

# Sufficient to Counsel

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by Rod Fillinger

This past Sunday I preached from [Psalm 55](#) a sermon entitled “Sufficient to Counsel.” We examined Psalm 55 as a case study for how David called upon God, petitioned him, and expected him to act because of God’s nature and character. David cried out of the extreme anguish of betrayal by a close friend – one with whom he used to enjoy close fellowship together in the house of God (55:14). But the lament also recognizes the hope that we have in God. We see God’s nature, his character, and his deliverance from a broken world of sin through the living Word, Jesus Christ, and his written Word, the Bible. While we are not adequate in and of ourselves to guide people through the problems of broken lives and bodies living in a broken world because of sin, Scripture is sufficient to guide us to Christ who is the hope who holds the answers to life’s brokenness.

Biblical counseling seeks to point people to these answers in Scripture. In one sense, counseling occurs when one person who has questions, problems, and trouble comes to another who has answers, solutions and help. But these answers, solutions and help are always given out of a view of reality, the world, and what is wrong with us. For the Christian, this view should come from the Word of God. In it God provides the answers to what it means to be a human being, what is wrong with us, and what the solution to our problems is. Unlike secular counselors, psychologists or psychiatrists who test theories or methodologies, the biblical counselor must speak truthfully and accurately or risk misrepresenting God’s Word and his character or risk the wrath of God ([Job 42:7](#)).

Psalm 55 is a psalm of lament. Lament is not a word we use much in our culture. What do we mean by lament? Because of sin, life is broken. Our existence in God’s created realm is not as he intended it to be. We experience pain, hurt, anger, rage, sorrow, depression, even physical illness resulting from mental, emotional and spiritual anguish. There have been studies done in the field of neuroscience that monitor brain activity. Emotional distress registers the same type of activity that a physical injury, like the breaking of a bone, registers. Of course, for years we have referred to this in the expression, “I feel like my heart is breaking.”

In Scripture, we have laments recorded for us as men and women wrestle with the pain and disappointment of life. From Hannah’s cry over her barrenness, to Jeremiah’s lamentations over the rebellion-produced exile, to Christ’s cry of anguish on the cross, we see lament in the pages of Scripture. We see lament throughout the psalms, particularly in Book II, and depending upon how you count them, as many as 65 or 67 of the psalms are psalms of lament. And yet, these psalms of lament,

that are the cries of God's people, were sung or recited together. This was not a lonely, individualistic, lamenting. It was family coming together and crying out to God.

The cries of God's people are answered definitively in Jesus Christ. Jesus provides forgiveness. He underwent the ultimate lament, crying out as he was forsaken by God on the cross, so that we need not lament separation from God. And yet, for a time, we still endure lament in our lives. Laments may be an embarrassment to some Christians, but they were a normal part of Israel's praise and worship – which is what the psalms were all about.

In [\*Affirmations and Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling\*](#), part of the Biblical Counseling Coalition's Confessional Statement, they set forth the goal of biblical counseling. "The goal of biblical counseling is spiritual, relational, and personal maturity as evidenced in desires, thoughts, motives, actions, and emotions that increasingly reflect Jesus (Ephesians 4:17-5:2). We believe that such personal change must be centered on the person of Christ. We are convinced that personal ministry centered on Christ and anchored in Scripture offers the only lasting hope and loving help to a fallen and broken world."

The statement also notes that it must be grounded in the Word of God, centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, based upon the work of the Holy Spirit and prayer, and significantly for our individualistic culture of today, rooted in the life of the church. It states, "We believe that we best reflect the Trinity as we live and grow in community ([John 17](#); [Ephesians 4](#)). Sanctification is not a self-improvement project, but a process of learning to love and serve God and others. Wise counseling embeds personal change within God's community – the church – with all God's rich resources of corporate and interpersonal means of grace ([1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)). We believe that the church should be both the center and the sender of Gospel-centered counseling ([Romans 15:14](#))."

Laments, in Scripture and in life, point us to Christ as the answer. In Scripture, the Word points to the Living Word as the solution to humanities' problems. In life, we know that he is the only true hope that we can extend to hurting people as the solution. We are insufficient in ourselves, but the Canon of Scripture is sufficient to counsel and it includes laments for us as an example of how God's people have handled difficulties. They are recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be an example for us. The Apostle Paul teaches us that they are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, for training in righteousness so that the believer may be complete, equipped for every good work. Even laments like Psalm 55.