

Questions for this Week's Panel

Each week's brief panel with members of WEPC serves to get the discussion going with your group, family or friend. Most of these questions will be revisited as you continue the conversation in the next section.

- **Introduce yourselves**, and share one thing about your work, family, or involvement at WEPC.
- Is there anything in particular from Chapter 7 that especially **spoke to you**, or stuck with you?
- The book of Lamentations shows us how the fall and exile of Judah loomed large over God's people. What is a **national or world tragedy** that occurred in your lifetime that has **deeply shaped you**? Why was it **so memorable**, and how did it **affect you**?
- "The unearthing of idols is part of God's plan. When pain topples our idols, lament invites self-examination. We can see more clearly the misplaced objects of trust that surface when the layers are peeled back. Pain helps us to see who we are and what we love" (136). What is an **example of a heart-idol God has toppled in your own life through loss & suffering**?
- Making an idol of something is not necessarily a physical process but is certainly a spiritual one. It means imagining and trusting anything to deliver the control, security, significance, satisfaction, and beauty that only the real God can give. It means trusting a *good thing* into an *ultimate thing*. Vroegop lists a series of heart idols that he draws from Lamentations 4. **Is there an idol on this list that are you tempted to worship? Why is that idol so attractive to you?**
 - 1.) Financial Security (4:1)
 - 2.) Relationships (4:2)
 - 3.) An Ideal Society (4:4)
 - 4.) Spiritual Leadership (4:13)
 - 5.) Spiritual Optimism (4:6)
- Every idol we make fails. Human wealth, relationships, societies, leaders, and hopes are all miserable substitutes for God. In fact, they will undo and enslave us. Jesus is not like our idols. **Read [Hebrews 4:14-16](#) and [7:26-28](#)**. What are some of the ways **Jesus is greater than our idols**?

Lamentations 4

¹How the gold has grown dim,
how the pure gold is changed!

The holy stones lie scattered
at the head of every street.

²The precious sons of Zion,
worth their weight in fine gold,
how they are regarded as earthen pots,
the work of a potter's hands!

³Even jackals offer the breast;
they nurse their young;

but the daughter of my people has become cruel,
like the ostriches in the wilderness.

⁴The tongue of the nursing infant sticks
to the roof of its mouth for thirst;
the children beg for food,
but no one gives to them.

⁵Those who once feasted on delicacies
perish in the streets;

those who were brought up in purple
embrace ash heaps.

⁶ For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been
greater
than the punishment of Sodom,
which was overthrown in a moment,
and no hands were wrung for her.

⁷ Her princes were purer than snow,
whiter than milk;
their bodies were more ruddy than coral,
the beauty of their form was like sapphire.

⁸ Now their face is blacker than soot;
they are not recognized in the streets;
their skin has shriveled on their bones;
it has become as dry as wood.

⁹ Happier were the victims of the sword
than the victims of hunger,
who wasted away, pierced
by lack of the fruits of the field.

¹⁰ The hands of compassionate women
have boiled their own children;
they became their food
during the destruction of the daughter of my people.

¹¹ The LORD gave full vent to his wrath;
he poured out his hot anger,
and he kindled a fire in Zion
that consumed its foundations.

¹² The kings of the earth did not believe,
nor any of the inhabitants of the world,
that foe or enemy could enter
the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³ This was for the sins of her prophets
and the iniquities of her priests,
who shed in the midst of her
the blood of the righteous.

¹⁴ They wandered, blind, through the streets;
they were so defiled with blood

that no one was able to touch
their garments.

¹⁵ "Away! Unclean!" people cried at them.
"Away! Away! Do not touch!"
So they became fugitives and wanderers;
people said among the nations,
"They shall stay with us no longer."

¹⁶ The LORD himself has scattered them;
he will regard them no more;
no honor was shown to the priests,
no favor to the elders.

¹⁷ Our eyes failed, ever watching
vainly for help;
in our watching we watched
for a nation which could not save.

¹⁸ They dogged our steps
so that we could not walk in our streets;
our end drew near; our days were numbered,
for our end had come.

¹⁹ Our pursuers were swifter
than the eagles in the heavens;
they chased us on the mountains;
they lay in wait for us in the wilderness.

²⁰ The breath of our nostrils, the LORD's anointed,
was captured in their pits,
of whom we said, "Under his shadow
we shall live among the nations."

²¹ Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
you who dwell in the land of Uz;
but to you also the cup shall pass;
you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.

²² The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is
accomplished;
he will keep you in exile no longer;
but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish;
he will uncover your sins.

Questions for Group or Individual Study

As you continue the conversation, this section has questions to reflect on this week's chapter, Scripture passage, and your own heart. Don't feel pressure to work through all of these questions, but choose several that work for you.

- The fall and exile of Judah loomed large over the hearts and minds of God's people. What is a **national or world tragedy** that occurred in your lifetime that has **deeply shaped you**? Why was it **so memorable**, and how did it **affect you**?
- We live in a rapidly changing world! Name a few of the big struggles in our culture over the last decade. What **role does lament play** for the church in **weathering culture changes**?
- "Suffering stirs up the sediments we forgot about or tried to hide. Fear, pride, covetousness, and self-sufficiency lie dormant. But pain can reveal these covert enemies. Hardship reveals idols" (124). How do **loss & suffering reveal our heart idols**?
- "The unearthing of idols is part of God's plan. When pain topples our idols, lament invites self-examination. We can see more clearly the misplaced objects of trust that surface when the layers are peeled back. Pain helps us to see who we are and what we love" (136). What is an **example of a heart-idol God has toppled in your own life through loss & suffering**?
- **Read Lamentations 4:1-22 aloud.** How would you describe the **tone**? What **themes and phrases** jump out at you?
- Making an idol of something is not necessarily a physical process but is certainly a spiritual one. It means imagining and trusting anything to deliver the control, security, significance, satisfaction, and beauty that only the real God can give. It means trusting a good thing into an ultimate thing. Vroegop lists a series of heart idols that he draws from Lamentations 4. **Is there an idol on this list that are you tempted to worship? Why is that idol so attractive to you?**
 - 1.) The Idol of **Financial Security**

"How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed!" (4:1)
Suffering reveals that the security of money or fear of financial loss can easily become our functional "gods" (126).
 - 2.) The Idol of **Relationships**

"The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen pots" (4:2)
Suffering reveals how much we believe people can—and should—fix the problems around us (128).
 - 3.) The Idol of an **Ideal Society**

"The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them" (4:4)
Suffering reveals disillusionment, disgust, prayerlessness, hardness, and disappointment we have with the world (130).
 - 4.) The Idol of **Spiritual Leadership**

"This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous" (4:13)
Suffering reveals our inordinate trust in spiritual leaders (134).
 - 5.) The Idol of **Spiritual Optimism**

"For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, and no hands were wrung for her" (4:6)
Suffering reveals how much we believe we have earned or deserve, and how little we know of the grace of God (134).

- What are some verses in Lamentations 4 that refer to the **actions of God**? What do these verses **tell us about God**? Do you see **evidences of God's grace and mercy** in this passage?
- The Lord poured out His wrath on Zion (4:11), and we know that He used the wicked Babylonians to lay siege to the city ([Jeremiah 52:4, 12-13](#)). How do we **reconcile the goodness of God and the horrible things** that happened to His people at the hands of their enemies? **Is God just** in punishing His people in this way? **Should we be scared of God's punishment** if we sin? Why or why not?
- Every idol we make fails. Human wealth, relationships, societies, leaders, and hopes all miserable substitutes for God. In fact, they will undo and enslave us. Jesus is not like our idols. **Read [Hebrews 4:14-16](#) and [7:26-28](#)**. What are some of the ways **Jesus is greater than our idols**?
- God will not spare the guilty & justice must be accomplished (4:22). How does this verse lead us to **look for the person and work of Jesus Christ**? Why do Christians **expect favor from God**, rather than punishment and exile? **Read [II Corinthians 5:21](#) for further insight**.

Questions for Children

For those of you who are parents or have young children in your life, here are questions to ask as you read the Bible together.

- What is an **idol**?
- What is one idol that **Jeremiah points out in Lamentations 4**?
- We all have things we are **tempted to trust more than God**. Can you think of an **example**?
- Why is **Jesus better** than an idol?

Pray & Lament

- *Ask God to mercifully expose the idols of our hearts*
- *Lament the attraction and tyranny of those idols*
- *Ask God to captivate us with the beauty & greatness of Jesus Christ*
- *Thank God for His mercy and favor in light of the Cross of Christ*

During this summer, we encourage you to try writing out some of your laments to God. Keep a journal or use some of the space in this guide to write any things in your life or in the world that lead you to lament. Then spend some time honestly bringing those concerns before God.