

## **The Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, Teacher's Guide**

### **Lesson 24: Great Is Your Faithfulness; Restore Us, O Lord**

#### **Lamentations 3:1–5:22**

##### **Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)**

Doctrinally, these chapters reveal the steadfast love and faithfulness of God shining at the very center of His people's darkest hour. The hinge of the whole book, indeed its high point, is 3:22–23: the Lord's steadfast love never ceases, His mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning, great is His faithfulness. The teacher must let this be the high point of the entire study. Here the God who justly judged Jerusalem is shown to be the same God whose compassions never fail. The lesson must hold together what Romans 11:22 calls the kindness and the severity of God: He does not cast off forever, and He does not afflict from His heart, even when His judgments are real.

The lesson must also teach the nature of biblical hope. The poet's hope is not optimism about circumstances; the ruins are unchanged. His hope rests on the unchanging character of God, deliberately called to mind in the dark (3:21). This is hope that chooses to remember God's faithfulness when feelings run the other way, and that learns to wait quietly for the Lord's salvation (3:26). The teacher should distinguish this sturdy, God-grounded hope from shallow positivity, and should connect repentance and restoration: the cry is not merely for trouble to lift but to be restored to the Lord Himself (3:40–42; 5:21).

Beyond the doctrine, these chapters aim at the formation of the student into steadfast, hopeful faith. The goal is believers who can grieve honestly and still call God's mercies to mind, who can wait quietly rather than force their own deliverance, who repent genuinely and pray for restoration with empty but lifted hands. Above all, the teacher should point forward: the mercies new every morning find their fullest and final expression in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom God's steadfast love is poured out once for all, so that we may draw near to the throne of grace and find mercy in our time of need.

##### **Question 1**

##### **Student Question:**

*Read 3:1–18. The poet describes affliction in unflinching terms: walled in, weighed down, his prayer shut out, his soul bereft of peace. Why does the Holy Spirit give us such honest words for the depths of suffering, and what does it tell us about God that He welcomes this kind of raw lament into His Word?*

##### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Begin by letting the darkness of 3:1–18 be dark. The poet does not flinch: “I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath.” He piles up images of confinement and crushing, of a prayer that seems shut out, of teeth ground on gravel. The teacher should resist the urge to rush to the comfort of verse 22. The hope shines so brightly precisely because the book first lets us sit in the dark.

Marvel that the Holy Spirit inspired words like these. God did not give us a Bible that only knows how to sing on the mountaintop. He gave us inspired language for the valley, for the night when even prayer feels blocked. This tells us something tender about God: He is not embarrassed by our anguish, and He is willing to put our deepest groans into His own holy Word.

Help students see that honest lament is not the opposite of faith; it can be an act of faith. The poet brings his suffering to God rather than turning away from Him. Even his complaint is spoken in God’s direction. That is the posture the whole book commends.

Land it gently. For anyone in the room who is in such a season, the message is that they are not faithless for hurting this much, and they are not alone. God has given them words, and He has given them His presence in the dark.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The Holy Spirit’s gift of honest, raw words for the depths of suffering (3:1–18).
- What it reveals about God that He welcomes lament into His own Word.
- Honest lament brought to God as an act of faith, not its opposite.
- The danger of rushing past the darkness before letting it be felt.
- God’s tender willingness to share in our groaning rather than be embarrassed by it.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why is it comforting that God put words this raw into Scripture?
- How can honest lament be an expression of faith rather than its failure?
- What does God’s welcome of our anguish tell you about His heart?

### **Question 2**

#### **Student Question:**

*The poet admits, “my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is” (3:17). Have you ever reached a place where you had nearly forgotten what happiness felt like, and what did you do, or wish you had done, with God in that season?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-question follows the poet’s admission: “my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is” (3:17). It is a stunning confession from an inspired writer. To forget what

happiness even feels like is the deep work of prolonged grief, and many believers have been there without anyone giving them permission to say so.

Help students name it honestly. Depression of spirit, the long ache after a loss, the gray seasons when joy seems like something that happens to other people, these are real, and the Bible does not scold the poet for describing them. Naming the season is the first step toward bringing it to God.

Point to what the poet does next, in the verses to come: he does not stay in the forgetting; he chooses to call something to mind. The way out begins not with a change of feeling but with a deliberate act of remembering God. We can begin to walk toward the light even before we feel it.

Be gentle and patient. The aim is not to push anyone to a quick fix but to assure them that God meets people in exactly this place, and that the path forward is to keep turning toward Him, even with empty hands and a heavy heart.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The reality of prolonged grief that nearly forgets what happiness is (3:17).
- Permission to be honest about gray, joyless seasons before God.
- The first step out: turning toward God rather than away, even before feelings change.
- Assurance that God meets His people in the depths, not only on the heights.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Have you known a season when you nearly forgot what happiness felt like?
- What helped you, or might have helped you, keep turning toward God in it?
- Why is it important to be able to name such a season honestly?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 3:19–24. At the lowest point, the poet says, “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.” What is the difference between hope that depends on changed circumstances and hope grounded in the unchanging character of God, and why does this hope hold even in the ruins?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 19–24 are the turning point of the whole book. After remembering his affliction, “the wormwood and the gall,” the poet does something deliberate: “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.” The hope does not arrive because anything improved. It arrives because he chose to remember the right thing.

Teach the difference between two kinds of hope. One kind depends on circumstances: I hope things get better. When the circumstances refuse to change, that hope collapses. The other kind rests on the character of God: His steadfast love never ceases, His mercies never end. This hope holds in the ruins because God does not change even when everything else does (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

Notice the word “portion” in verse 24: “The LORD is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him.” When everything else is stripped away, God Himself remains, and He is enough. The poet has lost almost everything, yet he can say the Lord is his portion. That is the bedrock under biblical hope.

Apply it concretely. Hope grounded in God is not a feeling we wait to receive; it is a truth we choose to stand on. Help students see that in their darkest seasons, the question is not whether they feel hopeful but whether they will lay hold of the unchanging God who is still their portion.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Hope grounded in God’s unchanging character, not in changed circumstances (3:21–24).
- The deliberate act of calling God’s mercies to mind (3:21).
- God Himself as our ‘portion,’ enough even when all else is lost (3:24).
- The unchangeableness of God as the bedrock of hope (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What is the difference between hope in circumstances and hope in God’s character?
- Why does hope grounded in God hold even when nothing improves?
- What does it mean to say, with the poet, ‘The LORD is my portion’?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*The poet chose to “call to mind” the Lord’s mercies rather than wait to feel them (3:21). What is one truth about God you most need to deliberately call to mind this week, and what practical step would help you remember it when your feelings run the other way?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-question turns the poet’s practice into a personal discipline. He did not wait to feel God’s mercy; he chose to “call to mind” what was true (3:21). Feelings often follow truth rather than lead it, so the believer learns to preach truth to the heart rather than wait on the heart to cooperate.

Help students identify the specific truth they most need to remember. For one it is that God’s love never ceases. For another, that God does not afflict from His heart. For another, that His

mercies are new every morning. Naming the one truth makes it portable, something they can carry into a hard moment.

Press toward practical means of remembering. Scripture memorized and spoken aloud, a verse on the bathroom mirror, a phone reminder at dawn, a trusted friend who will repeat the truth back to us when we cannot hold it ourselves. Remembering is a discipline with handles.

Move to something concrete. Ask each person to choose one truth about God and one practical way to call it to mind this week, especially in the moment when their feelings argue the opposite.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Calling God's truth to mind as a deliberate discipline, not a passive wish (3:21).
- Feelings often follow truth rather than lead it; preaching truth to one's own heart.
- Practical means of remembering: memorized Scripture, reminders, faithful friends.
- Choosing one portable truth to carry into hard moments.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What one truth about God do you most need to call to mind this week?
- What practical step would help you remember it when feelings argue otherwise?
- Who could help you remember the truth when you cannot hold it yourself?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 3:25–33. “The LORD is good to those who wait for him... It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD,” and yet “he does not afflict from his heart.” What does it mean to wait quietly for the Lord, and how does knowing He does not afflict willingly shape the way we endure hard seasons?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 25–33 teach the long, quiet posture of faith. “The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him... It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.” Waiting is not passive resignation; it is active trust that keeps seeking God while the answer tarries.

Teach the stunning balance of these verses. The same passage that says God may cause grief also says, “he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men” (3:32–33). God's severity is never the deepest thing about Him; His heart is mercy. He does not delight to wound.

Help students see how this shapes endurance. If we believed God afflicted from His heart, every hard season would feel like proof that He is against us. But the text says the opposite: even His discipline flows from a heart that does not enjoy our pain and aims at our good (Hebrews 12:10–11). That changes everything about how we wait.

Apply it warmly. Waiting quietly does not mean we feel nothing or ask for nothing; it means we entrust ourselves to a God whose heart toward us is good, and we refuse to take our deliverance into our own hands before His time. The waiting itself becomes a form of trust.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Waiting quietly for the Lord as active trust, not passive resignation (3:25–26).
- God does not afflict from His heart; His severity is not His deepest disposition (3:31–33).
- How knowing God's merciful heart reshapes the way we endure hard seasons (Hebrews 12:10–11).
- Refusing to seize our own deliverance before God's time as an act of faith.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean to wait quietly for the Lord without sinking into resignation?
- How does knowing God 'does not afflict from his heart' change the way you suffer?
- Why is patient waiting itself a form of trust?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*Waiting quietly for the Lord is one of the hardest disciplines of faith, especially when we want relief now. Where in your life is God calling you to wait on Him rather than force a solution, and what makes that waiting so difficult for you?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-question presses the discipline of waiting into the student's actual circumstances. Waiting may be the hardest thing God ever asks of us, because everything in us wants relief now and wants to engineer it ourselves. The poet commends waiting precisely because it is so contrary to our instincts.

Help students locate where they are tempted to force a solution: a relationship they want to fix on their timetable, a prayer they are tired of repeating, a hard providence they keep trying to wriggle out of rather than entrust to God. Naming it brings it into the light.

Distinguish godly waiting from mere passivity. Waiting on the Lord does not forbid wise action; it forbids the anxious, faithless grasping that runs ahead of God. We still pray, still act faithfully, still do the next right thing, but we leave the timing and the outcome in His hands.

Move toward the concrete. Ask each person to name one situation where God seems to be calling them to wait, and one way they could entrust the timing to Him this week rather than forcing it.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The difficulty of waiting when we want relief now and want to control it.
- Identifying where we are tempted to force solutions rather than trust God's timing.
- The difference between godly waiting and faithless passivity.
- Entrusting timing and outcome to God while still acting faithfully.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where is God calling you to wait rather than force a solution?
- What makes that waiting so hard for you in particular?
- How can you entrust the timing to God this week instead of grasping for it?

### **Question 7**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 3:40–42 and 5:21. The people say, “Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD,” and pray, “Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!” How do genuine repentance and the longing for restoration belong together, and why must we return to the Lord Himself and not merely wish our troubles away?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 40–42, together with the closing cry of 5:21, bind repentance and restoration into one motion. “Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD.” The path back is not merely a wish that the trouble would lift; it is a turning of the whole self back to God.

Teach that genuine repentance is a returning to a Person, not just a regretting of consequences. The people do not pray, ‘restore our fortunes’; they pray, “Restore us to yourself, O LORD” (5:21). The deepest restoration is reconciliation with God Himself; everything else flows from that. This is the heart of true repentance in every age, and it points forward to the gospel call to turn to God and be forgiven (Acts 3:19; Acts 2:38).

Note the order. They examine their ways, they lift up their hearts and hands to God, they confess, “We have transgressed and rebelled.” There is no excuse-making, no blaming. Honest self-examination and confession open the way for the prayer of restoration. Restoration that skips repentance is wishful thinking; repentance that despairs of restoration forgets God's mercy.

Apply it personally. Help students see that the longing for things to be made right is meant to drive us back to God Himself, where the real healing begins. We do not merely want our troubles gone; we want, most of all, to be restored to the Lord.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Repentance as returning to God Himself, not merely wishing trouble away (3:40–42; 5:21).
- Genuine self-examination and confession without excuse or blame.
- Restoration to the Lord as the deepest restoration, from which all else flows.
- The gospel pattern of turning to God for forgiveness (Acts 3:19; Acts 2:38).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why must true repentance be a return to God and not just a wish for relief?
- What is the difference between regretting consequences and turning back to the Lord?
- How do honest confession and the hope of restoration belong together?

### **Question 8**

#### **Student Question:**

*The closing prayer lifts up empty hands: “Restore us to yourself, O LORD... Renew our days as of old” (5:21). Where do you most need the Lord to restore something in your own life right now, and what would it look like to bring Him that need in honest, hopeful prayer this week?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-question takes up the great closing prayer: “Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old” (5:21). The book ends not with everything fixed but with empty hands lifted in hope. That is a deeply honest place for faith to live.

Help students name what they most long to see restored: a broken relationship, a wandering child, a faith that has grown cold, a joy that has slipped away, a habit that has wounded them and others. Restoration begins by bringing the specific need to God rather than carrying it alone.

Encourage hopeful honesty in prayer. The closing prayer of Lamentations does not pretend the ruins are gone, yet it dares to ask for renewal. That is the very shape of faith: clear-eyed about the loss, and still bold to ask God for mercy.

Move to the concrete. Ask each person to bring one specific need for restoration to God this week, with empty but lifted hands, trusting the One whose mercies are new every morning to meet them in His time.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The honesty of a faith that lifts empty hands and still asks for renewal (5:21).

- Bringing the specific need for restoration to God rather than carrying it alone.
- Hopeful honesty: clear about the loss, still bold to ask for mercy.
- Trusting the God whose mercies are new every morning to restore in His time.

### Discussion Prompts

- Where do you most need the Lord to restore something right now?
- What would it look like to bring that need to Him in honest, hopeful prayer?
- How does the closing prayer model both honesty about loss and boldness in asking?

### Question 9

#### Student Question:

*Read 3:22–23 slowly: “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” How does this single verse, set in the middle of so much sorrow, hold together God’s severity and His kindness (Romans 11:22), and how do these mercies, new every morning, point us to the fuller and final mercy revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ?*

#### Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest block of the lesson and the high point of the whole study, so the teacher should slow down and let it breathe. Read it aloud, perhaps more than once: “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (3:22–23). These words sit in the exact center of the book, surrounded on every side by sorrow, and that setting is the whole point. This is not a sunny verse from someone who has never wept; it is a torch lit in the darkest room in Scripture.

Unfold the words themselves. ‘Steadfast love’ translates the great covenant word *hesed*, God’s loyal, committed, faithful love that will not let His people go. It ‘never ceases,’ and His ‘mercies,’ His tender compassions, ‘never come to an end.’ Then comes the line that has comforted believers for thousands of years: ‘new every morning.’ Like manna in the wilderness that could not be hoarded but came fresh each dawn, God’s mercy meets us new at the start of every single day, including the days we have dreaded, including tomorrow. ‘Great is your faithfulness’ is the worshiping response: God can be counted on, all the way down.

Here the teacher must hold together what Romans 11:22 calls ‘the kindness and the severity of God.’ The same book that said the Lord ‘has become like an enemy’ (2:5) now says His mercies never end. These are not two different Gods; they are the holiness and the love of the one true God. His severity is real, His judgments just, and yet His deepest disposition toward His people is mercy that never runs dry. We must not pit these against each other. The God who is holy enough to judge sin is merciful enough to forgive it, and Lamentations refuses to let go of either truth. Indeed, the very next verses insist He ‘does not afflict from his heart’ (3:33). His kindness is not weakness, and His severity is not the last word.

Now lift students' eyes to where these mercies are finally and fully revealed. Every morning mercy in the Old Testament was a foretaste, a down payment, pointing forward to the morning when mercy itself would walk out of a tomb. In the Lord Jesus Christ, God's steadfast love is poured out not in measured daily portions only but once for all at the cross, where His justice and His mercy meet and embrace. The judgment Jerusalem tasted, and the judgment our own sin deserves, fell on Him, so that the mercy might fall on us. 'Great is your faithfulness' finds its deepest meaning in the faithful Son who bore our sin and rose again. Now, because of Him, we may 'draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need' (Hebrews 4:16).

Land this as the high point of the entire study. The same God who justly judged Jerusalem is the God whose mercies are new every morning and who, in Christ, has shown the fullest mercy of all. Whatever ashes a student is sitting in, this is the word that meets them: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. Tomorrow morning, before they have done anything to earn it, mercy will be there, fresh again, and in Christ it is theirs forever as they walk in faith. Invite them to wake tomorrow and receive it deliberately, naming God's faithfulness before the day has a chance to argue otherwise.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God's steadfast covenant love (hesed) that never ceases and mercies that never end (3:22).
- Mercies 'new every morning,' fresh each dawn like manna, meeting us before we earn them (3:23).
- Holding together the kindness and severity of God as the one holy, loving God (Romans 11:22; 3:33).
- These daily mercies as a foretaste of the fuller, final mercy revealed in Christ at the cross.
- In Christ, drawing near to the throne of grace to receive mercy and help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).
- This hope as the high point and message of the whole study: mercy meets us even in the ashes.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean to you that God's mercies are 'new every morning,' even tomorrow?
- How does this verse hold together God's severity in judgment and His unfailing kindness?
- How do these daily mercies point you to the fuller mercy God has shown in Jesus Christ?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Look back over these three chapters, from "I am the man who has seen affliction" to "his mercies... are new every morning" to "Restore us to yourself, O LORD." Name one specific way*

*the Lord Jesus is using this journey through darkness toward hope to form steadfast faith, patient waiting, or honest repentance in you this week.*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

The capstone question gathers the whole journey of these chapters: from “I am the man who has seen affliction,” through the great turn of “his mercies are new every morning,” to the closing prayer “Restore us to yourself, O LORD.” The arc moves from darkness to hope to honest petition, and it is meant to shape us, not merely to inform us.

Resist letting it stay general. Press for one specific way the Lord is forming them: a more steadfast faith that calls truth to mind in the dark, a more patient willingness to wait quietly, a more honest repentance, a more hopeful prayer for restoration.

Tie it firmly to Christ. The whole study has been moving toward the mercy that meets us new every morning, and that mercy has a face and a name. The Lord Jesus is the faithfulness of God made flesh, the One in whom God’s steadfast love is poured out forever. We are formed not by trying harder but by walking with Him, receiving His mercy fresh each day.

Invite each person to name their one thing aloud or on paper and to carry it into the week as a matter of prayer, beginning, perhaps, by waking tomorrow and deliberately receiving the mercy that is already there.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Moving from the journey through darkness to being formed by it (James 1:22).
- Christ as the faithfulness of God made flesh, in whom mercy is poured out forever.
- Formation toward steadfast faith, patient waiting, and honest repentance.
- Carrying one concrete step into the week, beginning with receiving fresh mercy each morning.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Which part of this journey from darkness to hope is the Lord pressing on you most?
- What one step of steadfast faith, patient waiting, or repentance will you take this week?
- How does walking with Jesus change the way you face tomorrow morning?