

### **Warm-up Activity or Question**

*Choose one and pursue it as a group.*

1. **Activity:** Average sleep time in the U.S. has trended up since 2019, mostly among younger adults and childless households.<sup>i</sup> The CDC recommends 7-9 hours/night. The national average for adults is ~6.8 hours/night (down from 7.9 hours in 1942)<sup>ii</sup>. Assess how your group is doing by computing your group's average estimated sleep time:
  - If you're willing, share with the group your estimated average nightly sleep time;
  - Appoint someone to write down those figures, total them up, and divide by the number of participants in order to calculate the group's average.

*So, how are we doing as a group? What are our issues?*

2. **Question.** Describe for the group:
  - A pet peeve of yours (something that others do that you dislike or disapprove of more than most folks); or
  - Something about which you are compulsive (a preference for how you do things that is more particular than that of most folks).

### **Can You Relate?**

In these chapters the great prophet Jeremiah pours out his heart in a crushingly honest review of the downfall, destruction, exile, and humiliation of the people of Judah and the city of Jerusalem; but he does so without even a hint of "I told you so."

1. **The Consequences of Covenant-Breaking.** Jeremiah provides graphic imagery of God's undoing of the covenant blessings that God had given to the people whom He delivered from Egypt to the Promised Land – and Jeremiah records the expressed sorrows of those who experienced the loss.
  - Undoing
    - Loss of the land (1:3), feasts/festivals (1:4a), treasures (1:7a), and battles (1:6b)
    - Defiling of the temple (1:10b)
    - The withdrawal of God's hand of protection (2:3a)
  - Sorrows
    - Like a weeping, widowed, queen-turned-slave, abandoned by all (1:1b-2)
    - Starvation (1:11; 2:11-12) and exile of the people (1:3, 18), agony (1:13, 16)
    - Public exposure of their immorality (1:9a)
    - Bound in ropes woven from their own sin (1:14)
    - The rejoicing of Israel's enemies in the house of the Lord (2:7b)
    - The gloating of Israel's neighbors (2:15)
  - Confession
    - Rebelling against God's Word (1:18a; 20a)

**Discuss:** How do your assessments of your own moments of failure compare to Jeremiah's thorough articulation of the scope, impact, and cause of Jerusalem's calamity?

Take turns going through the next three bullet points:

- Take a moment to recall painful or significant losses that were at least in part your fault.
    - Perhaps the rebellion of a child or alienation of a family member or friend?
    - Perhaps the loss of a job due to something you did or failed to do?
    - Other?
  - Harvesting the good that can come from failure requires getting clear-eyed about the failure, as the Lord lays out in Lamentations.
    - Describe for the group a moment of failure in your life and the consequences of it.
  - Most people learn far more from their failings than they do from their successes.
    - Describe for the group what you learned from that failure/experience?
    - How have you been changed by your failure for the better?
2. **The Temptation Toward Triumphalism.** The most startling element of Lamentations 1 & 2 is the absence of even a hint of “I told you so” from the prophet Jeremiah. He was ~40 years into his prophetic work, largely as a voice of impending doom. Wow! What a loving, grace-filled response the Lord has preserved for us in this book.
- When others fail around you, how prone are you to ensure that they learn their lesson by reminding them of your prior advice or warning to them?
    - On a scale from 1-to-10, how helpful has that been to them?
    - If we asked the other person to place it on that scale, where would he/she put it?
  - When did someone last pour acid on your wound by stating what you already knew in this regard (“I told you so.”)? How did that make you feel?
  - **Yikes!** How do we balance the value of helping those whom we love get clear-eyed about a moment of failure without unintentionally falling into the triumphal tone of “I told you so”?

### **Live It Out**

**Let’s take a moment and go around the group to identify what we want to take away from this discussion. Any quiet-time reflection required?**

- SOAP quiet-time journaling is a good starting point for reflection. This week, consider pledging with one of us to each doing SOAP quiet time for seven days in a row, texting one another for accountability and support as we go through it.
- Try resolving to start each day listening for the promptings of the Lord in your life.
  - **How?** One day this week before you get out of bed, pick up your phone or tablet and watch/listen to *First* by Lauren Daigle. Absorb the lyrics (e.g., “before I speak a word, I want to hear your voice”). Replay key lyrics in your mind through the day. Report next time on how that went. It’s on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/1cmmJLZYec4>.

***Encourage members of the group to commit time to praying for one another, encouraging and meeting one another’s needs, fellowshiping together, and interceding for the other members. Contact absent group members and encourage them to continue to meet and to return together at the next scheduled gathering.***

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/interactive/2024/sleep-data-survey-americans/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/166553/less-recommended-amount-sleep.aspx>