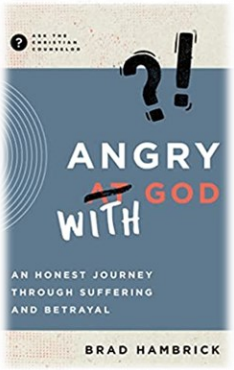
Learning the Lost Art of Lament Conference

For Christians who walk away from their faith, what is the number one reason? The answer is pain and suffering. The death of a child, a friend with cancer, the betrayal of a spouse, going through a season of prolonged suffering… these are the things that cause people to question their faith.



How do we help people prepare for these all too frequent experiences? We teach them to lament. Many of us are surprised that the Bible has more psalms of lament than psalms of praise. God knew how badly we would need to lament and invites us to bring him our prayers in the minor key (music metaphor).

The *Learning the Lost Art of Lament* conference provides a framework for learning to bring our pain to God. It articulates the unhealthy ways we often try to process our grief and invites you into an honest, psalm-like dialogue with God about the hardships of life in a broken world.

Session One: Your Pain Is Not a Riddle. Oh, how we wish suffering were a *riddle*. If it were, an *answer* could strip suffering of its ability to so deeply impact our lives. There is no question we ask in our suffering more than, "Why?" There is nothing as hurtful as people's attempt to guess at the answer. In this session, we learn to view suffering as a *journey* instead of a *riddle*. Yes, on any journey, we learn a great deal. But this session unpacks the difference between hurt (deep sorrow) and heresy (false beliefs) as we grapple with the impact of suffering.

Session Two: Bringing God the Gray that Flashes Red. If emotions were a box of crayons, we would expect grief to always be gray. We get surprised and alarmed when grief has flashes of red (i.e., anger). In moments of angry-grief, we feel like we teleported from sufferer to sinner; from receiving God's compassion to needing to repent. We're not sure we can bring our hot pain that cries out, "This is not the way it's supposed to be!" to God and be met with comfort. In this session, we use the template of Psalm 44 to process grief that expresses itself as anger.

Session Three: Learning the Value of Less Innocent Faith. Grief changes us. We often don't like those changes. Grief makes us less innocent. But the opposite of innocence doesn't have to be jaded or cynical. It can be mature. We can grapple with the ramifications of living in a broken world in a way that makes us wiser and more grounded. In this session, we learn to value the less innocent faith that lament produces by tracing the experience of grief through the creations-fall-redemption-sanctification-glorification movements of the gospel.

Optional: Q&A – Often churches add a Question-and-Answer time to these three sessions. It is wonderful to have pastors or other church leaders participate in a panel discussion. Having the voice of church leaders in the Q&A can be an effective way to help church members assimilate and apply what they have learned.

Optional: Sunday Sermon or Final Session – *Making Peace with Romans 8:28 (Romans 8:25-28).* In hard seasons of life, Christians often fear the trite application of Romans 8:28. But Paul does not sprint to this great promise of God's faithfulness. He walks patiently toward this truth because he knows the road of those who need it is arduous. This sermon articulates many of our misconceptions about suffering and helps us gain a greater felt sense of what it means for God to be near the broken hearted (Psalm 34:18).

The *Learning the Lost Art of Lament* conference is designed to be easy for your church to host and provides members with a way to think wisely about suffering, grief, and how to care for loved ones facing hardship. If your church is interested in hosting this conference, please visit www.bradhambrick.com/events to identify dates that may be available and to download my FAQ sheet for scheduling external events.