

The Year We Stayed at Home - with Lament



A Pick and Mix Resource pack of activities
and Bible linked materials for reflecting on
our shared experiences
of the COVID 19 Pandemic



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*Material created collaboratively by Dawn Lonsdale and Carolyn Gower
With credited guest contributions*

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Why this? Why now?

Introduction

The COVID 19 Pandemic has been undeniably tough for everyone and particularly for those communities where our Unlock work is focussed.

We believe that ***all of us*** need, (without moaning or whingeing), to be prepared to acknowledge the energy drain and the emotional cost of COVID 19, for ourselves, for each other and in our communities.

Everyone is more or less bereaved all of the time, even if we have not lost anyone, and even if we have plenty to be grateful for. We have all lost opportunities and precious time with loved ones, we have all had to let go of hopes and dreams and plans; and that disappointment is real and painful. As well as that everyone is dealing with heightened levels of fear and anxiety, and having to manage day to day decisions that potentially have far more significant consequences than we are accustomed to. Many of us know at least some people who have lost loved ones, which is both sad to bear and adds to the fear. Plus we have all had to adjust repeatedly and fairly swiftly to new ways of doing things and to relate, usually by pretty clunky means, to everyone else who is dealing with all of that stuff as well, but probably differently! It's hard to rest and feel refreshed when we do not have access to many of the ways we would usually do that, and the end is still some way off. Self-care and care for one another are going to be really critical over the next 24 months or so at least; and creating safe environments where people can express their pain and vulnerability, without abdicating responsibility or getting sucked into unproductive self-pity, are going to be an essential part of what we need to offer out of our faith, both personally, as Unlock and as Churches.

We may feel that we just want to move on and forget all about it but ultimately that will not help us to grow and learn from these exceptional experiences. It's going to be essential that we support one another to remember and process the collective trauma of COVID 19, that includes allowing appropriate grief, acknowledging anger and remembering effectively, both the good and the bad things.

So we are offering you this resource pack as a way to start to do that work, in your own places, with your own people. We hope and pray that you will find it useful.

Dawn Lonsdale, Chief Officer





We suggest that you begin with the **timeline activities on pages 6&7**. We have noticed that, in the course of this pandemic, the details of what was happening just a few months ago become hazy memories quite quickly. It is hard to keep a clear picture of what happened when; when we last saw so and so, when we last went inside someone else's home, when we last left our home town and so on. The timeline will help us to get some perspective, a long overview of all that has happened. Those experiences will be different for everyone and it will be good to explore them together. You will be amazed at how much you have forgotten! You might return to the timeline activities as part of each of the other sections, or at the end, to see if there are any new insights to add.

We have chosen **six topics** that have formed a part of our own journey and reflections through 2020 and 2021. They are **Lament, Gratitude, Patience, Hope, Kindness and Discernment**. Each topic has its own section, which includes a reflection, some creative activities for groups or individuals, and some Bible material. These sections are not in any particular order and you can use them in any way that you like. **This pack includes the section on Lament only**. The full pack is also available, as are five other individual topic sections.

You are encouraged to **be selective**. You use as much or as little of the material as you like. You know your people and your place. You know what will connect for folk, and what will engage them; please feel free to **choose** from this material and use only that which seems best suited to your own context. There's no reason why you can't present your groups with some options and respond to what they would like to do.

The **topic reflection/introduction** is on pages 9-11 and is intended as *preparatory reading for group facilitators*. Facilitators can choose how much of that material to share with their groups and how. Please note that there is absolutely no need to provide printed copies of all of the material for everyone involved!

The approaches in this pack are based on the **Unlock learning cycle** which you will find on page 28. Unlock has been using this approach for nearly 50 years. It is linked to the ways in which Jesus taught; using stories and connections with people's day to day lives; and we continue to use it because it works. We recommend that in using this material you use the learning cycle to structure your approach. The most important aspect is that we engage with our *own stories before* we explore what the Bible has to say, not the other way around.

It is important that you take some time when you are planning to **really understand the needs of your local group**, so that you can select activities and material that are appropriate for them, and work in a way that fits your local context. You can use pages 20—27 of our facilitator training pack, '**Unlock DIY**' to help you reflect effectively on the needs of your group(s). <http://www.unlock-urban.org.uk/documents/UnlockDIY2020update.pdf>

We recommend that you give yourself and your group plenty of **time and space** to work through this material. You will all get more out of it if you don't rush it, allow yourselves to be **creative** and to break free of the notion that there are 'right' answers. This is much more about sharing our experiences, what we can discover together, and how we can support one another in doing that, than it is about getting from point A to point B.

The participants are not the only ones who will benefit from thinking about this stuff, but not everyone will come and join in with group activities. So **share what you are doing**; find creative ways to display the results of your activities so that other people can see them and have a moment to do their own reflecting too.

See page 29 & 30 for further Unlock facilitator guidance.

What follows on pages 6&7 is an activity to help us begin to recall, process and understand the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on us personally, as a group, or groups, and also as a community.

The Timeline image maps some of the key events of 2020 (you can add others in 2021) and helps us place our personal key events into this framework.

The timeline image on page 6 is only for illustration. Obviously it is far too small for people to use to work on. The Unlock office has a supply of ready printed A2 copies of the timeline so (unless you have your own facilities to print page 6 at A2 size) you need to contact the Unlock Office and request sufficient copies to have at least one per person for your group(s). There is an order form below, or you can e-mail or telephone the Unlock office providing the necessary information.

The idea is that each person has their own individual copy and can personalise it by adding anything that feels important for them to remember. The coloured squares are deliberately left blank as spaces where people can add in their own personal events, milestones and experiences. Page 7 gives suggestions for the kind of things we might think about and add into our own copy of the timeline. Items can be added using pictures, words or a combination, or using cut out images pasted on. This needn't be a one off activity. We can return to our timelines and add more to them at any stage.

Groups can work both individually and together to help each other remember what happened when.

Ultimately each person's timeline will be their own personal record of their lives during the pandemic, a kind of visual diary, which they can keep and use to recall 'The Year We Stayed at Home', and perhaps to explain what it was like to future generations!

Covid timeline order form

The Year We stayed at Home

Please mail copies of the Unlock Covid timeline to -

Name: E-mail address

Postal address:

Telephone number (in case we need to check anything with you)

Please send completed orders to the Unlock Office, (C/O Shiloh) 15 Station Road,
Rotherham, S60 1HN or to office@unlock/urban.org.uk Tel: 01709 380318.

We welcome (but do not require) donations to cover the cost of printing and postage.



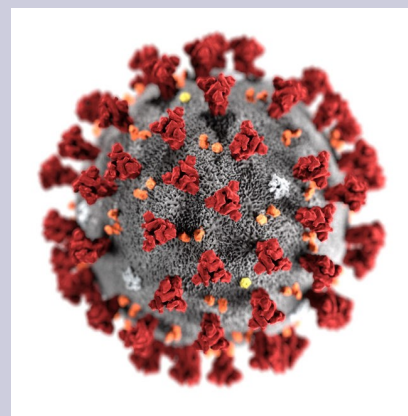
COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline Activities

You can add to the timeline anything that you want to record and remember about your personal experience of the pandemic.

You can use words, symbols, stickers, colours, drawings, pictures, or a combination; as you prefer.

You could include:-

- **Things that just were: -**
 - ◇ Family events, birthdays, etc
 - ◇ Significant moments or turning points
- **Lost or missed things: -**
 - ◇ People, activities or things you have lost or missed
 - ◇ Places you didn't go.
- **New things and things to be glad about: -**
 - ◇ Things you enjoyed
 - ◇ Things you are grateful for
 - ◇ Places you went
 - ◇ Things you made
 - ◇ Things that helped you get through
 - ◇ Things you learnt, or noticed
 - ◇ New things that you didn't do before that you want to keep
 - ◇ People you spent time with, either face to face or in other ways
- **Your responses and reactions: -**
 - ◇ What you discovered about yourself
 - ◇ What emotions did you feel?
 - ◇ When were you most afraid?
 - ◇ When were you most at peace?
 - ◇ Where was God for you; and where were God's people?



We have not included the regularly issued data on case numbers, hospitalisations and deaths. If you want to add in that kind of data you can find it here <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

You might find this Wikipedia timeline useful for reference, especially if you like to have precise dates and details https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_England

You can use the months that are blank, either to continue to journal as the months go by, or to express your hopes for what is to come (or a bit of both!) The big yellow box at the bottom is for you to make a note of things you want to do when it's over that you can't do now.

Once groups can meet again safely the timeline could be used to structure a group or community reflection process.



The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other and to be stretched large by them. How much sorrow can I hold? That's how much gratitude I can give. If I carry only grief, I'll bend toward cynicism and despair. If I have only gratitude, I'll become saccharine and won't develop much compassion for other people's suffering. Grief keeps the heart fluid and soft, which helps make compassion possible.

~Francis Ward Weller

Photo by Magne Traeland - Unsplash

BRASSBALLS TENDER HEART Helping you find your way home

AND
LET THE PEACE
OF CHRIST RULE
IN YOUR HEARTS
TO WHICH INDEED
YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE BODY
AND *be thankful*
COLOSSIANS 3:15



Lament

Which may also include anger

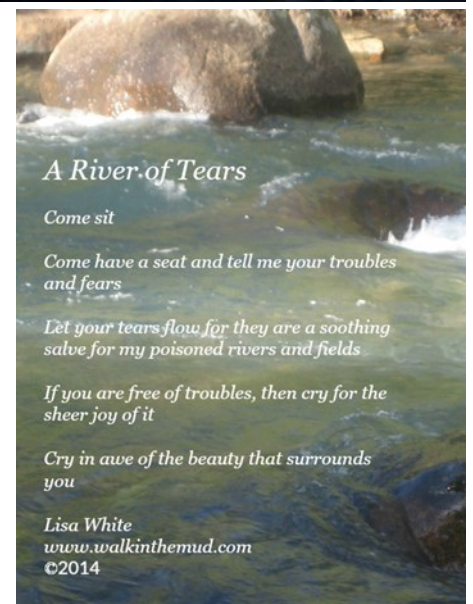
Let's start somewhere we know: in the book of **Lamentations 3: 22-23**; you know the chorus probably: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies (compassions) never fail (come to an end); they are new every morning, new every morning; great is thy faithfulness oh Lord, great is thy faithfulness.

Well, not only does that give you a near-completely false understanding of the tone and content of the five chapters of national degradation which is Lamentations, it's also rubbish, isn't it?

Most of the Psalms are lamentations, in poetry usually. Striking examples are **Psalms 22, 44 and 88**. (Spooky eh!). They are not long ones; please read them if you can.

Psalm 22 starts with the words Jesus repeated on the Cross. v9-10 are a beautiful image of God and the final 25% is very positive about God (like the end of many Psalms of lament). It's a very personal lament; or perhaps complaint is a better word.

Psalm 44 is communal; the defeated remnant of a nation, complaining,



"What will we do without them" by The Spanish painter [Juan Lucena](#)



lamenting, in great distress. The end here isn't exactly upbeat; 'Awake, O Lord... Rouse yourself! This can't go on forever... can it' (I paraphrase; but it could be a COVID-nation talking).

Psalm 88 feels very personal; it's definitely a complaint, an outpouring of deep distress, in loneliness and rejection and in the face of anticipated death. The final word in the Hebrew is 'darkness'. There is no respite; just darkness.

It is no bad thing to say to God, for example 'my eyes are dim with grief' Ps88 v9a. But the reason why lament is also complaint in all the biblical writing is because 'its God what done it'. And that's why I say, when you are in the pits, the lamentation based chorus is rubbish. These days we're ever-so-sophisticated and we know that bats and chickens and Chinese wet markets are not the agents of God to bring judgement on us; rather we know that we are living with the continuing consequences of our disobedience.

But don't let that stop you.

You might reasonably ask of an ever-loving God: why the weakest, why the poorest, why the alien.

You can rail about our rulers and their advisers and those who inflict rules and then take another's wife... you could get quite biblical!



And why, oh why, should many die alone; why can



we not at least say
goodbye and grieve well?
Listen to your heart: you'll
have plenty to say.

In the Chair's bit of the
2020 Annual Report I said
this about lament:there
have been losses; there is
much to lament. We have

not been able to fulfil our purpose for most of this year. Some work
will have lost momentum; some opportunities will have been lost.
Some people have been lost. Together we will, I hope, sit with that
reality. Not rush through it. But sit with it; face it; cry out to God
about it; be angry and sad and say whatever we need to say to a
faithful God who can take it. And hopefully relieve ourselves of
burdens we can't take.

THE STEADFAST LOVE OF
THE LORD NEVER
CEASES, HIS MERCIES
NEVER COME TO AN
END; THEY ARE NEW
EVERY MORNING;
GREAT IS YOUR

Faithfulness.

-LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 NRSV

By Andy Dorton

October 2020

**One bold message in the Book of Job is that
you can say anything to God.
Throw at him your grief, your anger, your
doubt, your bitterness, your betrayal, your
disappointment— he can absorb them all.
As often as not, spiritual giants of the Bible are
shown contending with God.
They prefer to go away limping, like Jacob,
rather than to shut God out.**

Philip Yancey

Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud

#ireadthereforequote #pragmaticcommunion

www.juliestilesmills.com

If leaders want to explore the
idea of lament further they
might want to watch this pre-
pandemic video from
Archbishop Justin Welby; but
please think carefully about
whether and how it is
appropriate to share the
contents with your group

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=UduqyYy2954&t=455s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UduqyYy2954&t=455s)



Activities to help us think about Lament

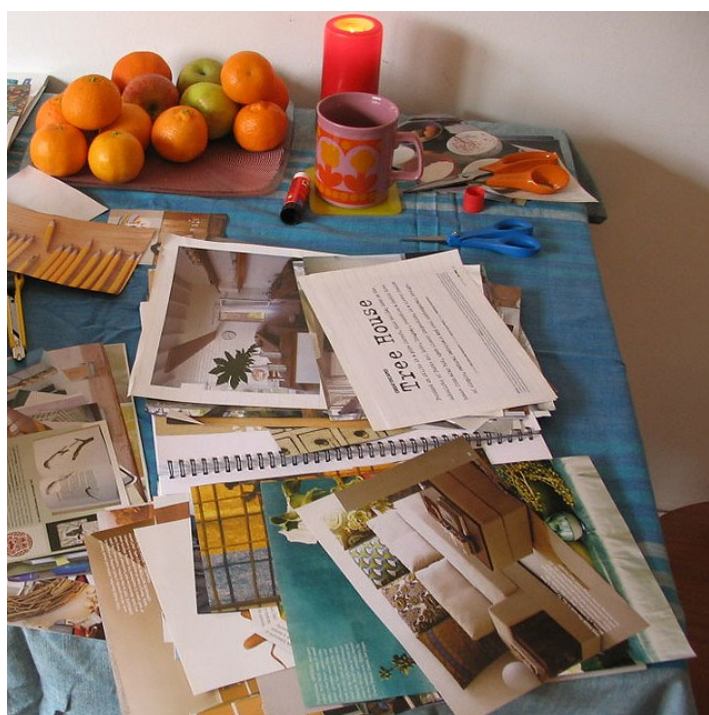
Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of lament.

Pictures: Photographs which remind us of lockdown (on page 15-16 there's a bit of a collection but you can find your own if you prefer). Facilitate a discussion by encouraging general comments about different photos. What emotions do we feel when we look at the photos? The emotion cards (on page 17) might help with this. Encourage people to share their own lockdown/COVID stories.

Emotion Stations: Set up no more than 6 separate stations around a room (or outdoor space), each should be labelled with one emotion (we suggest that you choose no more than 6 of those most associated with lament from page 17). At each station folk can write a postcard (templates on page 18) which says what part of the pandemic made them feel that emotion. This will work well if you use coloured card to make the emotions signs and then match the postcard colours to the signs for each station (e.g. make the 'sadness' station blue, with blue postcards, the overwhelmed station green, with green postcards, and so on).

After we have all had an opportunity to visit as many stations as we want, the postcards are gathered and handed out anonymously to people for them to read aloud to the group (if you are not confident that everyone present can read out a card then the facilitator can read them out, or people can help each other).

Discussion: Which cards other than the ones you wrote do you relate to most?



Community Scrapbook:

The completed postcards could be included in a community scrapbook, with drawings, photos, newspaper (or internet) cuttings and notes to help people to remember 'The year we stayed at home'.

Listening:

Allow the group to listen to some of the poems and songs provided



below. Choose the ones that are most appropriate for your group, or set all of these up as a playlist for people to listen to while doing some of the other activities.

Things we have lost:

Listen to: -

- Annie Lennox sings 'Dido's Lament' with massed online choir
https://www.classicfm.com/composers/purcell/annie-lennox-didos-lament-with-london-city-voices/?fbclid=IwAR2k8VMLH3eiCxLvY7dIIIRhYTm_Vu0Nap-Fb0K8WV6Tu3IX68s6WxTGEuxY
- The Lament for Boromir - from the Lord of the Rings Film - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDN1sA3Fpgg&list=PLvM65_qRuWZsrxapSiO47DjnU5HD2TP6N&index=78
- Eric Clapton's song River of Tears - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CrH8sylimw0>
- Weep with me by Rend Collective - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEAIWy72acc>
- O Lord you never let go by Matt Redman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y83-vMeWc9E>
- Rob Halligan, Singing Myself to Sleep - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqSvshPin5Q>

Materials: White cloth, masking tape, fabric dye or paint (choose a limited range of colours that work well together), brushes

Method: Use masking tape to write words or "draw" a simple picture or symbol to represent the thing(s) that COVID times have taken away from you. Press the tape down firmly. Paint swirly lines over the top and around the tape, using fairly watery paint. Leave to dry for an hour. Peel off the tape to reveal the white stencil. The idea is to facilitate conversation while people are working on this and at the end the results can be displayed.

(With thanks to Unlock Hull for this activity.)

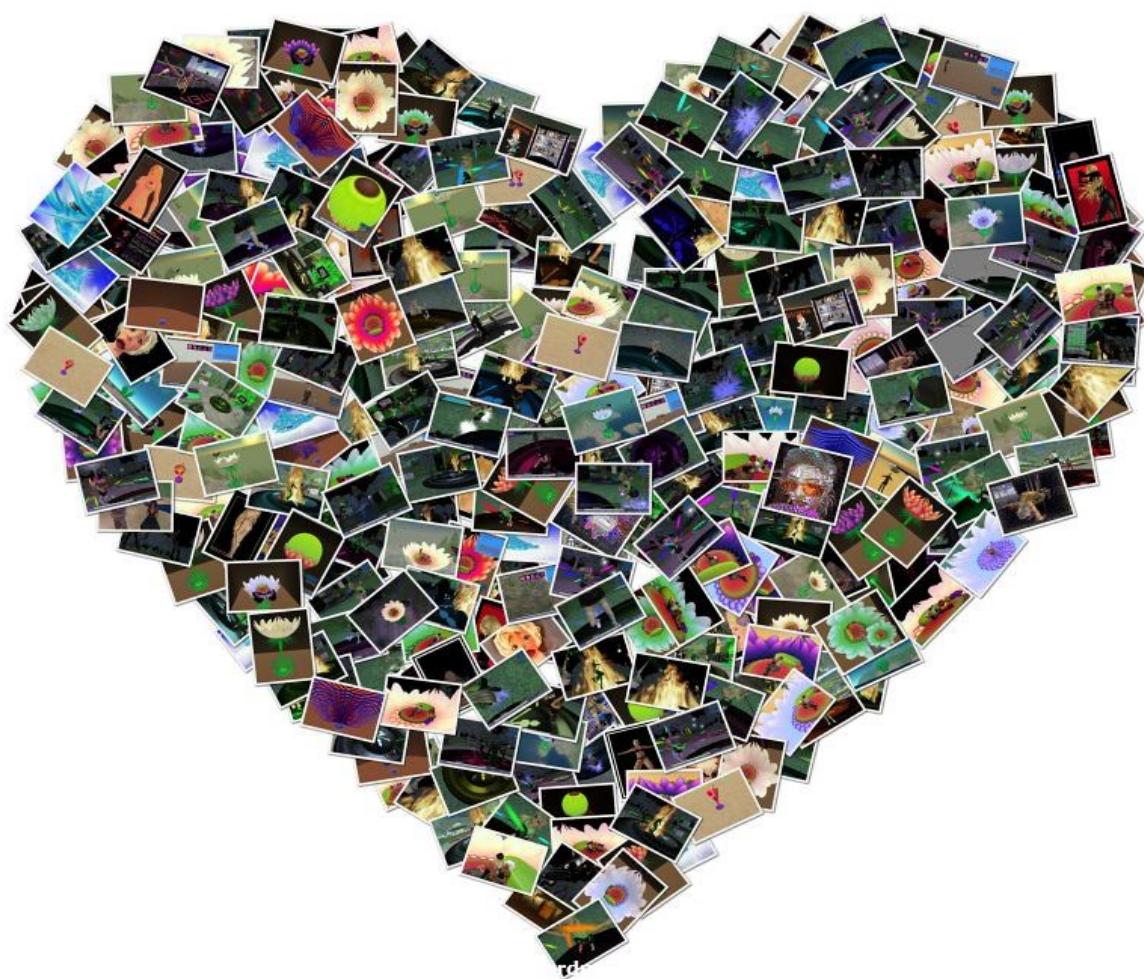


Create a Community Lament to Express our loss:

Following on from activities selected from those above invite the group to work together to create their own community lockdown lament in poetry and images. You might use the 'My Sister is Not Statistic' poem by Dorothy Duffy on page 19 to start your group thinking. Groups of 3/4 work together to write their own lament of about 7 lines which can then all be combined into one. Those who are not so confident with words and writing can suggest images to go alongside the words, draw them, or cut them out of magazines and newspapers (or, if you have the facilities, print them from the internet).

Watch: - The Archbishop of Canterbury visits the Covid memorial Wall in London

<https://fb.watch/50VsSpm3Mp/>



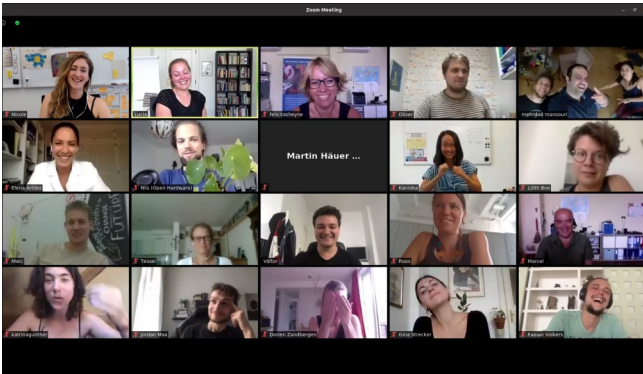
Display & Share:-

Find ways to display your work in a community space; trees, clouds, nature display, cards, painted stones, banner, posters, scrapbooks, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.



COVID Lockdown picture collection

Lament—Resources



Lament—Resources



Emotions cards

Angry

Loved

Ashamed

Disgusted

Terrified

Humbled

Betrayed

Trusted

Rejected

Lonely

Deceived

Overwhelmed

Hopeful

Desperate

Lost

Sad

These are just some suggestions;
you can add your own if you'd like to.



I felt

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when

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because of

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I felt

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when

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because of

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I felt

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when

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because of

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I felt

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when

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because of

.....



Lament—Resources

MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC

Tomorrow, when the latest
Deathometer of Covid is announced
in sonorous tones,
While all the bodies still mount and
curl towards the middle of the curve
Heaped one atop and alongside the
other
My sister will be among those
numbers, among the throwaway lines
Among the platitudes and lowered
eyes,
*an older person with underlying
health conditions,*
A pitiful way to lay rest the bare
bones of a life.

MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC

Her underlying conditions were
Love
Kindness
Belief in the essential goodness of
mankind
Uproarious laughter
Forgiveness
Compassion
A storyteller
A survivor
A comforter
A force of nature
And so much more

MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC

She died without the soft touch of a
loved one's hand
Without the feathered kiss upon her
forehead
Without the muted murmur of
familiar family voices gathered
around her bed,
Without the gentle roar of laughter
that comes with memories recalled
Evoked from a time that already
seems distant, when we were
connected by the simplicity of touch,
of voice, of presence.

MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC

She was a woman who spanned the
seven ages.

A mother
A grandmother
A great grandmother
A sister
A Friend
An aunt
A carer
A giver

MY SISTER IS NOT A STATISTIC

And so, she joins the mounting
thousands

THEY ARE NOT STATISTICS ON THE DEATHOMETER OF COVID

They are the wives, mothers, children,
fathers, sisters, brothers
The layers of all our loved ones
If she could, believe me when I say, she
would hold every last one of your loved
ones, croon to and comfort them and
say - you were loved.
Whilst we who have been left behind
mourn deep, keening the loss, the
injustice, the rage.
One day we will smile and laugh again,
we will remember with joy that, once,
we shared a life, we knew joy and
survived sadness.

You are my sister and I love you.

**Dorothy Duffy
4th April 2020**

You can hear this poem read aloud at
either of these links:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOJHEgfg2M4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KotYlc5C4Ec>



River of Tears by Eric Clapton

It's three miles to the river
That would carry me away
And two miles to the dusty street
That I saw you on Today
It's four miles to my lonely room
Where I will hide my face
And about a half a mile to the downtown bar
That I ran from in disgrace
Lord how long do I have to keep on running
Seven hours, Seven days or Seven years
All I know is since you've been gone
Feels like I'm drowning in a river
Drowning in a river of tears
Drowning in a river
Feels like I'm drowning
Drowning in a river
In three more days I'll leave this town
And disappear without a trace
A year from now maybe settle down
Where no one knows my face
I wish that I could hold you
One more time to ease the pain
But my times run out and I got to go
Got to run away again
Still I catch myself thinking
One day I'll find my way back here
You'll save me from drowning
Drowning in a river
Drowning in a river of tears
Drowning in a river
Feels like I'm drowning
Drowning in a river
Oh how long must this go on
Drowning in a river
Drowning in a river of tears

Songwriters: Eric Clapton, Simon Climie

The **Lament for Boromir** was a song sung by [Aragorn](#) and [Legolas](#) as the funeral-boat of [Boromir](#) drifted away:

Aragorn sang:

*Through [Rohan](#) over fen and field where the long grass grows
The West Wind comes walking, and about the walls it goes.
'What news from the West, O wandering wind, do you bring to me tonight?
Have you seen Boromir the Tall by moon or by starlight?
'I saw him ride over seven streams, over waters wide and grey,
I saw him walk in empty lands until he passed away
Into the shadows of the North, I saw him then no more.
The North Wind may have heard the horn of the son of [Denethor](#),
'O Boromir! From the high walls westward I looked afar,
But you came not from the empty lands where no men are.'*

Then Legolas sang:

*From the mouths of the [Sea](#) the South Wind flies, from the sandhills and the stones,
The wailing of the gulls it bears, and at the gate it moans.
'What news from the South, O sighing wind, do you bring to me at eve?
Where now is Boromir the Fair? He tarries and I grieve.
'Ask not of me where he doth dwell – so many bones there lie,
On the white shores and the dark shores under the stormy sky,
So many have passed down [Anduin](#) to find the flowing Sea.
Ask of the North Wind news of them the North Wind sends to me!
'O Boromir! Beyond the gate the seaward roads runs south,
But you came not with the wailing gulls from the grey sea's mouth'.*

Then Aragorn sang again:

*From the [Gate of the Kings](#) the North Wind rides, and past the roaring falls,
And clear and cold about the tower its loud horn calls.
'What news from the North, O mighty wind, do you bring to me today?
What news of Boromir the bold? For he is long away.'
'Beneath [Amon Hen](#) I heard his cry. There many foes he fought,
His cloven shield, his broken sword, they to the water brought.
His head so proud, his face so fair, his limbs they laid to rest,
And [Rauros](#), golden Rauros-falls, bore him upon its breast.
'O Boromir! The [Tower of Guard](#) shall ever northward gaze,
To Rauros, golden Rauros-falls, until the end of days.*

[Gimli](#) then comments that they left the east wind to him, but he would not sing it. Aragorn responds that the people of Gondor endure the east wind but do not ask it for tidings, because in that direction lies [Mordor](#) and the Evil in the East.





Bible Stories to help us think about Lament

Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together how these stories connect with our COVID experiences of lament.

Mark 5:24b-34 - A woman who had been in social lockdown for 12 years

So many people were going along with Jesus that they were crowding him from every side.

There was a woman who had suffered terribly from severe bleeding for twelve years, even though she had been treated by many doctors. She had spent all her money, but instead of getting better she got worse all the time. She had heard about Jesus, so she came in the crowd behind him, saying to herself, “If I just touch his clothes, I will get well.”

She touched his cloak, and her bleeding stopped at once; and she had the feeling inside herself that she was healed of her trouble. At once Jesus knew that power had gone out of him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

His disciples answered, “You see how the people are crowding you; why do you ask who touched you?”

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. The woman realized what had happened to her, so she came, trembling with fear, knelt at his feet, and told him the whole truth. Jesus said to her, “My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your trouble.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-10 - Solomon (privileged King!) Declares That Life Is Useless

These are the words of the Philosopher, David's son, who was king in Jerusalem.

It is useless, useless, said the Philosopher. Life is useless, all useless. You spend your life working, labouring, and what do you have to show for it? Generations come and generations go, but the world stays just the same. The sun still rises, and it still goes down, going wearily back to where it must start all over again. The wind blows south, the wind blows north—round and round and back again. Every river flows into the sea, but the sea is not yet full. The water returns to where the rivers began, and starts all over again. Everything leads to

weariness—a weariness too great for words. Our eyes can never see enough to be satisfied; our ears can never hear enough. What has happened before will happen again. What has been done before will be done again. There is nothing new in the whole world. “Look,” they say, “here is something new!” But no, it has all happened before, long before we were born. No one remembers what has happened in the past, and no one in days to come will remember what happens between now and then.

Jonah 4:1-11 - Jonah is Hacked off with God (after the people of Nineveh Repent and God lets them off)

Jonah was very unhappy about this and became angry. So he prayed, “LORD, didn't I say before I left home that this is just what you would do? That's why I did my best to run away to Spain! I knew that you are a loving and merciful God, always patient, always kind, and always ready to change your mind and not punish. Now then, LORD, let me die. I am better off dead than alive.”



The LORD answered, “What right do you have to be angry?”

Jonah went out east of the city and sat down. He made a shelter for himself and sat in its shade, waiting to see what would happen to Nineveh. Then the LORD God made a plant grow up over Jonah to give him some shade, so that he would be more comfortable. Jonah was extremely pleased with the plant. But at dawn the next day, at God's command, a worm attacked the plant, and it died. After the sun had risen, God sent a hot east wind, and Jonah was about to faint from the heat of the sun beating down on his head. So he wished he were dead. “I am better off dead than alive,” he said.

But God said to him, “What right do you have to be angry about the plant?”

Jonah replied, “I have every right to be angry—angry enough to die!”

The LORD said to him, “This plant grew up in one night and disappeared the next; you didn't do anything for it and you didn't make it grow—yet you feel sorry for it! How much more, then, should I have pity on Nineveh, that great city. After all, it has more than 120,000 innocent children in it, as well as many



animals!”

Lamentations - (Jeremiah’s outcry after the destruction of Jerusalem’s Temple) is the closest Bible link we can find to the COVID pandemic: Wholesale devastation (of Jerusalem) at all levels of society; Starving mothers - cannibalism; Best of the population are enslaved and exiled; End of religious traditions.

Chapter one - just as an example (it goes on a bit!): -

How lonely lies Jerusalem, once so full of people!
Once honoured by the world, she is now like a widow;
The noblest of cities has fallen into slavery.

All night long she cries; tears run down her cheeks.
Of all her former friends, not one is left to comfort her.
Her allies have betrayed her and are all against her now.

Judah’s people are helpless slaves, forced away from home.
They live in other lands, with no place to call their own—
Surrounded by enemies, with no way to escape.

No one comes to the Temple now to worship on the holy days.
The young women who sang there suffer, and the priests can only groan.
The city gates stand empty, and Zion is in agony.

Her enemies succeeded; they hold her in their power.
The LORD has made her suffer for all her many sins;
Her children have been captured and taken away.
Her enemies succeeded; they hold her in their power.
The LORD has made her suffer for all her many sins;
Her children have been captured and taken away.

The splendour of Jerusalem is a thing of the past.
Her leaders are like deer that are weak from hunger,
Whose strength is almost gone as they flee from the hunters.

A lonely ruin now, Jerusalem recalls her ancient splendour.
When she fell to the enemy, there was no one to help her;
Her conquerors laughed at her downfall.

Her honour is gone; she is naked and held in contempt.
She groans and hides her face in shame.
Jerusalem made herself filthy with terrible sin.

Her uncleanness was easily seen, but she showed no concern for her fate.
Her downfall was terrible; no one can comfort her.
Her enemies have won, and she cries to the LORD for mercy.

The enemies robbed her of all her treasures.
She saw them enter the Temple



itself,
Where the LORD had forbidden
Gentiles to go.

Her people groan as they look for
something to eat;
They exchange their treasures for
food to
keep themselves alive.
“Look at me, LORD,” the city cries;
“see me in my misery.”

“Look at me!” she cries to everyone
who passes by.
“No one has ever had pain like mine,
Pain that the LORD brought on me in
the time of his anger.

“He sent fire from above, a fire that
burned inside me.
He set a trap for me and brought me
to the ground.
Then he abandoned me and left me in
constant pain.

“He took note of all my sins and tied
them all together;
He hung them around my neck, and I
grew weak beneath the weight.
The Lord gave me to my foes, and I
was helpless against them.

“The Lord laughed at all my strongest
soldiers;
He sent an army to destroy my young
men.
He crushed my people like grapes in a
wine press.

“That is why my eyes are overflowing
with tears.
No one can comfort me; no one can
give me courage.
The enemy has conquered me; my
people have nothing left.

“I stretch out my hands, but no one
will help me.
The LORD has called enemies against
me from every side;
They treat me like some filthy thing.

“But the LORD is just, for I have
disobeyed him.
Listen to me, people everywhere;
look at me in my pain.
My young men and women have
been taken away captive.

“I called to my allies, but they
refused to help me.
The priests and the leaders died in
the city streets,
Looking for food to keep themselves
alive.
“Look, O LORD, at my agony, at the
anguish of my soul!
My heart is broken in sorrow for my
sins.
There is murder in the streets; even
indoors there is death.

“Listen to my groans; there is no one
to comfort me.
My enemies are glad that you
brought disaster on me.
Bring the day you promised; make
my enemies suffer as I do.

“Condemn them for all their
wickedness;
Punish them as you punished me for
my sins.
I groan in misery, and I am sick at
heart.”

Lamentations overview:-

Chapter 1:1-16 The story of the
destruction (+vs 16 personal
response - weeping etc..)



Chapter 3:1-20 Personal response

Chapter 3:21 Remembering what is lost

Chapter 3:22-33 God's character known from previous experience

Chapter 5:19-22 Final plea to God

Job is an interesting one! Job 3:1-26 and on through the long book! Job 40:1-5 God speaks and Job is contrite; Job 42: 1-6 repentance.

The Psalms:

*Oh, that I had the
wings of a dove! I
would fly away and be
at rest--I would flee
far away and stay in
the desert; I would
hurry to my place of
shelter, far from the
tempest and storm
-Psalm 55:7-8*

Personal lament -

Psalm 13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMy9CoDkxDA>

Psalm 55:1-8

Hear my prayer, O God;
don't turn away from my plea!
Listen to me and answer me;
I am worn out by my worries.
I am terrified by the threats of my
enemies,
crushed by the oppression of the wicked.
They bring trouble on me;

they are angry with me and hate me.
I am terrified,
and the terrors of death crush me.
I am gripped by fear and trembling;
I am overcome with horror.
I wish I had wings like a dove.
I would fly away and find rest.
I would fly far away and make my home
in the desert.
I would hurry and find myself a shelter



Psalm 88

LORD God, my saviour, I cry out all day,
and at night I come before you.
Hear my prayer;
listen to my cry for help!
So many troubles have fallen on me
that I am close to death.
I am like all others who are about to die;
all my strength is gone.
I am abandoned among the dead;
I am like the slain lying in their graves,
those you have forgotten completely,
who are beyond your help.
You have thrown me into the depths of the
tomb,
into the darkest and deepest pit.
Your anger lies heavy on me,
and I am crushed beneath its waves.
You have caused my friends to abandon me;
you have made me repulsive to them.
I am closed in and cannot escape;
my eyes are weak from suffering.

LORD, every day I call to you
and lift my hands to you in prayer.
Do you perform miracles for the dead?
Do they rise up and praise you?
Is your constant love spoken of in the grave
or your faithfulness in the place of destruction?
Are your miracles seen in that place of darkness
or your goodness in the land of the forgotten?
LORD, I call to you for help;
every morning I pray to you.
Why do you reject me, LORD?
Why do you turn away from me?
Ever since I was young, I have suffered and
been near death;
I am worn out from the burden of your
punishments.
Your furious anger crushes me;
your terrible attacks destroy me.
All day long they surround me like a flood;
they close in on me from every side.
You have made even my closest friends
abandon me,
and darkness is my only companion.

Community lament - Psalm 44 & 137

Psalm 44

With our own ears we have heard it, O God -
our ancestors have told us about it,
about the great things you did in their
time, in the days of long ago:
how you yourself drove out the heathen
and established your people in their land;
how you punished the other nations
and caused your own to prosper.
Your people did not conquer the land with
their swords;
they did not win it by their own power;
it was by your power and your strength,
by the assurance of your presence,
which showed that you loved them.
You are my king and my God;
you give victory to your people,
and by your power we defeat our enemies.

I do not trust in my bow
or in my sword to save me;
but you have saved us from our enemies
and defeated those who hate us.
We will always praise you
and give thanks to you forever.

But now you have rejected us and let us be
defeated;
you no longer march out with our armies.
You made us run from our enemies,
and they took for themselves what was ours.
You allowed us to be slaughtered like sheep;
you scattered us in foreign countries.
You sold your own people for a small price
as though they had little value

Our neighbours see what you did to us,
and they mock us and laugh at us.
You have made us a joke among the nations;
they shake their heads at us in scorn.



I am always in disgrace;
I am covered with shame
from hearing the sneers and insults
of my enemies and those who hate me.

All this has happened to us,
even though we have not forgotten you
or broken the covenant you made with us.
We have not been disloyal to you;
we have not disobeyed your commands.
Yet you left us helpless among wild animals;
you abandoned us in deepest darkness.

If we had stopped worshipping our God
and prayed to a foreign god,

you would surely have discovered it,
because you know our secret thoughts.
But it is on your account that we are being
killed all the time,
that we are treated like sheep to be
slaughtered.

Wake up, Lord! Why are you asleep?
Rouse yourself Don't reject us forever!
Why are you hiding from us?
Don't forget our suffering and trouble!
We fall crushed to the ground;
we lie defeated in the dust.
Come to our aid!
Because of your constant love save us!

Psalm 137

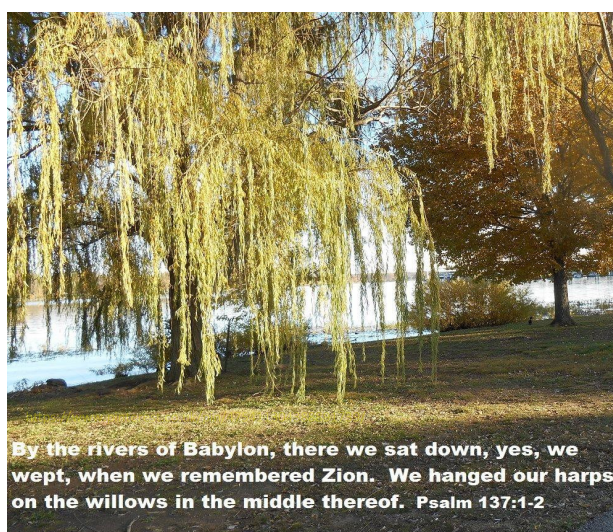
By the rivers of Babylon we sat down;
there we wept when we remembered Zion.
On the willows near by
we hung up our harps.
Those who captured us told us to sing;
they told us to entertain them:
“Sing us a song about Zion.”

How can we sing a song to the LORD
in a foreign land?
May I never be able to play the harp again
if I forget you, Jerusalem!

May I never be able to sing again
if I do not remember you,
if I do not think of you as my greatest joy!

Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did
the day Jerusalem was captured.
Remember how they kept saying,
“Tear it down to the ground!”

Babylon, you will be destroyed.
Happy are those who pay you back
for what you have done to us -
who take your babies
and smash them against a rock.



By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps on the willows in the middle thereof. Psalm 137:1-2

Psalm 102:4-8

I am beaten down like dry grass;
I have lost my desire for food.
I groan aloud;
I am nothing but skin and bones.
I am like a wild bird in the desert,
like an owl in abandoned ruins.
I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on a housetop.
All day long my enemies insult me;
those who mock me use my name in cursing.

The Psalms on Page 9: -

Psalm 22 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGW7DKP1twE> ,

Psalm 44 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywmdsAgL5gQ> ,

Psalm 88 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgdViCeJfPk>



Unlock, by various names, has been around since 1972, trying to help (mainly) urban Christians to understand and share their faith appropriately. Our life experience matters; our stories; our joys and sorrows. The Bible has plenty to say, more than we'll ever know, about our lives, if we know how to read it and apply it - if we know how to **UNLOCK** it!

Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies, based on a reflective learning cycle which is a tried and tested way of introducing people to the Bible in a non-threatening way (see below). We usually work with people outside of church who may be interested in finding out a bit more about faith but perhaps are not attracted to the formal methods of learning often associated with church life. Our approach starts from the stories and experiences of group members, whereas a more traditional approach starts from the Biblical text. It has been found to work well with small groups of urban, oral learners. Many churches have activities that draw in members of their surrounding community but then struggle with how to move on from those relationships into exploring faith, especially in urban environments where anything formal might be treated with suspicion. Unlock's approach can help with that.

There are many free resources on the Unlock website www.unlock-urban.org.uk/resources designed for use with such groups. However, because each of these resources was designed for a particular

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group in a particular time and place they are unlikely be a perfect fit for your group as they stand. They are offered more as inspiration to you to design your own materials along the same lines, rather than as ready to use packages.

If you have any queries relating to Unlock materials, please contact:

Unlock, 15 Station Road, Rotherham S60 1HN

01709 380318 office@unlock-urban.org.uk

The Unlock Learning Cycle

Unlocking real life

stories of urban people

Start with the group telling stories from their real life experience.

Releasing life changing skills and confidence

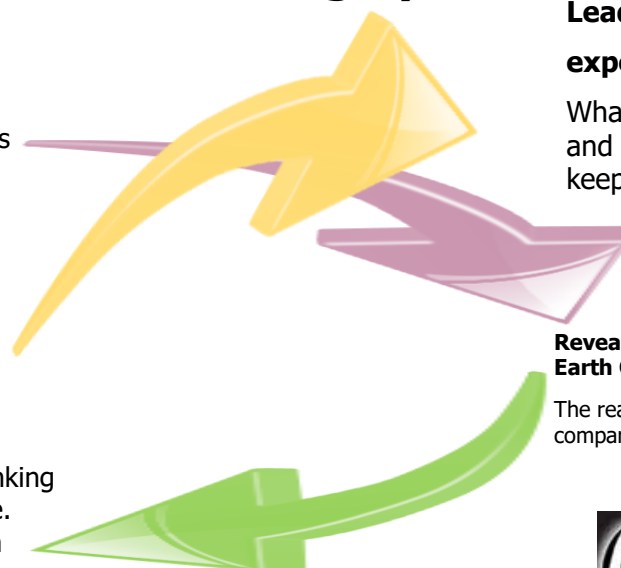
Change happens as a result of linking real life experience with the Bible. This change often leads to action among others.

Leading to more experience

What we learn now is learnt for life and changes us. We also learn to keep reflecting!

Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

The real life stories are connected to and compared with similar situations in the Bible.



10 principles of Training used by Unlock in its work

1. Pay attention to the local, regional and cultural factors that influence people's lives
2. Develop the ability to help other people tell their stories.
3. Take a genuine interest and enjoyment in LISTENING to other people's stories.
4. AFFIRM and ENCOURAGE people so that they can be confident enough to formulate their own questions, and not to impose our own answers on other people's questions.
5. Be PATIENT and WAIT for people to see the gaps in their own knowledge.
6. Believe that people can make sense of the Bible and their own experience, and make the connection between the two; and that God by his spirit will lead people to truth and action.
7. Encourage working together in groups where each person's contribution is valued, and where diversity of opinion is accepted and tolerated.
8. Be aware of what is going on in and between people in such groups.
9. Work with a group so that it can come to its own conclusions and decide on its own actions.
10. Value everyone as a 'Treasure –chest of information and experience'; seeing our task as one of giving people the keys to undo their treasures.

And some Dos and Don'ts

Do: -

- Know and use each person's name
- Accept whatever is offered and encourage further contributions
- Encourage everyone to have a go
- Find non threatening questions to enable people to join in
- Build trust between group members
- Try to work with groups of between 5 and 15 people
- Create an environment where each member has confidence to contribute
- Encourage and enable people to draw on their own experience as a primary learning tool
- Help the group to work together
- Make it clear that you value each person's opinion enough to want them to say what they think
- Gather information about what is already known and shared in a group before introducing new information



- Ask questions like, 'What do you think?' 'What would you like to change?', 'How are you going to change it?', 'What's the best thing about . . .?', 'What's the worst thing about . . .?'
- Encourage participants to consider where their information has come from and how their views have been formed.
- Create experiences for the group to reflect on, you can use film, drama, pictures, paintings, or photographs, cartoons, music, creative activities, community experiences.
- Stress the vastness of the data which the group already possesses.
- Give chances for people to respond, question, discuss.
- Introduce new information (including the Bible) in manageable chunks
- Expect change
- Help the group apply the Word to the here and now. 'What has this got to do with me? With us?'
- Work at presenting in the language of the group.
- Be creative
- Adapt published material to the needs of the group
- Write or make your own material
- Create flexible programmes that can adjust to group needs as they emerge
- Seek the group's agreement for the programme, allow them to modify it as necessary
- Listen attentively

Don't: -

- Use religious language, jargon, or clichés
- Use middle class illustrations, examples, case studies
- Assume a familiarity with the bible
- Tell people what they should do, think, believe; don't say, 'This is how it is.'
- Put people on the spot, or in the spotlight
- Make assumptions about people's lifestyles and domestic arrangements
- Don't ask questions with 'right' or 'wrong' answers or that rely on knowledge, rather than experience
- Make value judgements about people who think and learn differently to you and your friends
- Assume that everyone can read – or that no one can
- Lecture, give out handouts, issue book lists.



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