

**THE OPEN  
BIBLE  
FIND HOPE**



**Bible**Society

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## A Message from Grant Thomson CEO, Bible Society Australia

Dear friend

As we find ourselves in these challenging times, we need God's word more than ever before. We could be overwhelmed by worry, by grief, by despair, but then we remember that we have a God who will never leave or forsake us, and who is always good. We have a God who makes a way for us through the darkest of valleys.

In God and in his word we can find reassurance, hope and peace. In such uncertain and turbulent times, we can find comfort in a God who never changes.

We have created this small book of big hope, selections of Scripture accompanied by thoughts from people across our BSA family, that we pray will lead you to open the Bible and draw you closer to our loving Father.

We have chosen a pattern of lament. Lamentations 3:22–23 tells us: 'Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.'

We turn to God and cast our cares on him, and he relieves us and brings us up to a place of praise. Our God is not distant, nor is he indifferent to our cries of pain and confusion. It is with confidence that we can give him the anguish of our pain: 'Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11: 28). Our prayer for you is that you will find that rest.

Whether you are a long-time or new supporter, a Koorong customer or an *Eternity* subscriber, please accept this as our gift, from our family to yours. We offer it as a thank you for your support as we seek to provide God's word to people all over the world.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Grant', followed by a period.

## Lament

The scene from the garden of Gethsemane is one of the most poignant and shocking in Scripture. Jesus is anxious, distraught and prostrate on the ground. It's clear he doesn't want to die and deal with what is in front of him.

Past struggles have helped prepare Jesus for this one; he has a pattern of turning to God when life begins to overwhelm him – Luke 5:16 tells us that Jesus often withdrew to pray – and now is no different.

In his deep pain and distress, Jesus cries out to God and begs that his death be avoided and for his circumstances to be changed. And in response to this desperate cry, God is seemingly silent at best, or at worst, says no – he will not change Jesus' circumstances.

And for all of us who have gone through times of tremendous pain and distress, times of God being silent and of saying no to our desperate longings, Jesus' prayer, as uncomfortable as it is, is also a deep source of comfort. Jesus' prayer, perhaps the most profound lament in all of Scripture thus far (and it will only ever be outweighed by the desperate cry of Jesus from the cross), serves as a model for expressing honest pain and desire, while at the same time making a commitment to accept whatever God brings.

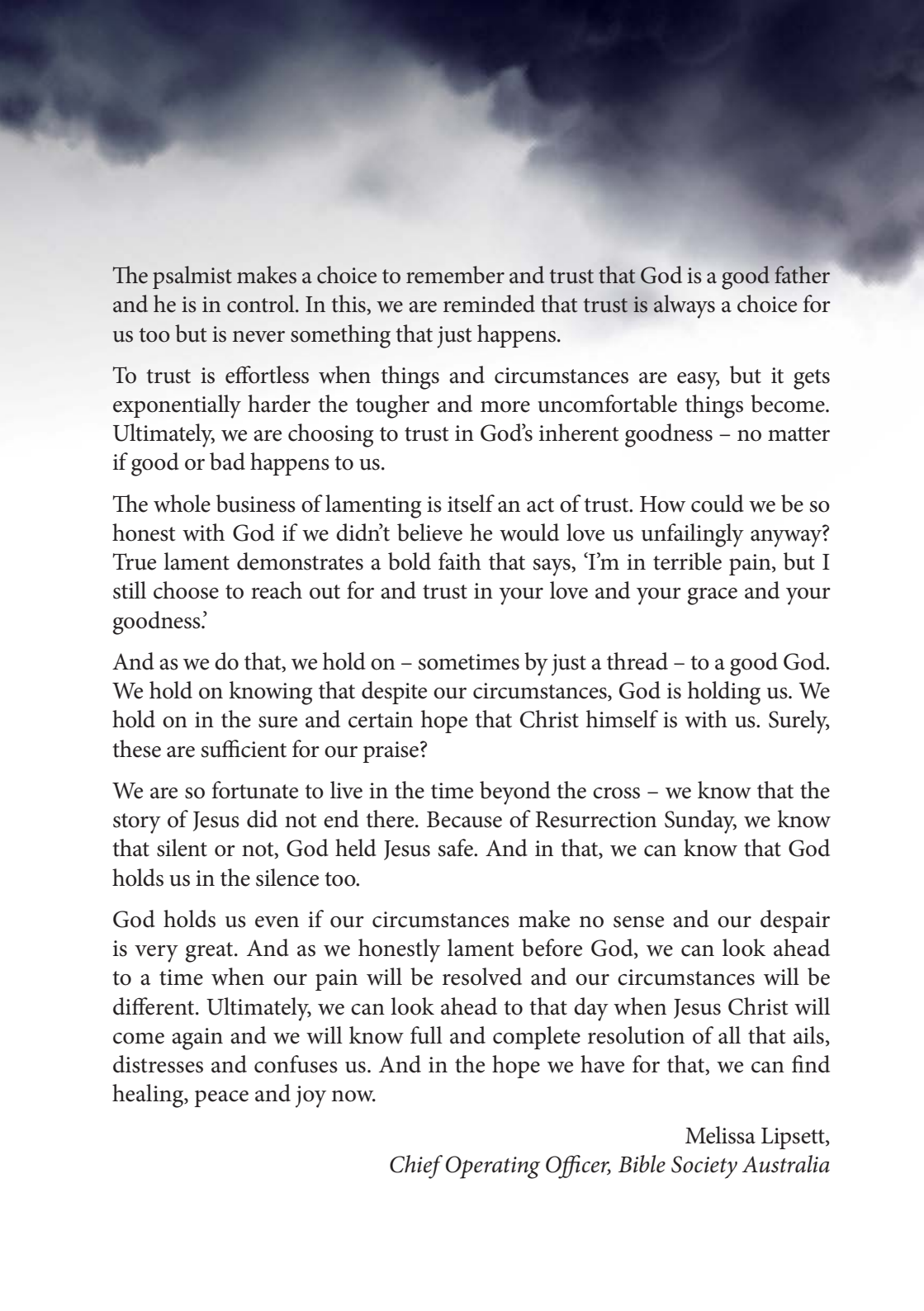
This is a pattern of healthy lament; that we turn to God in our anguish and distress, we honestly share our deepest complaints and desires, we quite rightly petition him to bring change to the circumstances that grieve us, but then, despite the pain, we make a choice to trust in him for the outcome that he chooses.

We see this same pattern in any of the great psalms of lament:

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

But here comes the turning point:

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me. (Selected verses from Psalm 13.)



The psalmist makes a choice to remember and trust that God is a good father and he is in control. In this, we are reminded that trust is always a choice for us too but is never something that just happens.

To trust is effortless when things and circumstances are easy, but it gets exponentially harder the tougher and more uncomfortable things become. Ultimately, we are choosing to trust in God's inherent goodness – no matter if good or bad happens to us.

The whole business of lamenting is itself an act of trust. How could we be so honest with God if we didn't believe he would love us unfailingly anyway? True lament demonstrates a bold faith that says, 'I'm in terrible pain, but I still choose to reach out for and trust in your love and your grace and your goodness.'

And as we do that, we hold on – sometimes by just a thread – to a good God. We hold on knowing that despite our circumstances, God is holding us. We hold on in the sure and certain hope that Christ himself is with us. Surely, these are sufficient for our praise?

We are so fortunate to live in the time beyond the cross – we know that the story of Jesus did not end there. Because of Resurrection Sunday, we know that silent or not, God held Jesus safe. And in that, we can know that God holds us in the silence too.

God holds us even if our circumstances make no sense and our despair is very great. And as we honestly lament before God, we can look ahead to a time when our pain will be resolved and our circumstances will be different. Ultimately, we can look ahead to that day when Jesus Christ will come again and we will know full and complete resolution of all that ails, distresses and confuses us. And in the hope we have for that, we can find healing, peace and joy now.

Melissa Lipsett,  
*Chief Operating Officer, Bible Society Australia*





# Turning to God

*'The LORD is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.  
He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;  
he hears their cry and saves them.'*

Psalm 145:18–19

Have you, like me at times, been wondering lately where is God in your life? Why does he appear to be silent? Then ask yourself: 'have you been seeking him, have I been calling upon his holy and righteous name?' Have I been drawing near to God in prayer and the study of his word?

Scripture declares that the Lord is near to those who call upon him and those who call upon him in truth. Are you calling upon the Lord and doing it in truth with a pure heart, no matter your circumstances?

When we call upon the Lord in truth, we can run to him with confidence knowing that we will find him to be our refuge and strength; our very present help in the times of trouble.

*David, Koorong, Sydney*





# Turning to God

*'Do not be anxious about anything,  
but in every situation, by prayer and petition,  
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'*


Philippians 4:6

Give it all to God – get it out of your head  
and heart and give it to the one who can deal  
with it. The worry about your aging parents,  
the kids' education, the kids' health, your health,  
everyone's health. Should I wash everything?  
Touch nothing? Give it all over to him  
and let his peace wash over you.

*Susannah, Publishing, Melbourne*



# Turning to God



*'Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.'*

James 4:8–10

We don't always remember to draw near to God in the first instance, do we? Instead, we find ourselves double-minded, tantrum-throwing and impatient. And then, in a moment of clarity, we remember, and it's time (again!) to humble ourselves, bend our knee and let God be God.

*Kylie, Eternity, Sydney*



# Complaint

*'As for me, I call to God,  
and the LORD saves me.  
Evening, morning and noon  
I cry out in distress,  
and he hears my voice.'*

Psalm 64:16–17

God wants to be close to us in both the good times and the bad. He longs to be the one we turn to when everything else falls apart. He is more than able to take the weight of our sorrow, hopelessness and despair. We can cry out to him, casting our cares on him because he cares for us.

*Louise Sherman, Remote & Indigenous Mission, Adelaide*



# Complaint

*'Look down from heaven and see,  
from your lofty throne, holy and glorious.  
Where are your zeal and your might?  
Your tenderness and compassion  
are withheld from us.'*

Isaiah 63:15

Does God seem distant? Does the gap between  
hope and reality yawn especially wide just now?  
Time to 'get up in God's face' about it.  
Be who you say you are, Lord!!

*Natasha, CPX, Sydney*





# Complaint

*'My soul is in deep anguish.  
How long, Lord, how long?'*

Psalm 6:3

Yes, we can be as candid and vulnerable with God  
as these words reflect. And we know he hears,  
he cares, and he will deliver us...in his time  
and in his way.

*Scott, Fundraising, Sydney*





# Petition

*'During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.'*

Hebrews 5:7

Even God's incarnate Son regularly petitioned his heavenly Father. He was not afraid to ask for the desires of his heart. We rejoice that God not only hears the prayers of his Son Jesus, but he hears our prayers and petitions as well. If Jesus regularly did this, what stops us from doing so in both the good and the bad times? We can trust that God will hear our prayers and is always listening.

*Rick, Church Relations, Perth*





# Petition

*'Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.'*

Daniel 9:17–19

It's easy to make prayer all about us. Daniel's heartfelt prayer for a nation in crisis is all about God's undeserved grace – God listens and acts, not because of what we do but because of his great mercy. Let us bow before our gracious God in humility, acknowledging all our sins and be assured that whatever the result, it will always be according to his sovereign will and for his glory.

*Liza, Finance, Sydney*







# Petition

*'Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you;  
he will never let the righteous be shaken.'*

Psalm 55:22

The Psalms are very permission-giving. The various writers rail against God and the world. Some are despondent, angry and/or frightened. Their willingness to cry out to God shows the kind of relationship they had with their Creator.

The Psalms often include the '...and yet'. And yet despite my anger/fear/sadness/grief, God remains constant. As we move through our emotions, the Creator of the universe also wants to hear our desires and our concerns, for God will sustain us. Through prayer, we will find rest in God's peace 'that passes all understanding'.

*Penny, Communications/Marketing, Melbourne*





# Praise

*‘Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Saviour and my God.’*

Psalm 42:11

I am desperately clinging to these words. They are my steadfast reminder that praise and lament are bound intimately together. This is the nature of life and faith; in sorrow I praise, and in triumph I lament. Our hope exceeds our experience: I despair, and yet I praise. Even in the midst of uncertainty, God has given us a reason to sing his glory, to give ourselves to the very joy of finding true reality in applauding the ‘King of Heaven’ for who he is, and for who he has made us to be.

*Jayden, Donor Care, Melbourne*





# Praise

*'LORD, you are my God;  
I will exalt you and praise your name,  
for in perfect faithfulness  
you have done wonderful things,  
things planned long ago.'*

Isaiah 25:1

I am a shameless praise seeker, and God spiritually chastens me when I read Isaiah 25:1, reminding me that everything is from him.

God demonstrates his perfect faithfulness when he deploys his blueprint for my life and yours.

While I may not understand or agree with the direction, he would never lead me astray.

I've taken him for granted, behaving like a petulant, self-entitled child – yet God is faithful.

It's easy in a fit of prideful frustration to resist praising God.

If that happens, reflect on Isaiah 25:1

Remember the good things that God blessed you with.

Reflect on how God used bad moments to change, challenge and grow you.

Then praise him!

*Nicole, Database/Donor Support Corporate Services*





# Praise

*'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'*

1 Peter 1:3

Give thanks to God for his magnificent gift to us in Jesus. He has brought his people out of sin and into a glorious living hope! Praise his faithfulness; praise his kindness; praise his goodness, forevermore.

*Heather, Mission, Sydney*







## Praise the LORD

*Praise God in his sanctuary;  
praise him in his mighty heavens.  
Praise him for his acts of power;  
praise him for his surpassing greatness.  
Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,  
praise him with the harp and lyre,  
praise him with timbrel and dancing,  
praise him with the strings and pipe,  
praise him with the clash of cymbals,  
praise him with resounding cymbals.*

*Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.*

Psalm 150

The Sovereign Lord  
is my strength;  
he makes my feet  
like the feet  
of a deer,  
he enables me  
to tread on  
the heights.

Habakkuk 3:17-19.

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