PSALMS OF LAMENT

Supplemental Digital Content

for

How Do Adolescents Develop Faith and How Can Nurses Help?

By Janice M. Haley, *Journal of Christian Nursing,* 2013,Volume 30, No. 3

Theologian Walter Brueggemann in his book *Praying the Psalms: Engaging scripture and the life of the Spirit* 2nd ed.(2007, Eugene, OR: Cascade), shares that the Psalms express with boldness, a common state of disequilibrium, invoking God with eloquence and passion. In other words, when a person is in disequilibrium, living at the edge of life and sensitive to hurts, the “primitive passions” from elation to despair are opportunities for one to turn toward God.

One tool that may be introduced by the nurse or nurse practitioner to encourage expression of feelings during periods of disorientation is writing a personal *Psalm of Lament* to God. Many adolescents experiment with poetry writing; the psalm of lament is a poem written to God with some specific aspects. The first is a calling out to God. Other components are verbalizing the complaint/lament, stating one’s belief/trust in God, demanding a resolution, trying to motivate God and finally, assurance of being heard. Frequently the psalm waxes and wanes back and forth between the complaint and petitioning or demanding a resolution until the writer has completely exhausted feelings of the complaint; the lament may end with a release of the complaint to God (Brueggemann, 2007). Examples of biblical psalms of lament are Psalm 6 and 13.

Below is a psalm of lament I wrote during a difficult time in my life.

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**Song of Lament One**

Oh God, where are you? I wander amidst the shock and horror

So young, so innocent, so loving…Taken from my arms… from family.

I cry…and I cry! It is not fair!

I prayed you take me….Thy will be done.

The world has stopped turning. No song of the bird do I hear.

I cannot breathe.

The twinkle in my eye is but the glistening of the sun upon my tears.

Where are you my God? Why do I not feel you close at this time?

For I am your faithful child

Worshiping, praying, as far back as my memory begins.

My heart is bursting full of pain, cracking, broken apart

You have taken me as a lion has chased and caught its spirited prey,

In the tight clench of its jaw, thrashing it from side to side until it is too weary

All is dark.

How much longer? Rescue me, my God!

Only you can mend my heart, heal me, rekindle the flame.

Only you can save me

I surrender….

I surrender,

I call you by name…Heavenly Father, Jesus, most Holy Spirit

You come,

You surround me with bright, soft, warm, gentle light

I call on you day and night,

I sit in silence… You are with me

I look for you in new places

I hear a word…

a spark is kindled.

Another place, another person, another creature,

Another word

the flame grows brighter.

My heart has grown to new, brighter dimensions

My eyes, my ears are open

You are with me, we are one

I am breathing…..

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