may lead people to simultaneously curse and embrace God, as they attribute blame to God as a moral agent, and yet cling to God in a desire to secure future safety (Gray & Wegner, 2010). People who have a strong sense of justice

may have greater difficulty with suffering, both on a small and large scale (Exline et al., 2011). The greater the suffering, the greater the perceived injustice gap for people who score high on levels of conscientiousness.

People may find themselves angry at God on account of their own personal suffering, the suffering of a loved one, or even suffering and pain on a wider scale throughout the world (Novotni & Petersen, 2001). The latter has been referred to within religious communities as the problem of pain, and the topic has been expounded within the popular literature by theologians and laypeople alike (Boyd, 2003; Davis, 1981; Kushner, 1981; Lewis, 2001; Lewis, 1973; Phillips, 2005; Young, 2007). Theodicy refers to the justification of God in light of the so-called problem of pain or problem of evil. The primary struggle is to make sense of how evil can exist in the world if God is both all-good (loving) and all-powerful.

For some individuals, this struggle leads to doubts about the goodness of God, the power of God, or even doubts regarding God's existence (Davis, 1981). In their desire for theological answers, people may change their beliefs; many are left unsatisfied. In order to make sense of suffering, people may take on the belief that God is all good, but not all powerful; others decide that God is all powerful, but not all good; others choose not to believe in God; still others embrace the sacred mystery, believing that God is both all powerful and all good, despite the suffering in the world.

People struggling with theological questions may find it difficult to discuss these issues with others in their faith community. This can be due to the fact that within religious communities, doubting may be viewed as a threat to faith, and therefore regarded as irreligious.



However, it has been argued that doubt is a normal occurrence, and that acknowledgement of doubt, rather than suppression, may result in greater well-being and faith (Taylor, 1992).

### **Resolving Anger Toward God**

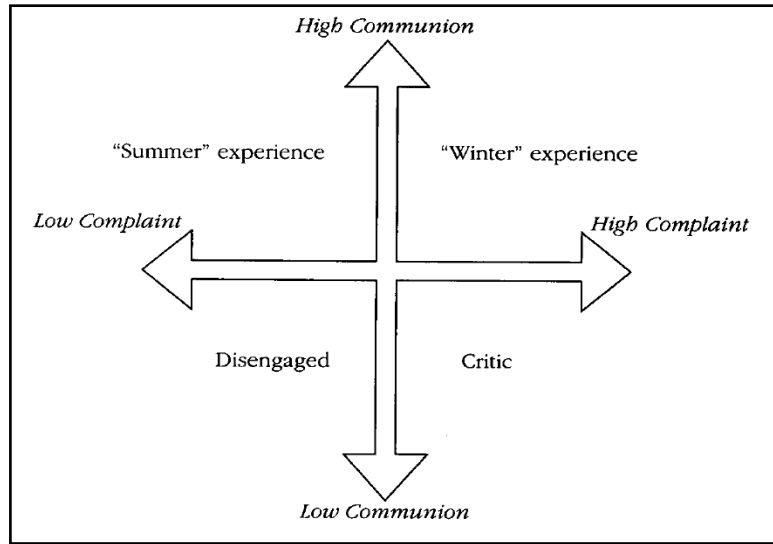
In a study of undergraduate students, 80% of individuals who reported anger toward God also reported that their anger had lessened over time. They attributed the decrease in their anger to the following: gaining insight into “why” (27%); passage of time (27%); benign reappraisal of God’s intentions (25%); acceptance (18%); some good outcome (14%); saw as God’s will (12%); problem went away (11%); God not at fault (11%); stopped believing in God (9%) (Exline, 2002). These self-report data show that most people resolve their anger toward God over time, though their means of accomplishing this task are highly varied. About half (47%) reported that their anger lessened due to these factors: passage of time, their problem went away, or they stopped believing in God. It appears that the other participants in this study employed primarily cognitive means of resolving their anger.

Cognitive reframing and meaning-making are two popular avenues for exploring negative feelings toward God (Exline & Martin, 2005), but experiential avenues to resolving anger have also been posited. *Solace for the Soul: A Journey Towards Wholeness* was created as a spiritually-integrated intervention specifically for female survivors of traumatic sexual abuse (Murray-Swank & Pargament, 2005). The program targeted seven themes, including the theme of abandonment and anger toward God. Among other things, the intervention utilizes prayer and two-way journaling to God. Prayer interventions have also been used with more general audiences (Zornow, 2001). Combining both cognitive *and* affective means of resolving anger makes sense when anger toward God is viewed as a relationship problem.

### **Emotions in Relationship to God**

Beck has argued that human relationships with God have an emotional dynamic that resembles human love relationships (Beck, 2007). Out of the theories of attachment, object-relations, and triangular love, Beck identified the two salient coexisting themes of Communion with God and Complaint against God (Beck, 2006). Beck's work was built on currently existing theories by psychology of religion researchers, which have applied attachment and object-relations theories to understanding human relationships with God. Beck's Communion/Complaint Circumplex Model illustrates four styles of attachment with God (Beck, 2007). In contrast to a bipolar model of faith (which views high faith/low complaint on one end of a spectrum, and low faith/high complaint on the opposite end), Beck offers a more complex view, which allows for complaint to be either adaptive or maladaptive (Beck, 2007).

The Communion/Complaint Circumplex Model consists of two spectra, which form four quadrants. The spectra are High Complaint versus Low Complaint and High Communion versus Low Communion (see Figure 1). The low communion/low complaint quadrant is labeled "disengaged" and refers to a superficial relationship with God, lacking in both intimacy and frustration. The low communion/high complaint quadrant is labeled "critic" and refers to individuals who are "outside observers," low in intimacy and highly critical. The high communion/low complaint quadrant represents people who are prone to "summer experiences" in their relationship with God; that is, they are intimate with God, and tend to be free of complaints. Finally, there is a high communion/high complaint category that is referred to as "winter experiences." This quadrant allows for high levels of both intimacy *and* complaint. It is this quadrant that seems to be least understood.



*Figure 1.* Beck's Communion and Complaint Circumplex Model with quadrant labels (Beck, 2007, p. 70).

The term “winter experiences” was borrowed from Christian scholar Martin Marty (1997), and refers to the experiences of a believer who is fully engaged with God, yet commonly experiences disappointment, frustration, and other forms of “negativity” (Beck, 2006). What does it mean for a person’s relationship with God to be strongly characterized by both intimacy and complaint? Beck explains it this way:

Complaint can occur in the presence of Communion [when] the Complaint is taken directly to God and not voiced elsewhere. This dynamic has always characterized the best in human love relationships. I don’t take my dissatisfactions with my spouse to a co-worker or friend. I, ideally, take them directly to my spouse: I express my complaints (petty, neurotic, or legitimate) in the relational space of trusting, intimate communion. Only then can the relationship acquire depth, resiliency, and maturity. (Beck, 2006, p. 51)

When complaint is brought into relationship with God, even if the complaint is directed *toward* God, it may reflect positive aspects of the relationship. While there are certainly negative aspects of complaint, complaint can also be a sign of safety, openness, and trust within a relationship. Even high levels of complaint toward God do not preclude a person from an intimate relationship with God. This concept is supported by Christian Scripture, perhaps most notably within the “psalms of lament.”

Though popularly referred to as simply the psalms of lament, these heart cries include expressions of anger, fear, frustration, and desperation. The psalmist displays the audacity of proclaiming what is wrong in the world, and boldly questioning God’s goodness. Although the psalmist openly discusses anger in relationship with God, a renewed commitment to trust God can be found within some of these psalms as well. Some of the psalms begin with cries of frustration, yet end with declarations of praise. It has been suggested that the psalms of lament offer spiritually healthy examples of struggling with God (Brueggemann, 1984; Macy, 1999; Novotni & Petersen, 2001). It has been argued that if religious communities are to be authentic, they must incorporate lament within their worship services; to focus exclusively on the expression of “positive” emotions, churches unbiblically deny the harsh realities of life and the full gamut of human experience (Brueggemann, 1984; Dawn, 1995).

Human relationships with God have been shown, at least in part, to resemble interpersonal relationships (Beck, 2006). Just as a married person might truly desire reconciliation with their spouse (and therefore work through, rather than deny or avoid their anger), it is most productive for anger with God to be resolved when people *want* to work things

out. Therefore, people high in Complaint as well as Communion (in Beck's model) may be the best candidates for this type of work.

Forgiveness between persons has been defined as a process of releasing hurt feelings and negative thoughts toward another, and gaining some measure of acceptance for the hurtful events (Wade, Bailey, & Shaffer, 2005). Just as interpersonal forgiveness promotes healthy relationships, resolving anger toward God is essential to maintaining a healthy relationship with God and avoiding the negative effects of harboring anger.<sup>1</sup>

It is believed that helping people explore their anger toward God can be done in a culturally sensitive way that results in positive mental health outcomes while simultaneously maintaining respect for the religious values of persons. To date, there have been few interventions targeted at helping people in this process. So far, interventions have not been aimed necessarily at eliminating spiritual struggle (Exline & Martin, 2005). Ultimately the goal of interventions may best be focused on helping clients to openly process and explore their feelings. Interventions can offer a safe and nurturing place for individuals to grow rather than shrink back in their suffering. In fact, spiritual struggle may serve as a benefit, resulting in post-

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<sup>1</sup> Resolving anger toward God has been said to share similarities with interpersonal forgiveness, despite theological dilemmas that emerge (Exline & Martin, 2005). For example, within predominant forgiveness research, condoning or excusing an interpersonal transgression are considered to be instances of pseudo-forgiveness. But what about situations in which there has been no actual transgression, and yet a person *feels* violated and offended? According to orthodox Christianity this would certainly be the case when a person experiences feelings of anger toward God, while simultaneously believing that God is incapable of doing wrong. For this reason, the phrase "resolving anger toward God" rather than "forgiving God" has been posited (Exline & Martin, 2005), and is used within the current study. Resolving anger toward God may be appropriate when a person is confused by the paradox of their feelings and the faith they profess. There are times when a person *feels* that God has hurt them in some way, or when a person is angry that God "allowed something to happen," or a person believes that God refrained from intervening on their behalf (e.g., they believe that God didn't answer their prayers). People may or may not perceive that God has actually committed a transgression, but they may *feel* this way. What is most important for the topic of this study is that anger toward God exists and may manifest in a variety of ways.

traumatic growth (Shaw, Joseph, & Linley, 2005). In any case, anger toward God requires sensitivity within therapeutic settings.

Expressions of anger toward God have run through the minds and crossed the lips of countless people throughout history. The use of lament psalms has been posited as a means of helping elicit the expression of anger toward God in prayer (Beck, 2006; Zornow, 2001; Murray-Swank & Pargament, 2005). Zornow created *Crying Out to God: Prayer in the Midst of Suffering*, as an intervention based on the Old Testament lament psalms (Zornow, 2001). Zornow addresses topics such as: principles and obstacles to crying out to God in prayer, a spirituality of anger, fear and intimacy in addressing God, and coping with spiritual ambivalence. Empirical validation of proposed interventions is the logical next step in the anger toward God research. For the current study, it was hypothesized that an experiential intervention utilizing the lament psalm material would help people resolve feelings of anger toward God (Zornow, 2009; see Appendix C).

It was hypothesized that the intervention would result in decreased feelings of anger toward God and increased feelings of intimacy with God among students at Christian colleges. It was also hypothesized that these changes would be accompanied by an increase in positive religious coping and a decrease in negative religious coping. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the strongest intervention effects would be experienced by participants who scored high on both the Communion and Complaint continua prior to the intervention. It was anticipated that ANOVAs would reveal significant changes in the experimental group condition when compared to two control groups over time.

## Chapter 2

### Methods

#### Participants

Students from private Christian universities were recruited to participate in the current study. 259 students completed the survey at Time 1 (T1). Of these participants, 192 went on to complete the study by finishing the posttest at Time 2 (T2).

#### Instruments

Instruments were chosen for this study based roughly on two factors. The first factor examined is communion and intimacy with God, which will be referred to as Communion scales. The second factor examined falls into the category of Complaint, and it includes relationship strain, disappointment and anger toward God.

The *Attitudes Toward God Scale - 9* (ATGS-9; Wood, Worthington, Exline, Yali, Aten, & McMinn, 2010) was administered as a pre and post test measure of both communion and complaint. The ATGS-9 is a revision of the Religious Comfort and Strain Scale, retaining nine questions from the RCS. The ATGS-9 measures two factors, Positive Attitudes toward God and Disappointment and Anger toward God. Items are rated on an 11-point Likert-type scale to rate participant endorsement of statements (ranging from 0 = *not at all* to 10 = *extremely*). Across multiple studies, the ATGS-9 has shown strong estimated internal consistency, and 2-week test-retest reliability (Cronbach alphas for the full scale ranged from .90 to .98, *Positive Attitudes toward God* = .94 to .97, and *Disappointment and Anger toward God* = .73 to .93). The

evidence supports the use of the ATGS-9 as a brief measure of anger and disappointment toward God, and positive attitudes toward God.

The *Attachment to God Inventory* (AGI; Beck & McDonald, 2004) was designed to measure two dimensions of attachment with God: Avoidance of Intimacy and Anxiety about Abandonment. The Avoidance dimension includes difficulty depending on God and lack of emotional expression or intimacy toward God. The Anxiety dimension includes feelings of worry, anger, or jealousy in relationship with God. The AGI employs a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from *disagree strongly* to *agree strongly*. Across three Christian samples tested, the AGI demonstrated stable factor structure, internal consistency, and construct validity (Beck & McDonald, 2004). Coefficient alphas ranged from .84 to .86 for AGI-Avoidance and .80 to .87 for AGI-Anxiety. Eleven items from the original 28-item inventory were used in this study, based on Communion and Complaint factor analyses (Beck, 2006).

The *Spiritual Assessment Inventory* (SAI) is a 54-item “relationally-based measure” of Awareness of God and Quality of Relationship with God (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Twenty-six items were selected for use in this study, from four subscales: Awareness, Realistic Acceptance, Disappointment, and Instability. For this study, items were chosen based on correlation to factors of Communion and Complaint (Beck, 2006). Items from the Awareness and Realistic Acceptance subscales were combined, and are referred to as SAI Communion. Items from the Disappointment and Instability subscales combined to make the SAI Complaint subscale in the current study. A 5-point Likert-type scale is used for items within the SAI (1 = *not at all true* to 5 = *very true*). Items include the following: “There are times when I feel disappointed with



God”(Complaint), and a follow-up question: “When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue” (Communion).

The *Spiritual Well-Being Scale* (SWB) is one of the most frequently used scales measuring religious functioning (Bufford, unpublished manuscript). A short version of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWB-6) was used in this study (Bufford, unpublished manuscript). The SWB uses a 6 point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*). The SWB-6 has shown internal consistencies ranging from .65 to .83 across three samples. Regression analysis has shown that these six items account for at least 94% of the variance on the full SWB.

*Brief Religious Coping Scale* (RCOPE; Pargament et al., 1998; Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). The brief RCOPE consists of 14 items assessing clusters of “positive” and “negative” coping strategies. The instrument uses a 4-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 4 = *a great deal*). The original RCOPE was designed to assess the *functional* roles of religion in coping (i.e., how religion is used for finding meaning, achieving a life transformation, or gaining something—control, comfort and closeness to God, intimacy with others and closeness to God). The RCOPE has been validated in a variety of studies as a useful comprehensive measure of religious coping, while the Brief RCOPE is an acceptable, albeit less-comprehensive version of the original. Development studies show strong internal consistency, with coefficient alphas ranging from .69 to .90.

Table 1 summarizes the scales used in the current study. Items from the SAI and AGI were combined based on Beck’s factor analysis study (2006). Based on Beck’s typology, subscales will be referred to by their original scale name as well as the designation of

“Communion” or “Complaint” (Beck, 2006). The reliability of each subscale was estimated using Cronbach’s alpha measure of internal consistency (see Table 1 for values).

Table 1

*Subscale Items and Internal Consistency*

Subscale Name	# of items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Name of Original Scale	# of items
Communion with God				
ATGS Communion	5	0.94	ATGS-9 Positive Attitudes toward God	5
AGI Communion	8	0.86	AGI Avoidance of Intimacy (ReverseScored)	14
SAI Communion	12	0.92	SAI Awareness and SAI Realistic Acceptance	33
SWB-6	6	0.68	SWB-6	6
Complaint and Anger toward God				
ATGS Complaint	4	0.88	ATGS-9 Disappointment and Anger toward God	4
AGI Complaint	3	0.79	AGI Anxiety about Abandonment	13
SAI Complaint	12	0.91	SAI Disappointment and SAI Instability	15
Religious Coping				
RCOPE Positive	7	0.86	Brief RCOPE Positive	7
RCOPE Negative	7	0.79	Brief RCOPE Negative	7

## **Procedure**

Participants were recruited in January of 2009 by emailing professors within the fields of psychology and counseling at Christian schools of higher education. Professors who showed interest in recruiting students for participation were sent instructions and informed consent forms for students. After the completed sign-up sheets and informed consent forms were returned, student volunteers were contacted via email. The initial contact email contained a link to the online questionnaire as well as an explanation of the research. A prize was offered to one student who was randomly selected upon completion of the study.

The online questionnaire was comprised of a demographics section, the Attitudes toward God Scale - 9 (ATGS-9), Attachment to God Inventory (AGI), brief Religious Coping Scale (RCOPE), 6-item Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWB-6), and the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI; see Appendix B). For this study, the experimental group was compared to two control groups: an attention group, and a no-contact group. After completing the initial survey, participants were randomly assigned into one of the three groups. For every two participants who were assigned to the experimental group, one participant was assigned to each of the other two groups. This was done in order to maximize the size of the experimental group in case of potential attrition by participants in this group. Each group then received further instructions via email.

The experimental group received material adapted from Zornow for use in the current study (2009). Participants in this group received reading material based on the lament psalms five days per week for four consecutive weeks. At the end of each week, they were sent a reflection/experiential assignment. Participants were asked to read the material and respond via

email to the weekly assignment. The lament psalm material approaches several topics related to authenticity in relationship with God.

Authenticity is encouraged on both cognitive and emotional levels, and includes expressions of grief, doubt, disappointment, and anger—all within the context of a Christian faith tradition, wherein one eventually turns over one's desires to the will of God. Various aspects of anger are addressed, including repressed anger, exaggerated anger, and the timing and placement of expressing anger. Anger toward God, oneself, others, and situations are included.

The lament material encourages participants to explore new ways of relating to God honestly and intimately. Pain and suffering, forgiveness, reconciliation, and acceptance of ambiguity and paradox within the life of faith are some of the topics addressed. Zornow explores the Jewish concept of “being bold toward heaven.” According to Zornow, “the prayer of lament has the God-given freedom to border on irreverence [...] all for the sake of being faithful in striving to maintain the I-Thou relationship,” (G. Zornow, personal communication, December 28, 2008). The material in its entirety can be found in Appendix C.

The second group of participants in this study served as an attention control group. They were also sent daily emails and weekly assignments, in the same manner as the first group. The material they received were daily devotions by popular Christian authors; various topics relating to Christianity were explored, rather than a common theme. The third group received no intervention and acted as a true control group.

At the end of the four weeks, participants in each group were directed to take the online survey a second time (T2). Participants were allowed two weeks to complete the ATGS-9, AGI, SWB-6, Brief RCOPE, and SAI online. In addition, participants in the experimental and

attention groups were asked to answer questions at the conclusion of the survey pertaining to their level of participation and reaction to the material. Table 2 summarizes the instruments and procedures used. All participants were given the opportunity to request a summary of the research.

Table 2

*Instruments and Procedure*

Pretest (T1)	Intervention	Posttest (T2)
Demographics	Experimental Condition	ATGS-9
ATGS-9	Attention Condition	AGI
AGI	No-ContactCondition	Brief RCOPE
Brief RCOPE		SWB-6
SWB-6		SAI
SAI		Post-Test Questions

## Chapter 3

### Results

#### Demographics

There were 259 students initially recruited for this study via college professors across the United States. One hundred ninety-five participants from 10 colleges completed the study. However, missing data resulted in the exclusion of three of these participants. Therefore, a total of 192 participants completed this study: 100 in the experimental group, 43 in the attention group, and 49 in the no-contact group. Of these, 75.5% of participants were female ( $n = 145$ ), and 24.5% male ( $n = 47$ ). Participants ranged in age between 17 and 44 years old, with a mean of 21 years old ( $SD = 3.43$ ). The ethnicity breakdown was: 84% European American, 6% Multi-Racial, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 2% African-American, 2% Native American, 1.5% Asian-American, 0.5% Egyptian, and 1% No Response.

Participants ranged in class standing from freshman to seniors in college. Their religious affiliation was categorized as 78% Christian Protestant, 12% Orthodox, 4% Catholic, 3% Not Religious, 2% Other, and 1% No Response. Participants also rated their level of religious activity and the importance of their religious beliefs. Importance of Religious Beliefs was assessed on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*No importance, I have no religion*) to 7 (*Extremely Important, religious faith is the center of my life*). Out of 189 responses to this question, the average score was 6.15, reflecting a high level of personal importance given to religious beliefs ( $SD = 1.17$ ). Table 3 summarizes the amount of religious activity endorsed.

Table 3

*Amount of Religious Activity*

Amount of Religious Activity	N = 192	Percentage
Not at all	1	0.5
Once or twice a year	4	2.1
Between 3 and 11 times a year	10	5.2
Between one and three times a month	37	19.3
Weekly	61	31.8
More than once a week	79	41.1

**Hypothesis 1**

It was hypothesized that the experimental group would show decreased feelings of anger toward God and increased feelings of intimacy with God at posttest when compared to the two control groups. To operationalize this hypothesis, it was expected that for the experimental group, scores on the anger scales would decrease and scores on the communion scales would increase from time 1 (T1) to time 2 (T2). Complaint and Anger were assessed by three measures: ATGS-Complaint, AGI-Complaint, SAI-Complaint. Communion was assessed by four scales: ATGS-Communion, AGI-Communion, SAI-Communion, SWB-6. For each of these scales, a repeated-measures 2x3 analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed to test this hypothesis, with experimental condition as the between-groups factor and pretest to posttest being the within-groups factor. In order to support this hypothesis, an interaction effect would have to show that participants in the experimental group demonstrated relatively greater decrease in anger toward God and relatively greater increase in intimacy with God than those in other

experimental conditions. However, this hypothesis was not supported, as no interaction effects were detected for any subtest (see Table 4).

### **Hypothesis 2**

A second hypothesis was that the experimental group would show decreased negative religious coping and increased positive religious coping (as measured by the RCOPE-positive and RCOPE-negative). Mixed-model ANOVAs revealed no significant changes across time for measures of positive religious coping. There was a significant repeated measures effect for negative religious coping,  $F(1, 188) = 4.61, p < .05$ , but no interaction effect. Negative religious coping showed an overall drop among the three groups, but the drop was not greater for the experimental group than other groups, as was hypothesized. Thus, this hypothesis was not supported (see Table 4).

As Table 4 indicates, there were no interaction effects detected by the repeated-measures ANOVAs, which suggests that change over time was not dependent on group membership; in other words, the conditions of the experimental group had no detectable effect on feelings of intimacy with God, anger toward God, or religious coping.

### **Hypothesis 3**

A third hypothesis was that the intervention effects would be salient for participants who scored high on both the Communion and Complaint continua at T1. It was expected that for a High-Communion/High-Complaint group (HC/HC), anger and negative religious coping would decrease, and that intimacy and positive religious coping would increase. In order to test this hypothesis, a median-split was performed on the data in order to determine a group that scored above the median on both Communion and Complaint at pretest. Using the AGI to perform the



Table 4

*Summary of Repeated-Measures ANOVAs*

	Experimental <i>n</i> = 100	Attention <i>n</i> = 43	No-Contact <i>n</i> = 49	Effects
<i>Communion With God Scales</i>				
ATGS-9 Communion				
<i>T1</i>	7.58 (1.34)	7.43 (1.80)	7.74 (1.69)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	7.81 (1.21)	7.49 (1.68)	7.85 (1.70)	No interaction effects
AGI Communion				
<i>T1</i>	5.06 (1.14)	4.69 (1.52)	5.22 (1.05)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	5.26 (1.06)	4.93 (1.25)	5.14 (1.06)	No interaction effects
SAI Communion				
<i>T1</i>	3.80 (0.82)	3.51 (1.01)	3.91 (0.86)	Repeated Measures Effect $F(1, 189) = 4.23^*$
<i>T2</i>	3.97 (0.78)	3.61 (0.96)	3.89 (0.88)	No between-groups main effects No interaction effects
SWB-6				
<i>T1</i>	4.67 (0.78)	4.59 (0.83)	4.83 (0.67)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	4.79 (0.73)	4.65 (0.87)	4.78 (0.73)	No interaction effects
<i>Complaint and Anger toward God Scales</i>				
ATGS-9 Complaint				
<i>T1</i>	2.25 (1.64)	2.40 (1.64)	1.96 (1.33)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	2.29 (1.54)	2.20 (1.47)	1.94 (1.39)	No interaction effects

	Experimental <i>n</i> = 100	Attention <i>n</i> = 43	No-Contact <i>n</i> = 49	Effects
<i>AGI Complaint</i>				
<i>T1</i>	3.99 (1.39)	3.74 (1.60)	3.33 (1.71)	Repeated Measures Effect $F(1, 189) = 4.49^*$ No between-groups main effects No interaction effects
<i>T2</i>	3.67 (1.57)	3.44 (1.39)	3.38 (1.48)	
<i>SAI Complaint</i>				
<i>T1</i>	2.43 (0.86)	2.40 (0.89)	2.16 (0.84)	Repeated Measures Effect $F(1, 189) = 9.98^*$ No between-groups main effects No interaction effects
<i>T2</i>	2.31 (0.83)	2.30 (0.84)	1.99 (0.80)	
<i>Religious Coping Scales</i>				
<i>Brief RCOPE Positive</i>				
<i>T1</i>	3.90 (0.70)	3.65 (0.91)	3.88 (0.83)	No main effects No interaction effects
<i>T2</i>	3.96 (0.69) <i>n</i> = 100	3.77 (0.89) <i>n</i> = 42	3.91 (0.85) <i>n</i> = 49	
<i>Brief RCOPE Negative</i>				
<i>T1</i>	1.99 (0.71)	1.98 (0.82)	1.78 (0.73)	Repeated Measures effect $F(1, 188) = 4.61^*$ No between-groups main effects No interaction effects
<i>T2</i>	1.90 (0.72) <i>n</i> = 100	1.87 (0.70) <i>n</i> = 42	1.74 (0.70) <i>n</i> = 49	

*Note.* *M(SD)*. The ATGS – 9 uses an 11-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *not at all* to *extremely*). The AGI uses a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from *disagree strongly* to *agree strongly*). The RCOPE uses a 4-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *not at all* to *a great deal*). The SWB uses a 6-point Likert-type scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). The SAI uses a 5-point Likert-type scale (from *not at all true* to *very true*).  $*p < .05$ .

split yielded an HC/HC group of 37 participants (experimental  $n = 21$ , attention  $n = 7$ , no-contact  $n = 9$ ). For each of the measures under consideration, 2x3 ANOVAs were computed to test this hypothesis, with one factor being membership or non membership of the HC/HC group, and the second factor being the experimental condition. Change scores were used as dependent variables.

The data revealed that across all three conditions, the HC/HC group had lower change scores; non HC/HC participants showed greater increase in communion with God and greater decrease in complaint toward God, as measured by the ATGS-9 at Time 2 (see Table 5). In addition, non HC/HC participants showed a greater increase in positive religious coping over time as compared to the HC/HC group. No significant interaction effects were found for any of the scales used. Main effects in these analyses demonstrated overall differences between HC/HC and other participants across all three conditions, but the lack of an interaction effect suggests that there is no differential change for the HC/HC group in relation to other participants.

#### **Additional Analyses: Hypotheses 1 and 2 Revisited**

In order to further examine possible benefits of the experimental condition, the same analyses (mixed model ANOVAs) were conducted for participants who reported the maximum level of investment in the study (see Table 6); this was done by excluding participants (in either the experimental or attention group) who reported their level of participation as less than seven on a seven-point scale. Therefore, participants included in this Maximum Participation Group ( $N = 104$ ) reported completion of all readings and assignments, or were in the no-contact group. A significant interaction was obtained for the AGI Communion subscale,  $F(2, 101) = 3.71, p < 0.05$  (See Figure 2). Results of post-hoc repeated measures t-tests revealed that post-test scores

Table 5

*ANOVAs (2 x 3): High-Communion/High-Complaint Participants' Mean Change Scores  
Compared to Other Participants by Experimental Group Condition*

	Experimental		Attention		No-Contact	
	HC/HC <i>n</i> = 21	Other <i>n</i> = 79	HC/HC <i>n</i> = 7	Other <i>n</i> = 36	HC/HC <i>n</i> = 9	Other <i>n</i> = 40
ATGS-9 Communion*	-0.13 (1.09)	0.32 (1.14)	-0.57 (0.65)	0.18 (1.0)	0.07 (0.57)	0.12 (0.73)
SAI Communion	-0.03 (0.49)	0.22 (0.60)	-0.06 (0.48)	0.14 (0.47)	0.05 (0.41)	-0.04 (0.46)
SWB-6	0.00 (0.71)	0.15 (0.58)	-0.21 (0.57)	0.11 (0.66)	-0.04 (0.41)	-0.04 (0.52)
ATGS-9 Complaint*	0.27 (1.58)	-0.03 (1.68)	1.29 (2.07)	-0.48 (1.21)	0.06 (1.40)	-0.04 (0.89)
SAI Complaint	-0.07 (0.61)	-0.13 (0.58)	0.00 (0.53)	-0.12 (0.41)	-0.15 (0.52)	-0.18 (0.47)
RCOPE Positive*	-0.25 (0.47)	0.14 (0.68)	-0.02 (0.78)	0.14 (0.61)	-0.13 (0.37)	0.07 (0.61)
RCOPE Negative	-0.19 (0.73)	-0.07 (0.48)	0.02 (0.47)	-0.14 (0.49)	-0.02 (0.31)	-0.05 (0.44)

*Note.* \* Main Effect for HC/HC condition  $p < .05$

for the Experimental group were significantly greater than pretest scores,  $t(32) = -2.37, p < 0.05$ .

Similar changes over time were not observed for the Attention group,  $t(21) = -0.85, p = \text{NS}$  or

the No-Contact group,  $t(48) = 0.96, p = \text{NS}$ .

No other interaction effects were observed among the dependent variables. Main effects across time were observed for both the SAI Complaint subscale, and the Brief RCOPE Negative scale. These main effects may be explained by the Hawthorne effect; that is, volunteers may change aspects of their behavior because of the fact that they are being observed. Another possibility is that main effects reflect naturally occurring changes over time that were similar for all participants.

Table 6

*Repeated Measures ANOVAs for the Maximum Participation Group (Participation Level = 7)*

	Experimental <i>n</i> = 33	Attention <i>n</i> = 22	No-Contact <i>n</i> = 49	Effects
<i>Communion with God Scales</i>				
ATGS-9 Communion				
<i>T1</i>	7.86 (1.25)	7.56 (1.76)	7.74 (1.69)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	7.99 (1.22)	7.84 (1.49)	7.85 (1.70)	No interaction effects
AGI Communion				
<i>T1</i>	5.26 (1.13)	4.96 (1.45)	5.22 (1.05)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	5.60 (1.00)	5.07 (1.35)	5.14 (1.06)	Significant interaction effect $F(2, 101) = 3.71^*$
SAI Communion				
<i>T1</i>	3.88 (0.92)	3.67 (0.99)	3.91 (0.86)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	4.04 (0.80)	3.78 (0.99)	3.89 (0.88)	No interaction effects
SWB-6				
<i>T1</i>	4.79 (0.84)	4.82 (0.88)	4.83 (0.67)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	4.95 (0.76)	4.89 (0.84)	4.78 (0.73)	No interaction effects

	Experimental <i>n</i> = 33	Attention <i>n</i> = 22	No-Contact <i>n</i> = 49	Effects
<i>Complaint and Anger toward God Scales</i>				
ATGS-9 Complaint				
<i>T1</i>	2.21 (1.81)	2.25 (1.72)	1.96 (1.33)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	1.91 (1.25)	1.97 (1.37)	1.94 (1.39)	No interaction effects
AGI Complaint				
<i>T1</i>	3.73 (1.57)	3.71 (1.65)	3.33 (1.71)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	3.51 (1.68)	3.41 (1.61)	3.38 (1.48)	No interaction effects
SAI Complaint				
<i>T1</i>	2.31 (0.92)	2.35 (0.88)	2.16 (0.84)	Effect Across Time
<i>T2</i>	2.15 (0.93)	2.28 (0.89)	1.99 (0.80)	$F(1, 101) = 6.28^*$ No interaction effects
<i>Religious Coping Scales</i>				
Brief RCOPE Positive				
<i>T1</i>	4.01 (0.79)	3.73 (0.86)	3.88 (0.83)	No main effects
<i>T2</i>	4.15 (0.65)	3.80 (0.85)	3.91 (0.85)	No interaction effects
	<i>n</i> = 33	<i>n</i> = 21	<i>n</i> = 49	
Brief RCOPE Negative				
<i>T1</i>	2.03 (0.80)	1.89 (0.60)	1.78 (0.73)	Effect Across Time
<i>T2</i>	1.88 (0.83)	1.71 (0.61)	1.74 (0.70)	$F(1, 100) = 5.67^*$ No interaction effects
	<i>n</i> = 33	<i>n</i> = 21	<i>n</i> = 49	

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

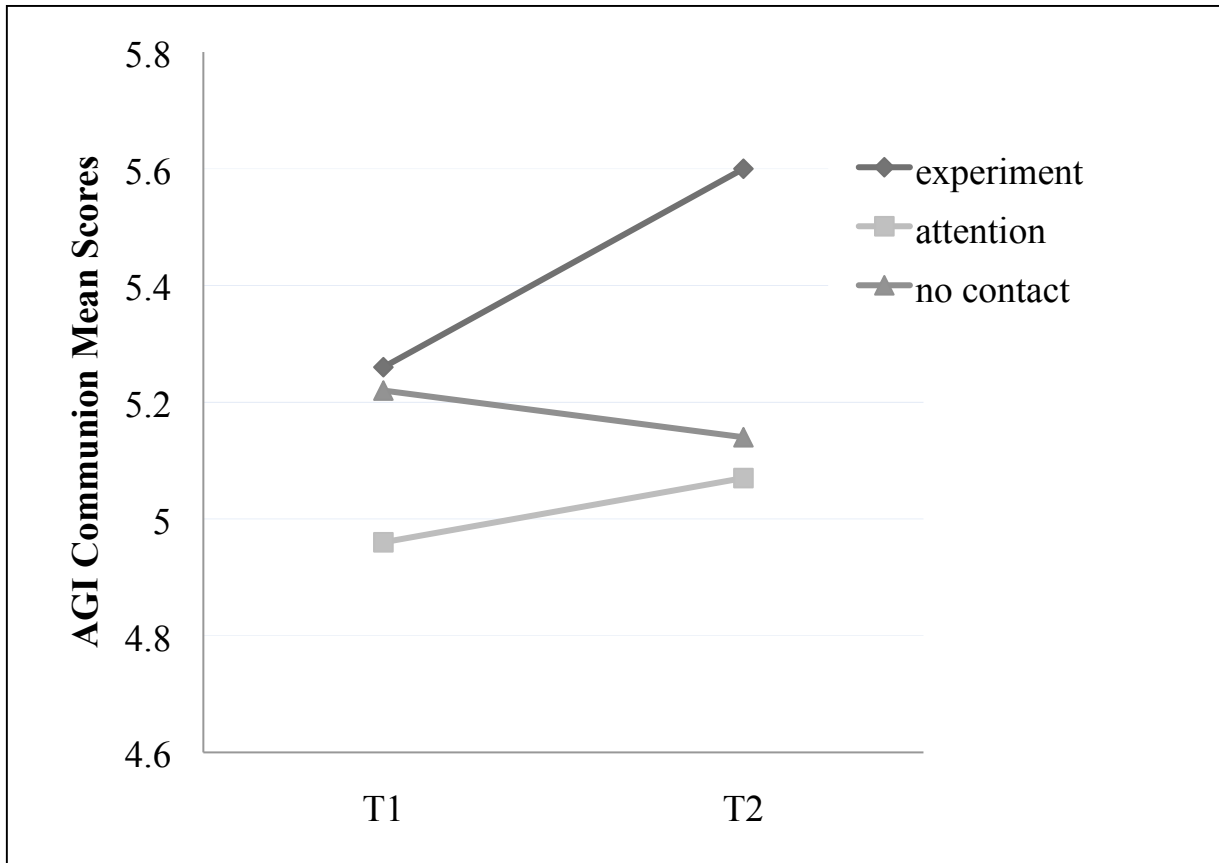


Figure 2. AGI Communion for the Maximum Participation Group.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion**

The intent of this study was to determine if the lament psalm intervention created for use in this study (Zornow, 2009) would aid volunteers in resolving feelings of anger toward God. Despite expectations, the primary analyses in this study failed to detect the expected changes. However, further analyses isolated participants who reported maximum participation with the experimental condition; for these participants, the experimental condition showed the expected increase on one of several Communion scales (AGI), but not the expected decrease in Complaint. Thus, the findings are inconclusive.

The AGI Communion subscale was created for this study based on Beck's (2006) factor results (see Table 6). The AGI Communion subscale measures benefits such as increased feelings of intimacy, emotional bondedness, and willingness to depend on God. The items comprising this subscale represent secure attachment to God, as characterized by the pursuit of an intimate relationship, rather than emotional withdrawal or avoidance.

These findings suggest two possibilities. The first possibility is that the finding is the result of a Type 1 error. The other possibility is that the lack of significant interaction effects on other dependent variables indicates Type 2 errors, resulting from a lack of sufficient power. Based on modest levels of observed power for the repeated measure ANOVAs, it is possible that increasing the power would yield the expected interaction effects. Power could be



strengthened by recruiting participants with higher severity of complaints against God, modifying the intensity or duration of the intervention, increasing the compliance level of participants, and/or increasing the sample size. It is possible that the treatment would result in measurable, positive changes in relationship to God if power were substantially enhanced. Despite these qualifications, participants who fully engaged in the experimental condition did report increased communion with God (as measured by the AGI Communion subscale; see Table 7).

Table 7

*Items Comprising the AGI Communion Subscales*

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1. My experiences with God are very intimate and emotional
  2. My prayers to God are very emotional
  3. I am totally dependent upon God for everything in my life
  4. Without God I couldn't function at all
  5. I let God make most of the decisions in my life
  6. I just don't feel a deep need to be close to God (R)
  7. I prefer not to depend too much on God (R)
  8. I am uncomfortable with emotional displays of affection to God (R)
- 

*Note.* (R)= reverse scored item

It seems likely that the severity of complaint represented in this sample was not sufficient to detect measurable effects of the intervention. Most striking is that the average rating for the ATGS Complaint scale was 2.21 out of a possible 11. The ATGS specifically addresses anger

toward God and other negative attitudes: “To what extent do you currently...feel angry at God...feel that God has let you down...view God as unkind...feel abandoned by God” (0 = *Not at all*, 5 = *Moderately*, 10 = *Extremely*). Average scores on the AGI Complaint and SAI Complaint scales are closer to the median, but also not in the high range. Table 8 shows the average scores at Time 1 for both the Communion and Complaint scales.

Table 8

*Pretest Means for Communion and Complaint Scales*

Instrument	Pretest Means	Measurement
ATGS Communion	7.59	11-point scale
AGI Communion	5.02	7-point scale
SAI Communion	3.77	5-point scale
SWB	4.69	6-point scale
AGI Complaint	3.77	7-point scale
ATGS Complaint	2.21	11-point scale
SAI Complaint	2.35	5-point scale

Hypothesis 3 examined participants who scored highest in levels of both communion and complaint with God. The cutoff scores (medians) for the HC/HC group were 5.35 for the AGI Communion subscale, and 3.83 for the AGI Complaint subscale. The average scores for the HC/HC group were 5.94 for AGI Communion, and 4.99 for AGI Complaint. The average scores for other participants was 4.80 for AGI Communion and 3.48 for AGI Complaint. The variance

in level of anger toward God may have been insufficient to identify differences in the HC/HC group compared to other participants. The amount of participants' suffering and severity of complaint and anger toward God should be considered in future studies.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The scope of the data presented here is limited to college-age students at Christian schools. The ethnicity represented was predominantly European American (84%). Most participants were Christian (95% Protestant, Orthodox, or Catholic). It may be helpful to test this intervention with various age and ethnic groups, and to compare participants from various denominational backgrounds, as the material may be adapted more specifically for various groups.

In the current study, college student volunteers were randomly assigned to receive the lament psalm intervention regardless of current feelings of anger toward God. Throughout the intervention, participants were encouraged to reflect on various incidents of anger, including anger toward self, others, situations, and God; in other words, they were not limited to thinking about one particular incident that made them feel anger toward God. A limitation to the study is the relatively low level of anger toward God that participants reported prior to the intervention. This creates a floor effect, making it unlikely for the intervention to reduce levels of anger that are already quite low. Future researchers may seek participants who have undergone significant stress or been exposed to trauma so that anger toward God is expected to be higher initially. Volunteers with moderately strong anger toward God, and those who are specifically interested in processing difficult emotions with God, should be recruited for future studies.

Future studies may employ interventions that are more personalized and interactive rather than the electronic methods used in this study. Personal interventions may be delivered in a variety of venues, such as church, hospital, and mental health settings (see Zornow, 2001). While the electronic methods used in this study ensured privacy for participants, it is possible that the delivery method had a negative impact on results. The constructs of attachment and spiritual well-being may necessitate a relationally mediated intervention, rather than an electronically mediated one. Due to the sensitive spiritual nature of the material, an intervention that spans a longer period of time may be appropriate and a later posttest could shed light on potential long-term effects. The resolution of anger, as well as overall changes in attitudes and beliefs may be more observable over time, as these are long-term, complex processes.

The following, or similar questions, may prove useful in gaining additional perspective on the experience of participants:

- “The quantity or quality of my prayer life or other spiritual discipline has changed”
- "I feel that I am on the way to getting back into a relationship with God more than before"
- “I sense that my anger toward God (self, others, life) is now more constructive, workable or eventually resolvable than before”
- “Religious doubts, distress, despair and disbeliefs are less than before”
- “I do not question God's love for me as much as before”
- “I feel a bit more of faith and trust in God than before”

Of course, while these suggestions may serve to benefit future studies, the number of possibilities for future research are truly limitless.

## Conclusion

The results of this study lend modest support for the hypothesis that a lament psalm intervention can foster intimacy with God. Maximum compliance with the intervention was associated with increased ratings on the AGI Communion subscale. However, similar changes were not detected on other measures of communion with God. Other hypotheses were not supported—significant changes in anger toward God and religious coping were not detected. This may be related, at least in part, to floor effects, with participants reporting relatively low levels of anger toward God prior to the intervention.

The lament psalm intervention used in this study encouraged intimacy with God through open communication that included the expression of emotional, spiritual, and physical pain, as well as the processing of difficult emotions and beliefs. The construct of anger toward God, and how to resolve that anger, is quite new in the psychology literature. Many factors may contribute to the process of resolving complex attitudes, thoughts, and feelings toward the divine. Similar to models of forgiveness and stages of grief, the resolution of persistent or complex anger toward God is a process that most likely takes time and a variety of efforts beyond the scope of this study. The materials used in this study promoted goals appropriate to the resolution of anger, including strengthening relationship intimacy, spiritual well-being, forgiveness, acceptance, and an ability to abide in paradox. The ability to live with disappointment and questions in light of true intimacy and relationship with God may be the healthiest end to our efforts in this area. Pargament (2007) asserts that spiritual change is possible, yet he also states:

Though we may aspire to a fully integrated life, few people achieve it on a consistent basis because inconsistencies, contradictions, and paradox are so much

a part of human experience. This point certainly holds true for the spiritual dimension. Fortunately, we do not need to be fully integrated to live worthwhile lives. Clients can be encouraged to tolerate a level of internal sacred conflict. (p. 291)

A traditional Christian worldview is founded on the belief that God is loving and good. Despite this belief, however, life's struggles and pain can lead people into an experience of negative feelings directed toward God. Distress caused by this cognitive and emotional dissonance can lead to a variety of negative consequences, even to the abandoning of one's religious beliefs. While the journey towards the resolution of anger with God may be a messy and complicated one, it is also a sacred conflict worth exploring. Lamenting is one way people can process difficult feelings toward God, though more research is required before speculating on its usefulness as an intervention.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent for Research

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH**

The purpose of this study is to help the researchers learn more about attitudes toward God. The research is being directed by Kimberly Snow, Psy.D. student at George Fox University, under the supervision of Dr. Mark McMinn.

You are being asked to participate in a 4-week-long study that will require between zero to 60 minutes of your time per week. The study may involve participating in devotional reflections that are sent to you by email, or it may not, depending on the group to which you are randomly assigned. You will receive further instructions via email. Upon completion of the study, you will be entered into a drawing to win a 16GB iPod Nano. All of your responses will be stored without any reference to your name or other information that could specifically identify you. If the research is published, no distinguishing information will be included that might be used to identify you.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. Even after signing this form, you are free to change your mind and stop participating at any point.

If your participation in this research causes personal distress, or if you would like a summary of the results, please contact Kim Snow at (503) 544-3529 or Dr. Mark McMinn at (503) 554-2380.

My signature below indicates that I have read and agree to these conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix B  
Intervention Measurements

Demographics

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Class Standing:

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

Ethnicity:

- African-American
- European-American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian
- Native American
- Multi-Racial
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Affiliation:

- Protestant
- Catholic
- Christian Orthodox
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- None

In the past year how frequently have you attended a religious activity?

- Not at all
- Once or twice a year
- Between 3 and 11 times a year
- Between one and three times a month
- Weekly
- More than once a week

How important are your religious beliefs and practices?

- |                |   |   |         |   |   |                      |
|----------------|---|---|---------|---|---|----------------------|
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4       | 5 | 6 | 7                    |
| No importance; |   |   | Neutral |   |   | Extremely Important; |





*Six-item Spiritual Well-Being Scale*

Choose the answer that best describes your personal experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life
2. I don't enjoy much about life
3. I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God
4. I feel most fulfilled when I'm in close communion with God
5. I feel unsettled about my future
6. I believe that God is concerned about my problems

*Attachment to God Inventory*

The following statements concern how you feel about your relationship with God. We are interested in how you generally experience your relationship with God, not just in what is happening in that relationship currently.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly			Neutral/Mixed			Agree Strongly

Attachment to God Inventory (anxiety about abandonment subscale):

1. I worry a lot about my relationship with God\*\*
2. I often worry about whether God is pleased with me\*\*
3. I get upset when I feel God helps others but forgets about me\*\*

Attachment to God Inventory (avoidance of intimacy subscale):

4. My experiences with God are very intimate and emotional\*
5. My prayers to God are very emotional\*
6. I am totally dependent upon God for everything in my life\*
7. Without God I couldn't function at all\*
8. I let God make most of the decisions in my life\*
9. I just don't feel a deep need to be close to God\* (reverse score)
10. I prefer not to depend too much on God\* (reverse score)
11. I am uncomfortable with emotional displays of affection to God\* (reverse score)

*Note. \* denotes Communion items, \*\* denotes Complaint items*

*Spiritual Assessment Inventory*

Give the answer that comes to mind first. Don't spend a lot of time thinking about an item.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at All True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True

Spiritual Assessment Inventory (disappointment and realistic acceptance subscales):

1. There are times when I feel disappointed with God\*\*
2. When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue\*
3. There are times when I feel angry at God\*\*
4. When this happens, I still have the sense that God will always be with me\*
5. There are times when I feel betrayed by God\*\*
6. When I feel this way, I put effort into restoring our relationship\*
7. There are times when I feel like God has let me down\*\*
8. When this happens, my trust in God is not completely broken\*
9. There are times when I feel frustrated by God for not responding to my prayers\*\*
10. When I feel this way, I am able to talk it through with God\*

11. Spiritual Assessment Inventory (instability subscale):

12. I am afraid God will give up on me\*\*
13. My emotional connection with God is unstable\*\*
14. There are times when I feel God is punishing me\*\*
15. I worry that I will be left out of God's plans\*\*
16. When I sin, I tend to withdraw from God\*\*
17. I feel I have to please God or he might reject me\*\*
18. There are times when I feel that God is angry at me\*\*

19. Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Awareness Subscale):

20. I have a sense of how God is working in my life\*
21. Listening to God is an essential part of my life\*
22. God's presence feels very real to me\*
23. I am aware of God prompting me to do things\*
24. My experiences of God's presence impacts me greatly\*
25. I am aware of God's presence in times of need\*
26. I am aware of God communicating to me in a variety of ways\*

*Note. \* denotes Communion items, \*\* denotes Complaint items*

*Post-Test Questions*

How would you rate your level of participation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Finished none of the reading or exercises			Finished half of the readings and exercises		Finished all of the reading and exercises	

How easy was it for you to relate to the material?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely difficult			Neutral		Extremely Easy	

How beneficial was the material to you personally?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not beneficial at all			Neutral		Extremely beneficial	

Did anything in the material cause you distress? If yes, please explain.

Did you ever discuss the material with someone else, such as a friend, counselor, pastor, or someone else you trust?

Please indicate any of the following issues that emerged for you personally as you worked through the material. Check all that apply.

- Anger, frustration, or distress over a recent incident
- Anger, frustration, or distress over an incident from your past
- Grief regarding a loss of some kind
- Frustration or anger toward God
- Doubts concerning your faith beliefs
- A significant life event
- A traumatic experience
- Everyday frustrations or problems
- Forgiveness
- Concerns over God's reliability/trustworthiness
- Concerns over God's care/affection/love

- Experience of distance from God
- Negative emotions directed at God
- Concerns about your faith
- Confusion/questions about God or your faith
- Other, please specify.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience in this study?

Would you like to be sent a summary of the results from this study?

Appendix C  
Intervention

Lament Psalm Intervention  
George Zornow

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## Introduction

In research, participants are often assigned to various groups. The group you have been assigned to is focused on learning about prayer, and specifically about the psalms of lament. You will be sent a brief daily email devotional, Monday through Friday for the next four weeks. You will also be sent a brief reflection exercise on Friday. Below is your introduction to this material as well as the first devotional reading.

Having emotions is a part of the way that God created all people. However, expressing emotions can be difficult for some people, especially emotions that are often referred to as "negative" (for example: anger, frustration, fear, sadness, rage, doubt, etc.). The Bible teaches that these emotions are a part of life, and the Book of Psalms gives numerous examples of heartfelt communication with God. There is a group of psalms that is often referred to as "lament psalms." Though referred to as lament psalms, these psalms include a lot more than just lament. They express feelings of anger, doubt, fear, confusion, depression, isolation, emptiness, sadness, and more. When a person enters into a relationship with God, they are invited to speak to God honestly and authentically, as the psalms illustrate so well.

### Day 1. Addressing God: A Matter of Having Face

Having an honest relationship with God carries with it the challenge of facing our own life honestly. All too often, when life events are very difficult, we tend to avoid thinking about or dealing with those things that cause us great hurt, fear or anger. This is a natural form of defense. It works for awhile, but usually not for the long run. Therefore it is important to use our God-given ability of 'face'—to face up to the challenges of our own life. The good news is that God has not made us to face our challenges alone! He has made us to bring our struggles into relationship with him through prayer. God promises to be there for us. He will face things (all things) with us, and he will aid us in ways beyond our present understanding. Again, this is God's promise—his commitment.

Facing our challenges by praying about them, whatever they may be, can bring us to a new way to cope and deal with our hurts, fears and angers—maybe even resolve or grow beyond them. Prayer is the key to this journey. We cannot simply talk about it, or just talk about God and his part in it. We must talk to God directly! So, this week, more than before, we speak to God directly and honestly.

Psalm 13:1

1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?

This daring address of God is possible because of a God-given provision in prayer. The daring questions convey a relationship with God as the Lord, as well as a willingness to question God boldly. They express a daring expression of a deep faith that is being tested by life. Like



the great Psalmist, call upon the Lord, address him directly, and take your fears, hurts and angers to God in prayer.

Please Note: In the next four weeks, when hurtful, fearful or angry filled emotions may begin to overwhelm, you are free to talk with someone else about this process. Always leave yourself open to talk with a wise and trusted friend, pastor or counselor. You never need to face anything alone! This too, is part and parcel of the life of prayer and being involved with God in dealing with whatever we need to cope with.

## Day 2. Addressing God: My Personal God

It was God's decision to establish a covenantal relationship with people. This covenantal relationship is central to the understanding of both God and prayer in the psalms of lament. This divine covenant can be briefly expressed as God saying, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." God is the Creator and he is Lord Over All. He is always working for the good of life. God's covenant promise unfolds in the following ways:

- In the face of sin, he is our Redeemer, the God of grace and mercy.
- In the face of suffering, he is our Healer and Rescuer.
- In the face of emotional hurt, he is our Reconciler, the Healer of the heart and mind.
- In the face of sorrow, he is our Restorer.
- In the face of confusion and uncertainty, he is our Lord of Wisdom and Guidance.
- In the face of long lasting, on-going hardship and trouble, he is our Sustainer and Provider.
- Even in the face of Death, God is the Eternal One, the Lord of our eternal salvation.

In short then, God is "Lord of All!" By praying to God, we have access to seek his aid for whatever we are facing in life. Furthermore, we are invited to call upon God using language that describes our relationship with him—calling upon him as "Father!" and as "my" Redeemer, "my" Rescuer, "my" Sustainer, and the like! This week then let us pray by addressing God with his various titles, especially the title that is appropriate for your need.

Psalm 13 for Tuesday: The Initial Plea continues as Lament

2 How long must I bear pain in my soul,  
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Even a true believer's faith can be challenged when burdened with intense pain, deep sorrow of heart, and the ruthlessness of an enemy. After all, one is only human. However, the psalmist chooses to take his frustrations to God—the only one who can give aid and save.

### **Day 3. Though I am Sinful: The God of the Covenant**

In prayer we can address God directly and honestly, asking him to hold to his part of the covenant to be our God. God also holds us to our part. Our part is spelled out in the two commandments of the Old Testament (as well as by Jesus in the New Testament): We are to love God with all our heart, mind, strength and soul. And, we are to love our neighbor as our self. These are enormous tasks that we all fall short of. An interesting thing occurs: Here we are trying to hold God to his covenant; yet, we cannot hold ourselves to our part of the covenant.

How dare we then approach God? We continue approaching God simply because God gives us the permission to do so. Fear of rejection or of punishment from God is not to get in the way of our relationship with him. God has chosen to be in relationship with us despite our shortcomings, wrongdoings and sinfulness. This is a part of the grace of his covenant with us. In our God-given freedom we continue to call upon God.

Psalm 13 for Wednesday: Petition

3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

The psalmist's questions in the previous verses along with the warning, "or I will sleep the sleep of death," are a means of arguing why God should intervene. These arguments are put forward for God's consideration. This way of leading up to the psalmist's petition is an acceptable way of lifting up one's suffering to God. The petition, "give light to my eyes," is open for the Lord's wisdom and determination. Such a petition places great trust in God.

When it comes to understanding your own fears, hurts and angers, what is it that is so serious that you bring it before the Lord? Can you petition God to help you in a way that is open for the Lord to decide how to help?

#### **Day 4. Being Bold Toward Heaven**

For most believers faith is a mysterious and difficult task. When God is hidden from our view, it is hard to be faithful and hopeful. Yet, faith is faith. Part of faith means trusting that the Lord is working in the midst of all things for that which is good. Faith is to hope in things that are not yet seen. Again, this is easier said than done. To make this mystery a bit easier to bear, we are invited by God to be “bold toward heaven.” This is a strong Jewish tradition seen throughout the Old Testament.

Being bold toward heaven means that in prayer we are free to insist that God be faithful to the covenant he has made with us. This is daring prayer in that we confront God, the Almighty, to be gracious and caring toward us. As we look at the psalms of lament in the Bible we can see and hear the depth of this “being bold toward heaven.” The psalmist seeks God’s favor and blessings AND the psalmist also seeks God himself. This tension between wanting God’s help and desiring God himself is to be embraced.

Are you “bold” toward God in your prayers? Why, or why not? What kind of god is God when he is so open to such daring and bold prayers? And why does he allow such openness and boldness?

Psalm 13 for Thursday: Motivations

4 and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";  
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

The psalmist is telling God to defend his own reputation in the eyes of the enemy. The enemy saying, “I have prevailed” refers not only to prevailing over the believer, but also over the Lord who is the believer’s protector!

### Day 5. The Tide of Persistence & Flexibility

There are so many examples of believers being persistent before God with their requests: Abraham, Moses, Job, Jeremiah, the Psalmist and others. In the midst of having to wait for an answer to our prayers, we keep praying. With persistence we are honest with our God about our situation (especially with our feelings). This persistence is an act of faithfulness. As we wait for an answer to our prayers, the way of persistence is not easy, but it is good and helpful.

The Bible also provides us many examples of believers being flexible before God with their requests. Paul, for one example, prayed three times for a “thorn” to be removed from him. The metaphor of the “thorn” is unknown. What is known for sure is that the answer to Paul’s prayer was that this thorn was to remain. Instead of continuing to pray for the thorn to be removed, Paul then prayed for God’s grace to be sufficient for him and provide him with endurance.

This changing of our prayers is not easy. To turn from praying to God as our Healer to praying to God as our Sustainer is difficult. We may need time to adjust; to let go of one desire and to take hold of another way to move forward. Yet, this is what we do. Both persistence AND flexibility are good and helpful for our walk of faith. It is difficult to discern when to be persistent and when to be flexible. But even in our confusion, we can address our prayers to the God of Wisdom and of Guidance. In all things we pray, addressing God with honesty and directness. And in all things we trust that our Lord is working for what is good.

Psalm 13 for Friday: Confession of Confidence & Waiting

5 But I trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

This believer has prayed for a revival of their own faith, and for rescue. This approach to God in prayer has given the believer a sense of confidence that the prayer will be well attended to in due time. The believer is still waiting for an answer, but now there is hope—a hope that the believer shall rejoice in the Lord. Protest and trust, pain and peace, may indeed coexist together. Like the great psalmist, let God stir up within you the confidence and hope that you need while you wait for your fears, hurts and angers to be answered by God.

Psalm 13 represents just one process of prayer that can lead you to a peace that surpasses all human understanding. So like the great psalmist, continue to pray by Addressing God, Lamenting (complaining, questioning and the like), Petitioning, and Waiting with confidence.

Please Note: Not all Psalms move consistently toward expressions of confidence in God or praise of God. Some move from praise to lament (Psalms 9,10, 27 and 40), others move back and forth between lament and praise repeatedly (Psalms 12, 28, 31 and 35), and still others will have no expression of confidence or praise (Psalm 88). Such variations are reflective of the real nature of

faith and prayer in the midst of fears, hurts and angers that are a part of our relationship with life, others, ourselves and God. Know and make use of the Psalm that is right for you.

Please take a few moments to reflect on this week's devotions and write a response (1 or more paragraphs describing your thoughts and feelings about the material so far). Submit your response by replying to this email. Thank you.

## Day 6. Therapeutic Praying

Many prayers that ask something of God have a standard and polite form: “Dear God, please...” Yet, the Psalms never address God as “dear.” Nor, do they say, “please.” The Psalms don’t always seem “religiously correct” but they are “religiously good” for they have the depth of describing one’s situation honestly. They have the integrity of deeply felt emotions. The expression of difficult or negative emotions is to be straightforward and direct; it is not a piling up a bunch of complaints. We focus on one complaint and God’s response to it. Also, as we express our emotions before God for his consideration and response, we open ourselves to God expressing his feelings and his passions for our consideration and response! The expression of emotions in prayer is a two way street between us and God. How open are you to God’s expression of his concerns?

Reflection on Psalm 39:1

1 I said, "I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue;  
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence."

The standard for ‘religious correctness’ according to this verse is: Avoid the expression of questions and doubts regarding God’s rule in the hearing of wrongdoers or unbelievers. Among believers, however, expressions of questions and doubts, and negative emotions like anger, are to be a part of the faith community’s ministry to one another. Thus, “A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends (fellow believers), even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty (raises his questions and doubts).” (Job 6:14 NIV). Many believers, however, are too afraid or judgmental to be patient or understanding of our laments and complaints. Therefore, we should select carefully those who we share the content of our prayers with.

### Day 7. A Spirituality of Anger

To express anger in prayer, whether it be anger at another person or anger at God, is difficult for most people. It takes an act of trust to take such risks with God. Praying honestly is a spiritual act of faith to God. It is trusting God not to turn away from us or retaliate against us. It is saying, “God, this is how I really feel! This is a real part of me, of who I am in this situation! I give myself to you as I truly am!”

When we bring our anger to God, we also run the risk of having to face our own anger and possibly change it. Changing how or why we are angry can be a significant sacrifice. We engage ourselves in this struggle. Just as pain is a sign that something is wrong in our body, anger may be a sign that something is wrong in one of our relationships—with our own self, with another human being, or with God. The warning signal of anger is to be taken seriously by us, as it will be taken seriously by God. To take our anger seriously means working toward restoration of a broken relationship, whether that’s through an act of mercy or an act of justice (or a combination of the two). This is not an easy way to pray. Yet, it is a significant part of our journey with God toward something better.

How are you doing in connecting with God in prayer, and in sharing your anger with God and allowing God to help you wrestle with it?

Reflection on Psalm 39:2-3

2 I was silent and still; I held my peace to no avail;  
my distress grew worse,  
3 my heart became hot within me.

While I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue...

When we hold in or hold on to our anger our ‘distress can grow worse’—even ‘hot.’ When we dwell on our anger, turning it over and over again in our minds, we eventually get burned. Then, like a bomb with a burning fuse, we explode—usually at the wrong person or in an unproductive manner. All of this only makes things worse. The sooner we deal with our anger, it then tends to be directed toward the right person and in more productive fashion. Whether you are dealing with resentment, anger, frustration, annoyance or something else, remember that it may be wise to consider getting counsel from someone you trust.

Which is worse to the holy and loving ears of God: a blasphemy of words or the blasphemy of silence wherein no honest prayer is ever spoken? Which can God work with more?



## Day 8. Anger & Sinfulness

Anger is often assumed to be sinful and a wrong feeling to have. To understand anger better, it's helpful to know where anger comes from. Anger can be attributed to three sources:

1. Anger can be an external challenge rising from without (for example, when something bad happens to us, or we have been wronged by another human being).
2. Anger can be an internal challenge rising from within (for example, we may tend to interpret things in a way that causes us anger).
3. Anger can be a spiritual issue (God can get angry, and we were made in his image. Therefore, we too can get angry. For example, we may feel angry regarding pain and suffering in the world or injustices done to people.).

God has made us in such a way that we can get angry over external and internal turn of events that cause us mental, physical or spiritual hurt. In this spiritual aspect, anger not only has a cause, it has a purpose. Anger is a warning signal that something has gone painfully and morally wrong. Anger is then meant to cause us to act in a way that correction and restoration can take place.

From these observations we can see that anger is something natural; socially, psychologically and spiritually speaking. We can also conclude that anger is not sinful in and of itself. Rather, it is what we do with our anger (and the anger of others) that determines whether or not anger becomes something sinful. This is why the Apostle Paul said: "Be angry, but do not sin." (Eph.4:26-27). Anger is not sinful when we use it in a productive manner to reconcile situations and relationships that have gone wrong. This is always easier said than done. To help with this process, we bring our anger to God in prayer and ask God what he would then have us do.

Reflection on Psalm 39:7

7 And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?

My hope is in you.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions.

The psalmist recognizes a connection between his sinfulness and suffering. Sinfulness can be seen in several ways. Therefore, the psalmist hopes in God and his grace; waiting for God to save him from any aspect of sinfulness and its accompanying consequences of suffering. We are sinful human beings. Yet, we can also be innocent at the same time: not having caused our own suffering, not having deserved to suffer in this manner, and trying to live in light of God's forgiveness. This is the setting of Psalm 17 and the Book of Job.

## Day 9. Anger & Depression

We avoid dealing with anger because of the way it makes us feel and the way others judge it. Yet, quite often, this way of dealing with anger leads to depression, laziness, apathy and the like. This is a natural result of repressing anger. These results only serve to make things worse. In Psalm 4, the psalmist advises, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” This wisdom calls us to reflect productively on our anger in order to get it resolved appropriately before even a single day goes by. Not only do we get a better night’s sleep, we also avoid the consequences of repression (such as depression and apathy).

Sometimes we repress our anger because we conclude that there is not much we can do with it. The one who has harmed us may refuse to confess up to the wrongdoing, refuse to say they are sorry, refuse to accept any form of discipline or forgiveness, or even to be approached about the matter. It’s true that we cannot control the one who has wronged us. Yet, we can still work with our anger in whatever way that is open to our influence.

We continue to struggle by bringing our anger to God in prayer, praying about it, striving to understand what has happened to us, seeking guidance to not be overcome by our troubles, and keeping ourselves open to be renewed in whatever way we can.

### Reflection on Psalm 39:9

9 “I am silent; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it.”

The Psalmist is now silent. Now that he has spoken his piece with God, he can come to peace to listen to what God has to say. Many teachers of prayer emphasize the prayer of silence, of quieting all our thoughts so that we can hear what God has to say to us. Yet, more often than not, we cannot reach true silence unless we have spoken all of what we need to say to God. This may well include giving God a piece of our mind before we can come to “the peace of God that transcends all understanding.” (Phil 4:7, NIV).

## Day 10. Anger & Vengeance

People often respond to their anger in unhealthy ways. At one extreme, we can deny or repress our anger to the point of depression. At the other extreme, we can express our anger in verbal or physical outrage toward others. People often fear anger because of this extreme.

Anger is often held in due to the belief that it is unacceptable or sinful to feel angry, let alone acknowledge the feeling. However, many theologians have argued against this belief that anger is inherently sinful. Anger is a serious emotion that can lead to sin. However, anger can also be used constructively in a manner that does not lead to sin. There are many healthy functions of anger.

St. Paul said: “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” (Ephesians 4:26-27, NIV). Dealing with anger in a healthy way takes a lot of learning and self-discipline, and no one will ever be perfect at it! Yet, with practice and with prayer, we get better over time.

But not everyone wants to control their anger! This is because anger can give us a sense of power, a sense of self-protection, or a sense of self-worth. Therefore, we are often tempted to hold on to our anger and tempted to use it against others. This is very human. God recognizes the struggle and sacrifice that goes with praying about our anger and turning it over to him. We can trust God with our anger because he is the God of anger, the God to whom “vengeance belongs” (Psalm 94:1-3). He is also the God of wisdom, the one who can discern what is best for all involved. We can trust God to use his acts of grace and justice in accordance to his divine insights and holy purposes.

Reflection on Psalm 39:12

12 "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry;  
do not hold your peace at my tears."

God is a God of peace. It is a peace that cannot be taken from him, nor can it even be shaken. All too often, we tend to think that God has it good and he has no idea what is really happening to us or how we feel about it. The psalmist cries out to God, hoping that God will hear and listen. And no matter what the psalmist thinks or feels, God hears. God has promised to listen and care.

Exercise: Think of a situation that has caused you to feel anger or sadness. It can be something recent or in the past. Write your own psalm-prayer. You can write it in your own style, or use the basic structure of the lament psalm described below. If you would like additional help with this process, you may refer to the document attached called “Writing and Reflection Exercise” :

1. The Address: call upon God in a direct and personal manner

2. The Complaint: describe the desperation of the situation, and any concerns or fears that you have
3. Petitioning: ask God to act decisively in some manner in regard to the complaint
4. Vow to Praise, Thanksgiving, Praise: promise to praise God after He has acted; thank God for hearing your complaint and petitions; express your regard for God, for His character, or for His deeds done in the past
5. Waiting: wait for a response to your complaint and petition; wait for God's acknowledgment; wait for God to act, to sustain or to save the one in need.

### Day 11. Using Various Ways of Prayer to Work on Anger

Using prayer to deal with anger can take on a number of beneficial forms or methods. Make use of any of the following that seem useful to you in praying with and about your anger.

- Read selected psalms of lament out loud.  
  
(For example, Psalms of direct protest against God: Psalms 6; 13; 22; 35; 39; 42-43; 88; and 102. Psalms of indirect protest against God: Psalms 25; 26; 27; 28; 38; 40; 41; 51; 55; 59; 69; 70-71; 109; 140; 141; and 143). Or speak your own prayers out loud, perhaps yelling. Be sure your privacy is secure.
- Pray standing, legs spread apart, hands clenched as fists, ready to do battle—with your anger against the one who has wronged you, or even against God himself; or to do battle against your anger itself.
- Write out your prayers. Use the “parallelism” technique of the psalms by expressing a single thought repeatedly, in slightly different ways. You may also use rhyme, alliteration or acrostic styles of writing, or any other style that you enjoy.
- Use song or another form of art (drawing, sculpture, etc.) to express yourself (this can be your own or another person’s art that you relate to).

All of these will help you to express your anger more fully. In turn, your anger may be better understood and dealt with; and you may be able to turn more and more of your anger over to God. The goal in all of this is for you to wrestle with your anger in prayer; the goal is not for you alone to win.

Reflection on Psalm 62:5

“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone, my hope comes from him.”

Not only does this Psalmist talk to God in prayer, he also talks to his own soul. It may sound strange, but talking to oneself in this way is a Biblical reality, specifically talking to one’s soul. Self-encouragement is not uncommon to the Psalmists, nor is it uncommon to the saints and significant historical leaders of the church. Try this practice as a part of your repertoire: encourage yourself when you feel hurt, discouraged, or angry, and see how God uses this as another avenue to bring you comfort and blessing.

## Day 12. Anger Leading to Forgiveness of Self

Anger is an emotion that will not go away easily; anger seeks to be understood and attended to. It is helpful to understand that our anger can be related to a number of things that are a part of us. Sometimes this means working with one of our other emotions, like managing a particular fear. When a fear of ours is aroused, this can make us angry. Being rid of our fear (if possible) rids us of present or repeated episodes of anger. Disappointed expectations can also make us angry. Being rid of unreasonable expectations (as with unreasonable fears), rids us of unnecessary moments of anger.

Reworking a belief—like ‘I can only feel good about myself if...’—can also free us from times of anger. We might even be seeing God in a way that is incorrect and blaming him for something that has gone wrong for us. Yet it is our belief or our failure to see God as we should that is in error. Once we understand some of these causes of our anger, then we can better determine how to work with it. Sometimes this means forgiving ourselves for the inappropriate ways we think or feel. This grace helps us to change.

Reflection on Psalm 88:8-9

“You have caused my companions to shun me;  
 you have made me a thing of horror to them,  
 I am shut in so that I cannot escape;  
 my eye grows dim through sorrow.  
 Every day I call on you, O Lord;  
 I spread out my hands to you.”

Loneliness often comes along with suffering. Our suffering may cause us to withdraw from others, and it may cause others to withdraw from us. Even our closest relationships may fail to offer us the support we need and long for when faced with hard times. As this Psalmist mentions his “eye”—in the singular—he is referring to the “inner eye” or the “eye of his faith.” He is saying that he cannot see or hear anything from God. Even in this state, he continues to cry out to God. Just as the Psalmist perseveres in prayer, we can do the same.

### **Day 13. Anger Leading to Forgiveness of Another**

Anger helps us to put our finger on the wrong that has been done and motivates us to address the problem. Anger can lead us to forgiveness if we recognize that forgiveness does not free an offender from accountability. Rather, forgiveness can lead us to hold the wrongdoer accountable in a reasonable, appropriate or even caring manner. Also, forgiveness, if accepted, frees the offender to be more accepting of confrontation, correction, guidance or discipline. In this way, forgiveness leads to the best forms of obtaining justice for the offended.

Forgiveness does not always free us completely from our anger. When this happens, the repeated act of forgiving keeps anger under control so that we remain free and committed to hold the offender accountable in an appropriate manner.

God is both merciful and wrathful, he disciplines and grants mercy. He is not all merciful with no just disciplines; nor is he all discipline and without mercy. He is a wise and loving—and sometimes mysterious—combination of the two. Being created in his image we seek to live out a creative tension between mercy & justice, forgiveness & anger. God has entrusted us with a responsibility for using our image wisely for the benefit of all. To do this well we seek God’s help through our honest prayers.

Reflection on Psalm 73:16-17

“When I had tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood...”

Whether or not the Psalmist got his new understanding of things from God, from a message that was presented by a temple leader, or from a conversation with one or more religious believers, we do not know. We do know that his going into the sanctuary was an attempt on his part to abandon trying to figure it all out on his own. He reached out for help. This is good for us to do also.

### Day 14. Living with the Silence of God

Some Christian teaching encourages us to simply accept our sufferings as being a part of God's plan for some greater good, or as a way of connecting with the suffering of our Lord Jesus. Often though, when we're in the midst of hard times, these and any other answers do not seem satisfying. We may experience what has been called "the dark night of the soul," when we seek God, but we feel and hear nothing—just silence.

Jesus provides us a broad picture of prayer and faith in the midst of God's silence. Before he is led to the cross to die, Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane for a time of prayer. He wrestles in prayer for hours, struggling to surrender and accept God's will. Jesus cried, "Not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:36-46). Then, upon the cross he cries out a heartfelt protest, saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45-46, quoting from Psalm 22:1). Finally, striving between surrender and protest, Jesus cries out from the cross of God's silence, "Into your hands I commend my spirit." (John 23:44-46, quoting from Psalm 31:5). This commending of himself to God is not acceptance of God's silence. Rather, it is living with God and his silence (and in this case of Jesus, it is also dying with God and his silence).

Through all the ways we pray—petition, thanksgiving, confession, surrender, praise and protest—we live with God as he is. This is our way of trusting faith. And God lives with our persistence, protests, and petitions; he lives with the pains and sorrows of each of our prayers. This is his way of faithfulness.

#### Reflection on Psalm 73:21-22

The Psalmist has wrestled with God in prayer, pouring out his tormenting thoughts about his life. Now he confesses:

"When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart,  
I was stupid and ignorant; I was like a brute beast toward you."

Like the Psalmist, can you sense how God is graceful toward your prayers of lament, complaint and protest?



### Day 15. A Spirituality of Ambivalence

Ambivalence is the experience of having two opposing emotions at the same time. Spiritually speaking, it is to simultaneously love and fear God, love and be angry at God, be humble toward and daring with God at the same time. This spiritual ambivalence with God is quite natural for it is based upon God himself.<sup>2</sup> God reveals and hides himself, he blesses and curses, he provides and he withholds, he is present and absent, he is the God of love and wrath, of justice and mercy. A faithful believer who takes in all of God as he is cannot avoid a sense of spiritual ambivalence with God.

Raising up our prayers of lament helps us to live with this spiritual ambivalence. In prayer we can acknowledge the God we are angry with, the God who we fear, who we try so desperately to understand. We can then call upon God to reveal himself to us as trustworthy and loving. With this kind of honesty and openness, the lament psalms reveal a mature understanding of God. They avoid the dishonesty of saying that God is only one way!

God is not simply wrathful, withholding and absent from us. Nor do we always feel God's presence, understand his love, or get what we ask for from God. The prayer of lament is honest and vulnerable in confessing the variety of thoughts and feelings that we may have toward God. It is the prayer of the holy "yet!"

Sometimes, to honestly lament is to say, "God, you have been harsh toward me in life. For pain and sorrow still haunt me. You have been hidden and absent from me. You have withheld from me your blessing of rescue in the here and now. Yet, I call upon you to be the God who blesses, provides, rescues and cares! I call upon you to be the God who you are, the God who loves and who saves!" So we pray, we lament with a holy 'yet,' a holy hope that God turns to bless and to love.

Reflection on a more contemporary Psalm

Ah, my dear angry Lord,  
 Since you do love, yet strike;  
 Cast down, yet help afford;  
 Sure I will do the like.

I will complain, yet praise,  
 I will bewail, approve;  
 And all my sour-sweet days  
 I will lament, and love.  
 (George Herbert, The Temple)

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<sup>2</sup>[note: God is not ambivalent; but God's paradoxical nature evokes ambivalence in us].

Please choose one of the following options to do for this week's assignment. Then reply to this email with either your prayer or a reflection on your experience:

1. What thoughts or feelings toward God do you find difficult to express? Spend some time praying about it, telling God how you truly feel, even the parts you're ashamed of. Ask him for help, and then listen.
2. What anger do you still need to work through? It can be anger toward yourself, someone else, a group of people, a situation, or God. Spend some time praying about it. Ask God for guidance and listen.

## Day 16. The Direction of Our Petitions

Praying about what's most important to us requires much faith. For behind the petition most important to us is the fear that our petition will be rejected, our hope will be turned into a sorrowful disappointment. To petition God then is to run the risk of taking God at his Word; trusting in his promise to hear and to come to our aid in our time of need. This is the importance of petitioning God: out of petitioning arises hope and expectation, the anticipation of God's intervention in our lives on our behalf. It is this divine hope and anticipation that keeps overwhelming depression and despair at bay. So we accept the risk of our petition being rejected. With hope and anticipation we raise our petition up to God.

Reflection on Psalm 63:3

"Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you."

This is a grand spirituality—loving God more than life itself. That's a tough spirituality to live up to. In another prayer for help, with different words, yet the same sentiment, this spirituality is echoed in Psalm 27:4: "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

When we petition God for an earthly need, important as it may be to us, by comparison just how important is God to us? How do we balance our want of help from God with our want of God himself? Should the scales balance or should they tip in one direction? These are not easy questions to answer, yet they are worthy of our consideration.

### Day 17. Boxed In and Breaking Out

Often we need time to process what weighs heavy upon our heart. As this process unfolds we need to keep our selves free to change our petition to what has become recognized as more important with the passing of time. It can be very disappointing when our original petition has not been granted. Yet, with a new petition in our heart we can still maintain an attitude of hope and anticipation. While this is sometimes easier said than done, this is a natural part of the work of prayer. Many others have trod this way before. Even God redirects his desires (cf. Ex 32:14; Amos 7:1-7 and the like).

The Psalmist petitions God for his attention ('hear my prayer'); for God's care ('see my plight'); or for God's intervention or sustaining help ('save me'). These petitions are straight forward and direct; even insistent! Yet, while they invite God to answer their prayer, they do not tell God how to answer. God is called upon to break into their lives, yet God is not boxed in by a detailed 'how to' petition. While many prayers in the Bible have a specific petition, many prayers are open to God's wisdom and will. It may be best to pray with a more open-ended petition; or, with both (a specific petition and an open-ended petition).

What reasons would the Psalmist have for the tendency to leave his/her petition open for God to decide how to deal with the situation at hand?

Reflection on Psalm 86:7

"In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me."

God is free to give us various answers to our prayers. Out of concern for us or for others God can say, "No."; "Yes"; "Yes, but..."; or "Wait". How would these possible responses from God fit your situation?

Consider also this line of reflection: Does your petition, underneath it all, really rely completely upon yourself to do something? Does it rely completely upon God to do something because there is really nothing you can do? Or, does rely upon a cooperative effort by both you and God working together? Which way do you tend to prefer? Does your situation require a change from your preference? Which way do you think God prefers? Or, which way does he requires of you for your present struggle? Also consider how God might have you use the following prayer [by R. Niebuhr] for your situation.

The Serenity Prayer:

God grant me  
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

## Day 18. The Purposes of Having to Wait

Many of us tend to be impatient with waiting. We believe that it has little or no purpose. Yet, waiting is not wasting time. Rather, there are a variety of meaningful purposes to waiting.

- Waiting provides us time to be more productive with the work of prayer: reworking our image of God, our expression of lament or complaint, our petitions, our understanding of ourselves and our relationship to others, and the retelling and reshaping of our story.
- Waiting provides moments for taking a break from our focusing on our suffering; taking time for our daily responsibilities, for recreation (re-creation), for rest, for a good laugh, and for getting re-energized.
- Waiting provides us time for cooling down, time for dealing with our anger, time for establishing a balance between overwhelming feelings and overly practical reasoning.
- Waiting provides us the opportunity to come to quietness wherein we become silent and listen; to sense perhaps a response, an insight, a holy presence, or a request from God.
- Waiting provides the opportunity to come into community wherein we identify with others, and they with us, like never before. In waiting we come to know that we are not alone. Others are with us and for us. They can even aid us in feeling closer to God.
- Waiting provides us the opportunity to come to a deeper faith wherein we remember and embrace the past saving acts of God (Biblical & persona); or significant and meaningful insights regarding our relationship with God, ourselves and others.
- Waiting provides us moments to see the good things in our lives, blessings from God that aid us in fighting the good fight of faith.

Reflection on the Refrain in Psalm 42 & 43

"Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help

Refrains are useful in that they can serve as a very brief summary of the heart of our prayers. We see this in the refrain of Psalm 80: "Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved." Refrains can also be useful in that they can serve us as brief prayer of encouragement. This we see in the refrain of Psalm 42 & 43 referred to above. See if you can come up with a short refrain of your own that summarizes your prayers, or a refrain that can serve you as a brief prayer of encouragement.

If you want, search for the refrains in Psalms 42/43; 46; 56; 59; 62; and 80. Many repeated refrains are not word for word. This is a style of Hebrew poetics. This style allows the spirit of the refrain to be flexible; thus adaptive toward a variety of positive directions.

## Day 19. Prayer, Passion & Putting Trust in God

In the midst of continual suffering waiting is difficult, especially when we feel helpless or hopeless. This is the experience of “passion.” Passion is when we have little or no control over what is happening to us, we are dependent upon others for assistance or comfort, we see little or no hope for change in our suffering, or we sense no real value or purpose within our suffering or even in our very selves. Passion is the state we sometimes find ourselves in; it is also the state of Jesus upon the cross.

Despite the pain that passion brings, the most meaningful and holy depths of life and love can be felt in the midst of suffering and waiting.

Passion is the state in which we can experience ourselves to be so very deeply loved by God. For when we feel so worthless, unable to do anything to cause God to love us, this is when we can come to know that God loves us for no good reason at all, that God loves us for naught.

Passion is also the state in which God can experience himself to be so very deeply loved by us. When we believe that God is nowhere to be felt, seen or heard, and when he appears to be providing us with so little or no response to our prayers, we can love God for what seems to us as no good reason at all, to love God for naught.

In the midst of passion, we can experience and express holy and unconditional love. Despite any suffering, we are loved, and we do love. Being open to, experiencing, repeating or maintaining this depth of love is easier said than done. It calls for prayers seeking the abilities to trust and to believe. So, in the midst of our waiting and passion, we pray and we pray.

### Reflection on Psalm 73

In a number of psalms God is questioned as to why God has allowed the psalmist to suffer. The question “Why?” often haunts us. Psalm 73 raises the question: “If God is good, and we are innocent, why do we suffer?” After struggling with this question, the psalmist says:

- 23 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.
- 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.
- 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
- 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
- 27 Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
- 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

The psalmist discovers that faith depends not on his fragile, often vulnerable grasp of God, but on God’s grasp of him...“you hold my right hand...you guide me...you receive me (despite my

behavior!)...you are the strength of my heart...my portion forever."

Nearness to God is what saves and brings blessings beyond worldly considerations! The psalmist concludes that God is his strength and portion and that true and lasting goodness is being in relationship with God (verses 26 and 28).

The psalmist never gets an answer to his original question "Why?". Instead, he gains a sense of God's presence. In this is a sense of deep meaning and true hope. The psalmist has gained the certainty of God as his God. Encountering God, communing with God, he needs nothing else. The ultimate misery is to be "far from God" as are the wicked (verse 27). The ever enduring shalom or peace is to be "near God." The psalmist is filled with praise that pours over: "I will tell of all your works!"

### Closing Reflections on Psalm 73

It is important to notice the role that doubts and questioning play in this psalm. They are not the enemies of faith. It was only by questioning and struggling with the doubts his questions raised that the psalmist broke through to a new understanding of what the goodness of God really meant. Such questions and doubts were the catalyst of a more mature faith. There is need today to learn anew from the psalms the place which such questions and doubts have in worship.

### **Day 20. How am I to Relate to God While in the Midst of My Suffering?**

Sometimes we are led to believe that God has done something to cause our suffering; or, at the very least, he has failed to prevent the trouble—This follows along the line of thinking that if God is God, then ‘the buck stops’ with him! So, in the midst of any suffering we might blame God and be angry with God.

How then are we to relate to God? To answer this question we must first ask: How it is that God relates to us? If he was an abusive god or our enemy, then he would have us surrender to him without any terms or conditions. Yet this is not the case. Rather, he calls upon us to engage and hold on to him in terms of a covenant. He calls us to protest and petition, to cry out to him based upon the conditions of a covenant.

This call to prayer reveals to us the God who has bound himself to be in a caring relationship with us. Thus, he speaks and we listen and strive to respond as best as we can. We pray and he listens and responds as he sees fit for all involved. We go back and forth with each other. We were made in God’s image to speak and to be in authentic, honest relationship with him, with the world, and with ourselves. So we continue to relate with God and to trust that he will hear and respond.

Reflection on Psalm 119:89

“Your Word, O Lord, is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens.”

Our hope is this: The words of our prayers will not be the last word, God’s Word will be. While we strive for our words of prayer to be filled with honest emotions, well intended thought-out petitions, and a sincere desire for God himself; God’s Word is fully holy, good and eternal. We always take hope in his sacred and loving Word. The words of our prayers have their connection with God’s Word. For God’s Word of love seeks to guide our words of love: words that speak up for our love for our selves, for others and for God. In the midst of this, God’s eternal Word has an answer that goes beyond all our prayers. Because of this future hope that we have with God’s Word, we also have a present hope in his Word to hear and answer our prayers in a way that fits in with his wisdom and love for all.

We close this final devotion with these words from Psalm 20, verses 1-5,

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.

May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings.

May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.



We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God.

May the LORD grant all your requests.

Take some time to reflect on what you've learned from the Lament Psalm devotions and what this experience has been like for you. Then write a prayer-reflection, using the following as a guide. Reply to this email with your prayer-reflection.

1. Tell God what you like about prayer and any aspects of prayer that are still difficult for you.
2. Tell God about any new ways of praying that you want to continue experimenting with (What part of the so-called "lament process" might you need to focus upon the most within your prayer life?)
  - Tell God what's hardest for you about waiting through times of distress and suffering? Explain why.
  - Within your situation of distress and suffering what might you need to be doing in your life and in your prayers to be more true to yourself?
  - Tell God the characteristics or qualities about him that are most comforting to you.
  - Which of God's attributes do you need his help believing in?
  - Make any vows to God that seem fitting.
  - If possible, end your prayer with praise.

You will receive an email in the next few days with a link to an online survey. Your participation in this study will be finished upon completion of this survey, which must be completed before XX/XX/XX. Thank you again for your participation. It is our hope that this has been a rich experience for you.

Appendix D  
Curriculum Vita

**KIMBERLY N. SNOW**

414 N. Meridian St. #V323  
Newberg, OR 97132  
503.544.3529  
ksnow06@georgefox.edu

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EDUCATION

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**Student in Doctorate of Clinical Psychology Program, 8/2006 – 5/2012**

Graduate School of Clinical Psychology, APA Accredited  
George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon

**Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology, 5/2008**

Graduate School of Clinical Psychology  
George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon

**Student in Doctorate of Clinical Psychology Program, 9/2005 - 5/2006**

Graduate School of Clinical Psychology, APA Accredited  
Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California

**Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, 5/2005**

**Minor in Christian Ministries**

George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon

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CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

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**George Fox Practicum Site Development at 5Rock Ranch, Yamhill, OR, 7/2010 - 6/2011**

Supervisor: Dr. Steven Spotts, PsyD

**Kaiser Permanente, Salem, OR, 8/2009 - 1/2010**

Supervisors: Robert Schiff, Ph.D., & Catherine E. DeCampos, Psy.D., CFNP

**Evergreen Clinical, Portland, OR, 8/2008 - 6/2009**

Supervisor: Brian Goff, PhD

**Multnomah County Corrections, Portland, OR, 8/2007 - 5/2008**

Supervisor: Stephen Huggins, PsyD

**George Fox University, Newberg, OR, 9/2006 - 4/2007**

Supervisors: Scott Koeneman, PsyD, & Clark Campbell, PhD

**Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 9/2005 - 4/2006**

Supervisors: Brett Veltman, MA, & Tim Kelley, PhD

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PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

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**Snow, K. N.,** McMinn, M. R., Bufford, R. K., Brendlinger, I. A. (2011). Resolving anger with God: Lament as an avenue toward attachment. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 39, 130-142.

McMinn, M. R., **Snow, K. N.,** & Orton, J. J. (in press). Counseling and Psychotherapy Within and Across Faith Traditions. In L. Miller (Ed.), *Oxford Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. New York: Oxford.

McMinn, M. R., Hathaway, W. L., Woods, S. W., & **Snow, K. N.** (2009). What American Psychological Association leaders have to say about Psychology of Religion and Spirituality. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 1, 3-13

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#### PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

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Glori G. G., **Snow, K. N.,** (2011). *Creative arts & strengths-building in high-risk youth*. Paper presented at the International Conference of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies.

**Snow, K. N.,** Glori G. G., (2011). *The use of creative arts in facilitating resilience and countering depression in high-risk youth: The benefits of Chill and Spill therapy groups*. Poster presented at the 119<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

Glori G. G., **Snow, K. N.,** Crowl, H. R., Smithberger, A. L., (2011). *Building youth resilience with words and watercolors: An evaluation of psycho-educational and experiential approaches*. Poster presented at the 119<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

**Snow, K. N.,** & McMinn, M. R. (2010). *Resolving anger with God: Lament as an avenue toward attachment*. Poster presented at the 118<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, San Diego, CA.

A variation of this same topic presented at the International Conference of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies in 2010, Kansas City, KS.

McMinn, M. R., Hathaway, W. L., Woods, S. W., & **Snow, K. N.** (2009). *What American Psychological Association leaders have to say about Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Paper presented at the 116<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, Boston, MA.

**Bendeck, K.,** & Koch, C. (2005). *Personality and attitudes toward research*. Poster presented at the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Western Psychological Association, Portland, OR.

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#### PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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**Real Life Cafe, 2011**

5 Rock Ranch, Yamhill, OR

**Art and Creative Writing Therapy Groups, 2010**

5 Rock Ranch, Yamhill, OR

**Intensive Psychotherapy Retreats for Married Couples, 2010**

5 Rock Ranch, Yamhill, OR

**Grief and Bereavement Groups, 2007**

Inverness Jail, Portland, OR

**Anger Management Group, 2007**

Inverness Jail, Portland, OR

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HONORS AND AWARDS

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**Richter Scholar**, George Fox University, 2010 - 2011

**Richter Scholar**, George Fox University, 2008 - 2009

**Diversity Scholar**, George Fox University, 2006 - 2008

**Emblem Club Scholar**, Garden Grove Emblem Club, 2005 - 2009

**Beaverton Foursquare Scholar**, Beaverton Foursquare Church, 2006 - 2007

**Magna Cum Laude**, George Fox University, 2005

**Academic Dean's List**, George Fox University, 2001 - 2005

**Benson Academic Award**, George Fox University, 2001 - 2005

**Multicultural Achievement Award**, George Fox University, 2001 - 2005

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UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM

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**Dissertation Writing Consultant**, George Fox University, 2010 - 2011

**Guest Lecturer: Undergraduate and Graduate Campuses**, George Fox University, 2011

**Teaching Assistant: Survey of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods**, George Fox University, 2010

**Research Vertical Team**, George Fox University, 2007 - 2010

**Multicultural Committee**, George Fox University, 2010

**Peer Mentor of Psy.D. Student**, George Fox University, 2007-2010

**Teaching Assistant: Advanced Counseling**, George Fox University, 2008

**Program Development, Community Arts Center, Newberg, OR, 2008**

**Community Group Leader, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2006**

**Event Committee, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2006**

**Serve Trip Leader, George Fox University, 2003 - 2004**

**Multicultural Community House, George Fox University, 2003-2004**

**Shared Praxis Community, George Fox University, 2002 – 2004**

**Small Group Leader, George Fox University, 2002 - 2003**

**Missions and Multicultural Awareness Committee, George Fox University, 2001 – 2002**

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CLINICAL INTERESTS

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Religious and Spiritual Development

Resilience in Clergy and Relief Personnel

Grief and Bereavement

Depression, Anxiety & Adjustment Disorders

Trauma Recovery

Couple and Relationship Issues

Integrative Approaches to Psychotherapy