

**The Gift of
LAMENT:**
Processing Difficult
Emotions with God and in
Community

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***“...bad things happen to good people...
(in Scripture) they complain with great freedom
and at considerable length to their God.
And Scripture does not seem to regard these complaining prayers
as anything other than wisdom.”***

--Praying: Finding Our Way, by J.I. Packer

“He thought of his Mother, and he thought of the great hopes he had, and how they were all dying away, and a lump came in his throat and tears in his eyes, and he blurted out:

‘But please, please won’t you—can’t you give me something that will cure Mother?’ Up till then he had been looking at the Lion’s great feet and the huge claws on them; now, in despair, he looked up at its face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion’s eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory’s own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself.”

**--The Magician’s Nephew, by C. S. Lewis
as cited in God on Mute, by Pete Greig**

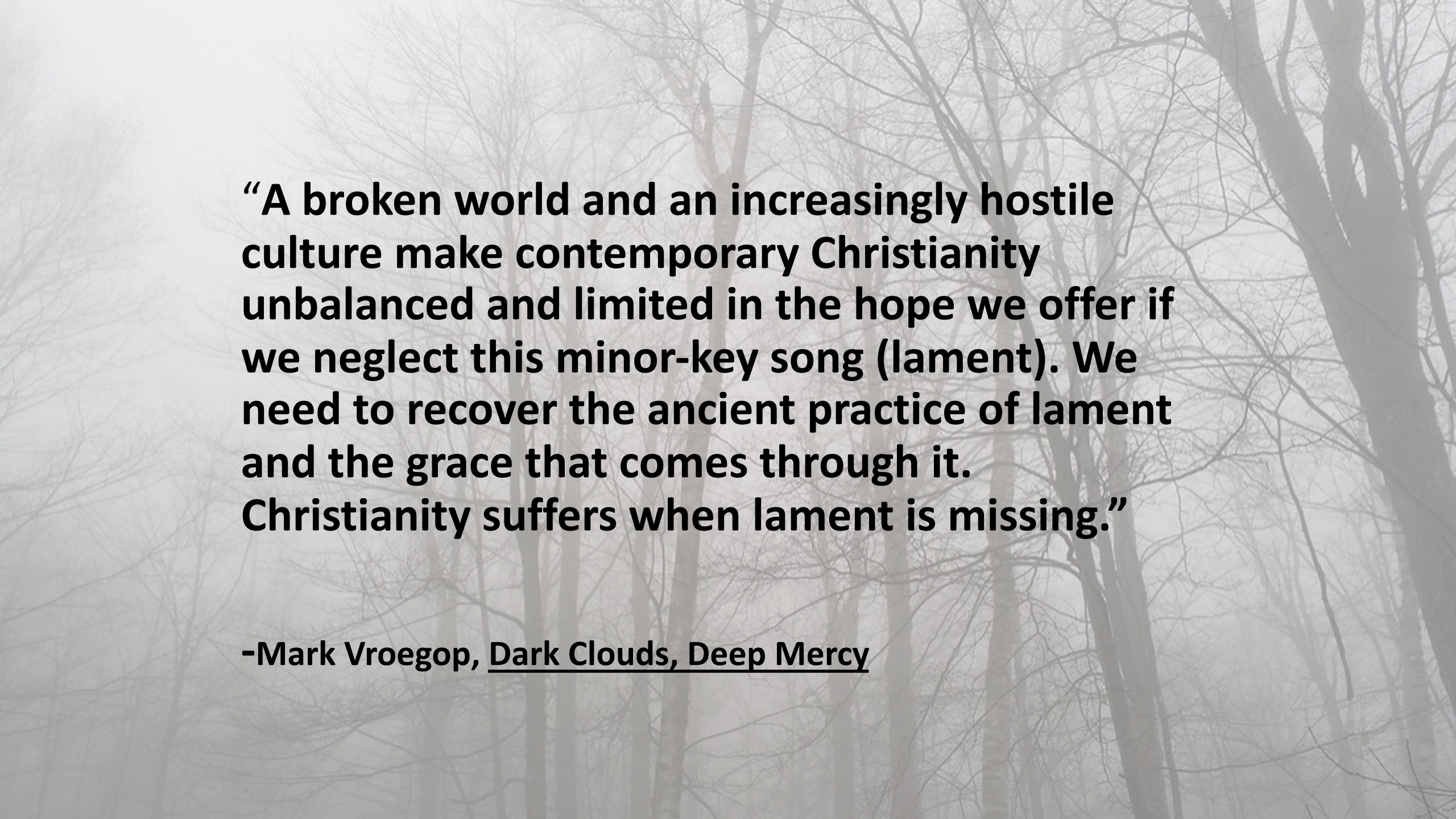
“Laments, we must realize, are God’s Word. Why are so many biblical characters shown as disappointed and angry with God? Do we seek to learn from all the other facets of their lives but this?”

People like Job, David, Jeremiah, and even Jesus, reveal to us that prayers of complaint can still be prayers of faith. They represent the last refusal to let go of the God who may seem to be absent, or worse—uncaring. If this is true, then lament expresses one of the most intimate moments of faith—not the denial of it. It is supreme honesty before a God whom my faith tells me I can trust. He encourages me to bring everything as an act of worship: my disappointment, frustration, and even my hate.”

-- Michael Card, A Sacred Sorrow

Losses: Life is Full of Them

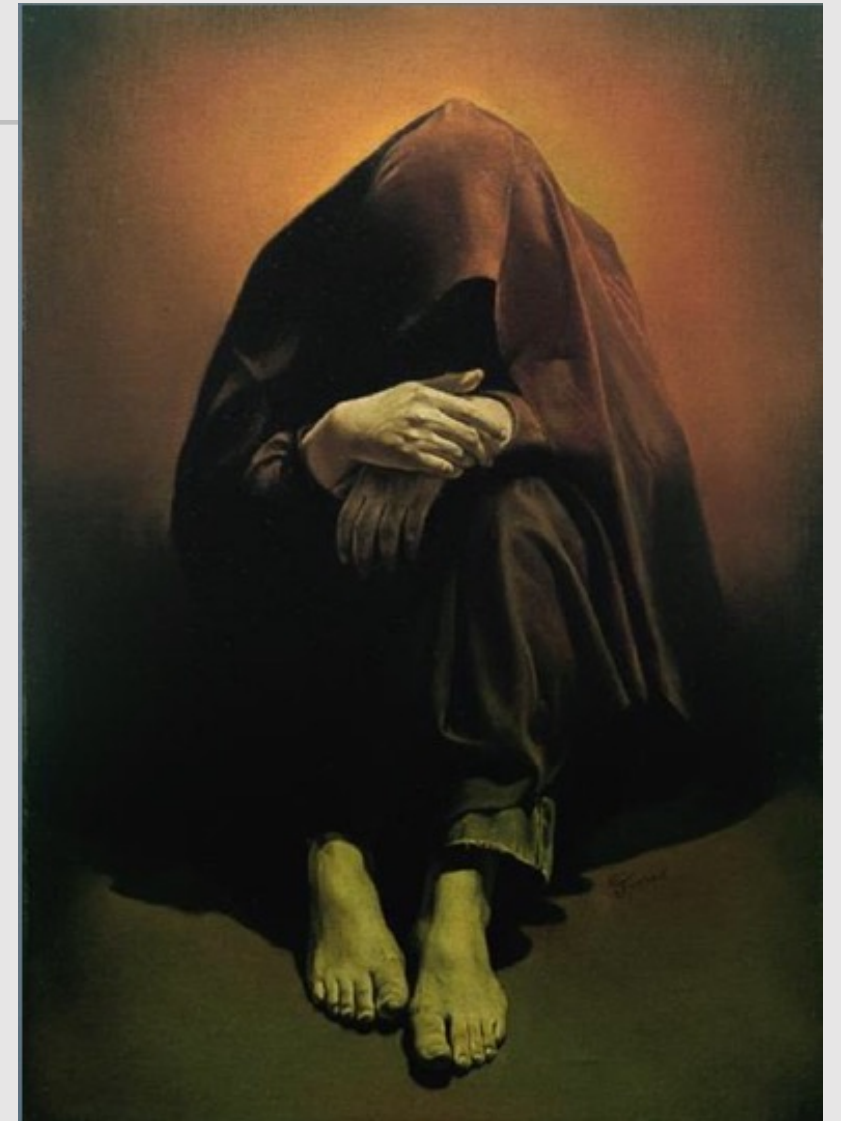
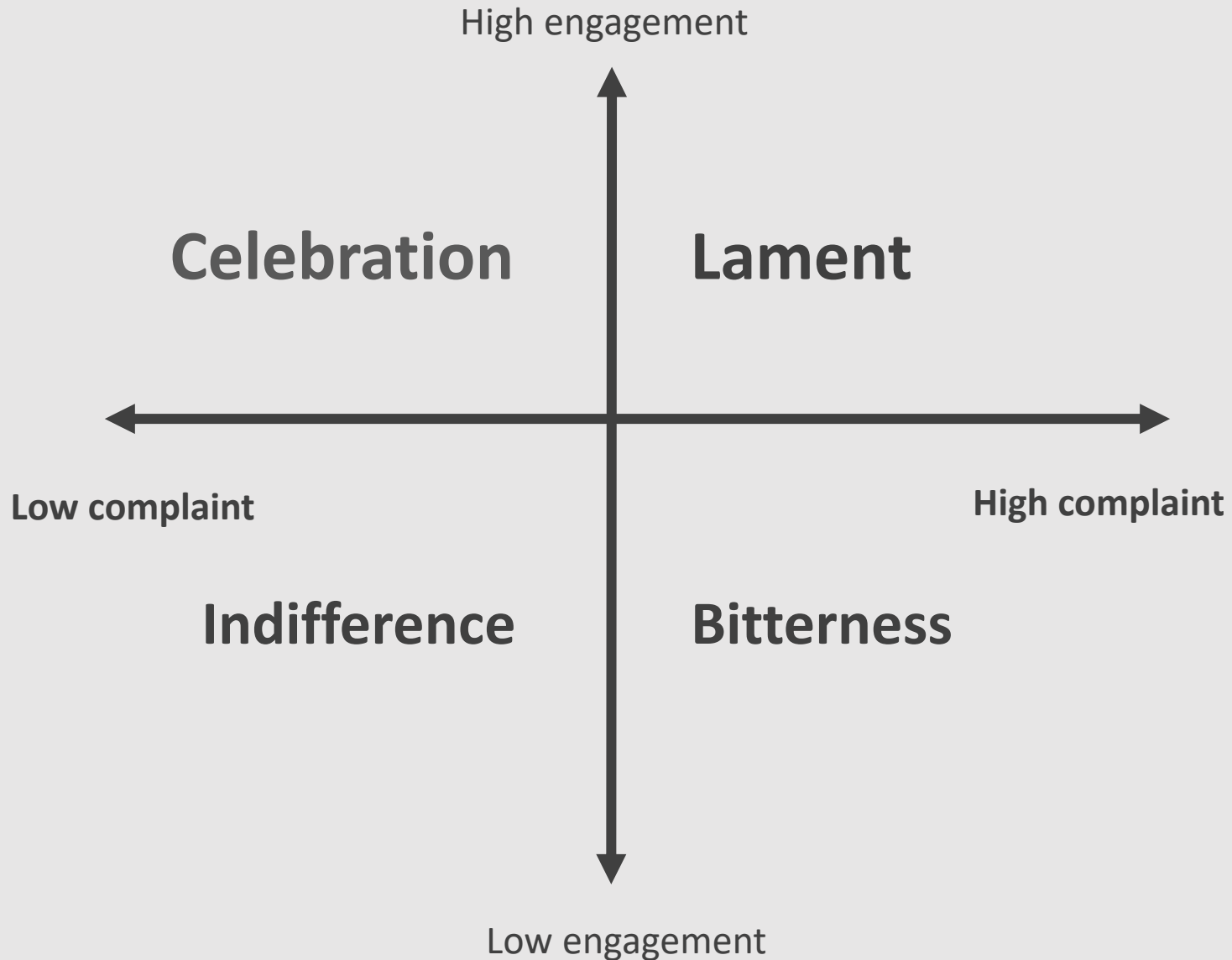
- **Loss of a loved one**
- **Loss of a dream**
- **Loss of an ideal**
- **Loss of community**
- **Loss of relationship**
- **Loss of financial stability**
- **Loss of a role**
- **Loss of reputation**
- **Loss of health**
- **Loss of mobility**
- **Loss of brain function**
- **Loss of independence**
- **Loss of family**
- **Loss of purpose**
- **Loss of safety (social media)**
- **Loss of cherished beliefs**



“A broken world and an increasingly hostile culture make contemporary Christianity unbalanced and limited in the hope we offer if we neglect this minor-key song (lament). We need to recover the ancient practice of lament and the grace that comes through it. Christianity suffers when lament is missing.”

-Mark Vroegop, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy

A matter of discipleship



Original work by R, Beck 2006
as presented by Dr. Bob Watson, Alongside

Loss, Grief and Mourning

Loss-*an ending or separation from someone or something in which there is significant meaning or bond.*

Grief-*an intense, internalized reaction to that loss.*

Mourning-*taking the grief from those losses and expressing them outside of ourselves through ritual and other forms of intentional processing.*

Losses and Grief are inevitable.

Mourning is an intentional response to
the inevitable.

What happens when we don't mourn?

We get stuck in the past, unable to move forward.

Physical illnesses

Mental illnesses

Stunted emotions

Impaired relationships

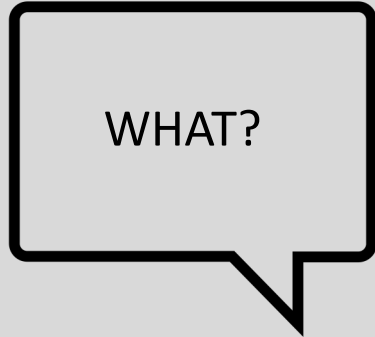
Unhealthy relationship with God

A nomadic life...always searching

What keeps us from mourning?

- Fear of pain
- Belief that once I start, I will never be able to stop
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of tools
- Social pressure
- Over spiritualizing
- Lack of time
- The over accumulation of grief
- Fear of the paradox of both gratitude and grief

SHOCK



DENIAL



ANGER



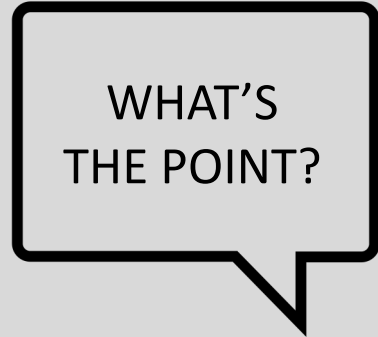
BARGAINING



The Seven Stages of Grief
(modified version of the Kubler-Ross Model)



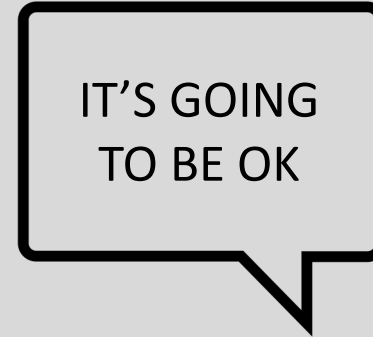
DEPRESSION



TESTING



ACCEPTANCE



**Non-linear
Fluid
Non-sequential
Unique to each
individual**

The Seven Stages of Grief
(modified version of the Kubler-Ross Model)



Orientation

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graph TD; Orientation[Orientation] --> Disorientation[Disorientation]; Disorientation --> Reorientation[Reorientation]; Reorientation --> Orientation;
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The diagram consists of three gray rounded rectangular boxes. The top box is labeled 'Orientation'. Below it are two boxes, 'Reorientation' on the left and 'Disorientation' on the right, connected by a thin horizontal line. A large white arrow curves from the 'Reorientation' box up to the 'Orientation' box, and another large white arrow curves from the 'Disorientation' box up to the 'Orientation' box, forming a cycle.

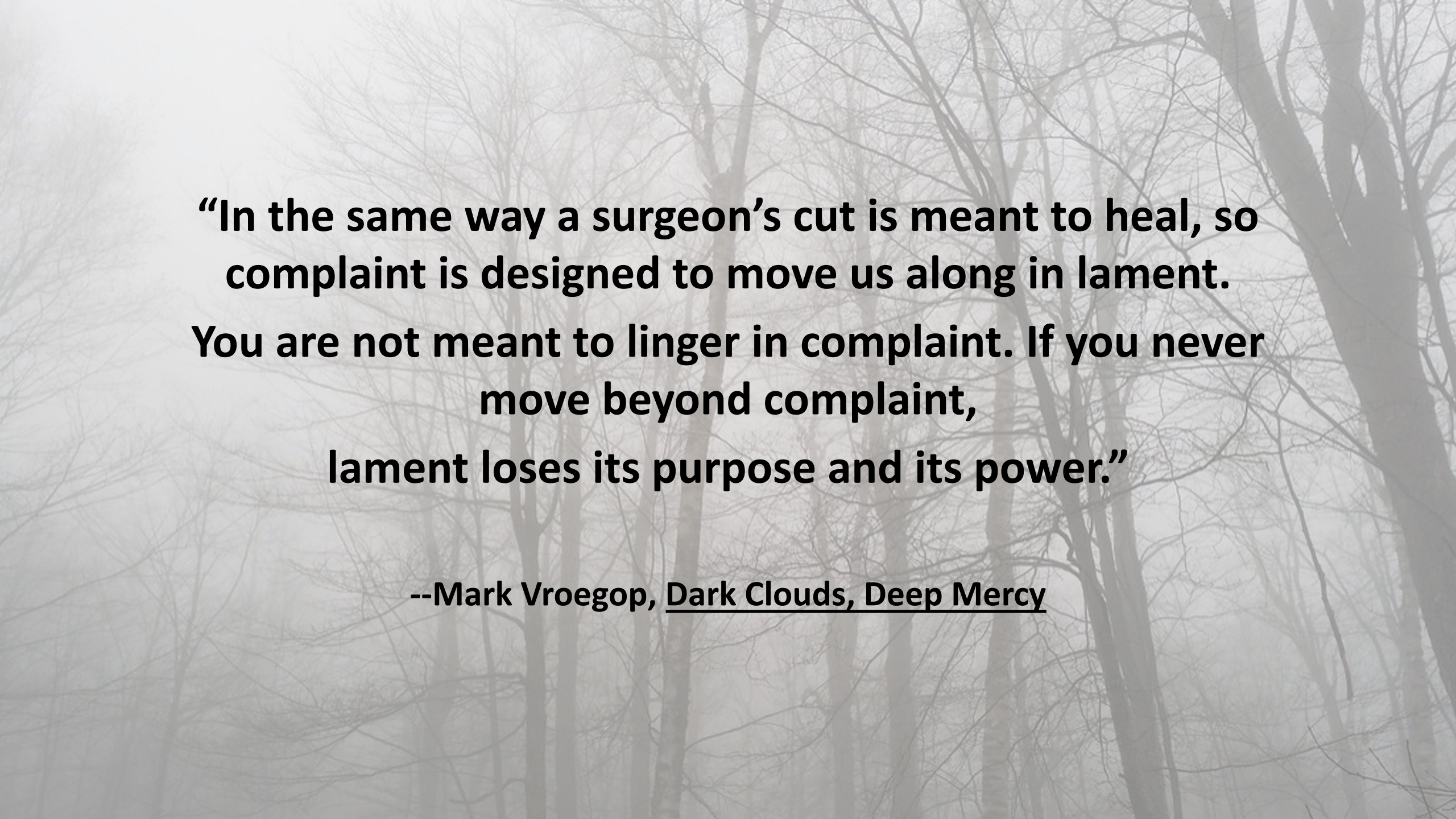
Reorientation

Disorientation

Orientation (life is going comfortably)...

"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way (**disorientation**), consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow (**reorientation**). So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."

--James 1:2-4



**“In the same way a surgeon’s cut is meant to heal, so
complaint is designed to move us along in lament.
You are not meant to linger in complaint. If you never
move beyond complaint,
lament loses its purpose and its power.”**

--Mark Vroegop, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy

“Catastrophic loss by definition precludes recovery. It will transform us or destroy us, but it will never leave us the same. There is no going back to the past...”

***I did not get over the loss of my loved ones;
Rather, I absorbed the loss into my life, until it became part of who I am. Sorrow
took up permanent residence in my soul and enlarged it...***

However painful, sorrow is good for the soul...

The soul is elastic, like a balloon. It can grow larger through suffering.

--Jerry Sittser, A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss

Three Types of Psalms

Orientation-written in the context of well-being; expressions of gratitude, praise, adoration, joy; all is right in the world.

LAMENT → **Disorientation**-written in the context of hurt, sorrow, suffering, rage, confusion, sadness; it is the soul's outcry of pain!

Reorientation-written in the aftermath of being met with new hope, new insight, the experience of transformation.

Psalms of orientation: 1,8,14,15,19,24,33,37,104,112,131,133, and 145

Psalms of disorientation:

13, 32,35,49,50,51,73,74,79,81,86, 88, 90, 109, 130, 137, 143

Psalms of re-orientation:

23, 27, 29, 30, 34, 40, 47, 65, 66, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 113,
114, 117, 124, 135, 138, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150

as categorized by Walter Brueggeman

Basic elements of lament

Complaint-a cry for help; an honest description of what is happening or has happened.

Request-our appeal to God. What I want Him to do!

Confidence-speaking out loud who we know God to be, what He has promised to do and what He has done in the past.

Praise-expressions of trust that our prayers have been heard and our hope that God will answer, drawing on past experiences or the experiences of others.

Writing a Personal Lament

Krispin Mayfield, Attached to God

1. Tell God something you wish was different in your life, in your family, in your ministry setting, in the world.
2. Tell God what you feel when you think about this issue.
3. Recall a time in your life or someone else's when God intervened.
4. Ask God to step in and address this problem.
5. Tell God you're confident that your prayer has been heard. (Reaffirm faith)
6. Praise or recognize one of God's attributes or characteristics based on your past or present experience.

A Model for Corporate Lament

Dr. Bob Watson, Alongside

Address (begin dialogue with God)

Lament (state the problem/situation)

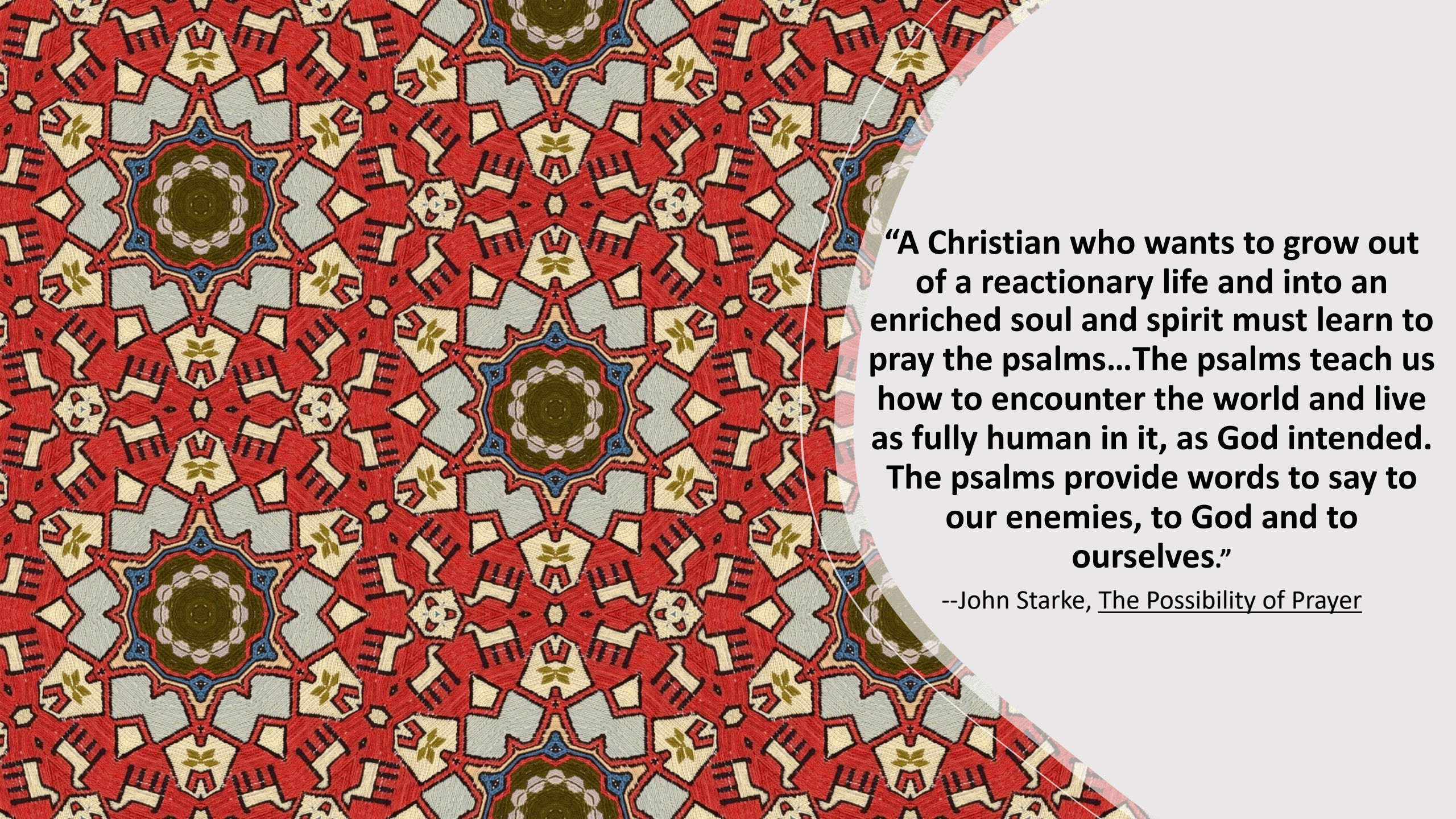
Confession of trust (what is true about God)

Prayer/Petition (request made known)

Motivation (why should God act?)

Vow/praise (thanks to God)





“A Christian who wants to grow out of a reactionary life and into an enriched soul and spirit must learn to pray the psalms...The psalms teach us how to encounter the world and live as fully human in it, as God intended. The psalms provide words to say to our enemies, to God and to ourselves.”

--John Starke, [The Possibility of Prayer](#)