

HOW TO GROW SPIRITUALLY WHEN YOU FEEL STUCK

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO REIGNITING YOUR FAITH
AND SPIRITUAL PASSION



DBA MINISTRIES

HOW TO GROW SPIRITUALLY WHEN YOU FEEL STUCK



Overcoming Dry Seasons and Rekindling Your Fire for God

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN HEAVEN FEELS SILENT



“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

— Psalm 22:1

If you picked up this book, chances are you know exactly what it feels like to pray those words. Not as a theological exercise, but as a desperate cry from the depths of your soul. You know what it’s like to open your Bible and feel nothing. To worship on Sunday morning while everyone around you seems caught up in God’s presence, yet you stand there feeling like you’re singing to the ceiling. To pray and wonder if your words are bouncing off brass heavens.

You love God. You really do. But somewhere along the way, the fire that once burned bright in your heart has dimmed to barely glowing embers. The passion that used to wake you up early for devotions has been replaced by a spiritual numbness that frightens you. You find yourself going through the motions—attending church, saying your prayers, reading your three chapters a day— but it all feels empty, routine, mechanical.

And the worst part? You feel guilty about it. You look around at other believers who seem to be thriving, posting their highlighted Bible verses and breakthrough testimonies, while you’re barely holding on. You wonder if you’ve done something wrong. If God has given up on you. If this spiritual drought will ever end.

Friend, I need you to hear this: **You are not alone, and you are not abandoned.**

The Hidden Epidemic

What we don’t talk about enough in our churches is that spiritual dryness is not the exception in the Christian life—it’s far more common than we admit. Some of the greatest saints throughout history have walked through what St. John of the Cross called “the dark night of the soul.” Mother Teresa, who the world saw as a beacon of faith, privately confessed to feeling God’s absence for nearly fifty years. Yet she continued to serve, to love, to believe.

The enemy wants you to believe that your dry season is proof that something is fundamentally wrong with you. That “real” Christians don’t struggle this way. That if you just had more faith, prayed harder, or sinned less, you’d feel God’s presence again. But these are lies designed to keep you in shame and isolation.

The truth is far more beautiful and mysterious: **Seasons of spiritual dryness are not signs of God’s abandonment, but invitations to a deeper intimacy.**

What This Book Is (And Isn’t)

This is not a book of quick fixes or spiritual formulas. I won’t promise that if you follow seven easy steps, you’ll instantly feel God’s presence again. What I will offer you is something far more valuable: a biblical roadmap through the wilderness, testimonies of those who’ve walked this path before you, and practical tools to help you not just survive your dry season, but allow it to transform you.

You’ll discover that:

- Feeling distant from God doesn’t mean He’s distant from you
- Spiritual emotions are not the measure of spiritual maturity
- God often does His deepest work in us during the silent seasons
- Your dry season may be preparing you for your greatest season of fruitfulness

A Personal Confession

I write this book not as someone who has it all figured out, but as a fellow traveler who has spent months—sometimes years—wandering in spiritual deserts. I’ve been the worship leader who led others into God’s presence while feeling nothing myself. I’ve been the Bible study teacher who shared profound truths while my own devotional life felt like reading a phone book. I’ve prayed prayers that felt like they went nowhere and wondered if I’d ever feel that first-love passion again.

But I’ve also discovered that God is faithful even when we can’t feel His faithfulness. That He’s working even when we can’t see His hand. That sometimes He allows us to hunger so deeply that when He satisfies us again, we’ll never take His presence for granted.

Your Journey Ahead

In the pages that follow, you’ll meet believers who faced their own dark nights and emerged with faith refined like gold. You’ll learn from Mother Teresa’s radical obedience in the midst of spiritual darkness. You’ll be inspired by Francis Chan’s courage to leave comfort behind in pursuit of genuine intimacy with God. You’ll discover how Christine Caine served faithfully in hiddenness before God released her into global influence.

More importantly, you’ll learn practical, biblical strategies for navigating your own dry season:

- How to hold onto truth when feelings fail you
- Ways to rekindle your first love for Jesus
- The power of worship as spiritual warfare

- How community can spark personal revival
- Practical disciplines that position you for breakthrough

At the end of this book, you'll find a 90-day spiritual growth plan designed to help you take concrete steps toward renewal. Not as a legalistic checklist, but as a grace-filled journey back to the heart of God.

An Invitation to Hope

If you're reading this through tears, know that those tears are precious to God. If you're reading this with a heart that feels hard as stone, know that God specializes in bringing life from the deadest places. If you're reading this wondering if things will ever change, let me assure you: they will.

Not because you'll find the magic formula or finally become spiritual enough, but because we serve a God who promised, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). Even when you can't feel Him. Even when heaven seems silent. Even when your prayers feel like they're going nowhere.

Your dry season is not your destination—it's a corridor you're passing through. And on the other side waits a deeper, richer, more unshakeable faith than you've ever known. A faith that isn't dependent on feelings but rooted in the unchanging character of God. A faith that can worship in the wilderness and trust in the darkness.

So take a deep breath. Pour yourself a cup of coffee (or tea, if that's your thing). Find a quiet corner where you can be honest with God and yourself. And let's begin this journey together.

Because here's what I know to be true: The God who seems silent is often the God who is speaking most profoundly. We just need to learn how to listen with more than our emotions.

Your breakthrough may not come on page 10 or page 100. But if you'll walk this path with an open heart, I believe you'll look back on this dry season not with regret, but with gratitude. Because it was here, in the wilderness, that you learned to know God not just as a feeling, but as a Person. Not just as an experience, but as Emmanuel—God with us.

Even when we can't feel Him. Especially when we can't feel Him.

Let's begin.

A Prayer Before We Start:

Father, I bring before You every person reading these words who feels spiritually stuck, distant, or numb. Lord, You see their hearts. You know their struggles. You've collected every tear and heard every desperate prayer that seemed to go unanswered.

I ask that You would use this book as a tool of restoration in their lives. Open their eyes to see You in new ways. Soften hearts that have grown hard. Breathe on embers that seem nearly extinguished and fan them back into flame.

Most of all, Lord, reveal Yourself to them—not just as a feeling or an experience, but as the faithful God who never leaves or forsakes Your children. May this be the beginning of their journey from spiritual dryness to rivers of living water. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHAPTER 1

GOD IS STILL THERE IN THE SILENCE

“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?”

— Psalm 13:1-2

The letter arrived at the Vatican in 1979, and its contents would have shocked the world. Mother Teresa, the living saint of Calcutta, the woman whose very name had become synonymous with godliness and compassion, penned these words to her spiritual director: “Jesus has a very special love for you. As for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear.”

For nearly fifty years—fifty years!—this woman who the world saw as the embodiment of Christ’s love felt nothing but spiritual darkness. No warm presence of God during prayer. No supernatural comfort while she held the dying. No mystical experiences while she served the poorest of the poor. Just silence. Emptiness. A feeling of absence so profound that she wrote, “I am told God loves me, and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul.”

Yet here’s what staggers me: She never stopped serving. She never stopped praying. She never stopped believing. While feeling absolutely nothing, she built a global ministry that touched millions of lives. While experiencing what she called “terrible darkness,” she became a light to the world.

The Myth of Perpetual Spiritual Highs

We need to start here, with Mother Teresa’s story, because it demolishes one of the most damaging myths in modern Christianity: the belief that mature believers live in a constant state of spiritual euphoria. Somewhere along the way, we’ve bought into the lie that “real” Christians wake up every morning overwhelmed by God’s

presence, see visions during their quiet time, and float through life on a cloud of supernatural joy.

Social media hasn't helped. We scroll through feeds filled with spiritual highlight reels—friends posting about their life-changing devotions, pastors sharing their latest revelations, worship leaders describing how they were “undone” by God's presence. And we sit there, Bible open on our lap, feeling nothing, wondering what's wrong with us.

But what if I told you that your silence is not a sign of God's absence but potentially a sign of His deeper work?

What if the very fact that you're struggling, questioning, and refusing to give up despite feeling nothing is evidence of a faith more genuine than any emotional high?

What if God is more present in your darkness than He ever was in your light?

Understanding Spiritual Silence

Before we go further, we need to distinguish between different types of spiritual dryness. Not all silence is the same:

1. The Silence of Sin Sometimes we feel distant from God because unconfessed sin has created a barrier. Isaiah 59:2 tells us, “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you.” If you're living in deliberate disobedience, the path back to intimacy begins with repentance.

2. The Silence of Neglect Other times, we feel distant because we've actually become distant. We've let the disciplines slide. Prayer has become perfunctory. Bible reading has ceased. Community has been abandoned. This silence is often God's invitation to return to our first works.

3. The Silence of Grief Loss, disappointment, and trauma can create a numbing effect that makes it difficult to feel anything, including God's presence. This is not a spiritual failure but a human reality that God understands and honors.

4. The Silence of Growth And then there's the silence that Mother Teresa experienced—what mystics call “the dark night of the soul.” This is not punishment or abandonment, but a divine invitation to deeper faith. It's God weaning us off spiritual feelings so we can learn to love Him for who He is, not for what we feel.

The Biblical Reality of Divine Silence

If you're experiencing this fourth type of silence, you're in excellent biblical company. Consider:

Job sat in ashes for chapters while God remained silent, his friends offering explanations that only deepened his anguish. When God finally spoke, He didn't explain the silence—He revealed Himself in it.

David wrote psalm after psalm crying out, “How long, O Lord?” The man after God's own heart knew what it was like to feel forgotten, abandoned, and alone. Yet

he also wrote, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (Psalm 56:3). Not when I feel secure. When I am afraid.

Elijah experienced God in earthquake, wind, and fire, but God’s true presence came in “a gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:12)—so quiet it could easily be missed.

Jesus Himself cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). If the Son of God could experience the feeling of divine abandonment, why do we think we’re exempt?

Even **Paul**, who had been caught up to the third heaven, wrote about his “thorn in the flesh” and how he pleaded with God three times to remove it. God’s response? Not removal, but “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

What God Is Doing in the Silence

Here’s what took me years to understand: God’s silence is not His absence. In fact, He often does His deepest work when we can’t feel Him. Consider what happens in silence:

1. Purification of Motives When we can’t feel God, we discover why we really serve Him. Is it for the spiritual highs? The sense of purpose? The community approval? Or is it simply because He is worthy? Mother Teresa wrote, “I have come to love the darkness, for I believe now that it is a part of a very, very small part of Jesus’ darkness and pain on earth.”

2. Development of True Faith Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Not what we feel—what we do not see. Every day you choose to believe despite feeling nothing, your faith muscle grows stronger. You’re learning to walk by faith, not by sight (or feelings).

3. Deeper Intimacy Through Hiddenness Paradoxically, God often draws us closest when He feels farthest away. In Song of Solomon 3:1, the bride says, “All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him.” But this apparent absence created a desperation that led to deeper pursuit and ultimately, deeper intimacy.

4. Preparation for Greater Purpose Joseph spent years in slavery and prison, feeling forgotten by God and man. Moses spent forty years in the wilderness after his failure. David spent years running from Saul, living in caves, wondering if God’s promises would ever come to pass. In each case, the silence was preparation for promotion.

The Truth That Anchors Us

When feelings fail and heaven seems brass, we must anchor ourselves to truth. Not truth as we feel it, but truth as God has revealed it. Here are the unshakeable realities that hold us when nothing else will:

God's character hasn't changed. Malachi 3:6 declares, "I the LORD do not change." The God who saved you hasn't become a different God. His love hasn't diminished. His promises haven't expired. His nature remains constant even when your experience of Him fluctuates.

God's presence isn't dependent on your perception. In Joshua 1:9, God promises, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Notice He didn't say, "You'll always feel me with you." He said, "I will be with you." Period. Full stop. No conditions.

God's work continues in hiddenness. Zechariah 3:9 speaks of God's work being completed "in a single day." Often, God works for years in secret before revealing what He's been doing all along. Your silence may be the workshop where He's crafting your greatest message.

God's love remains fierce and unchanging. Romans 8:38-39 assures us that nothing—"neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation"—can separate us from God's love. Notice that feelings aren't mentioned. Because feelings don't determine reality.

Practical Steps for Standing in Silence

Knowing these truths intellectually is one thing. Living them out when your soul feels dead is another. Here are practical ways to stand firm when God feels absent:

1. Choose Truth Over Feelings Every morning, before your feet hit the floor, declare what you know to be true: "God loves me. God is with me. God is working all things for my good. I choose to believe this regardless of what I feel." Write these truths on cards and place them where you'll see them throughout the day.

2. Maintain the Disciplines (Even When They Feel Empty) Mother Teresa prayed for hours every day despite feeling nothing. Why? Because prayer isn't about feeling; it's about faithfulness. Set a sustainable rhythm of prayer, Scripture reading, and worship. Show up even when—especially when—you don't feel like it.

Think of it like a marriage. You don't stop talking to your spouse just because the honeymoon feelings have faded. You continue the relationship because of commitment, and often, the feelings follow the faithfulness.

3. Look for God in New Places Sometimes God feels absent in our usual spiritual practices because He's inviting us to encounter Him differently. If your quiet time feels dead, try:

- Taking prayer walks in nature
- Serving at a homeless shelter
- Reading different Bible translations
- Exploring liturgical prayers
- Sitting in silence without agenda
- Practicing the presence of God throughout mundane daily tasks

4. Journal the Journey During her dark night, Mother Teresa wrote letters that became a lifeline—not just for her, but for millions who would later read them. Keep a journal where you can be brutally honest with God. Write your doubts, fears, and frustrations. But also write what you choose to believe despite your feelings. Often, we can write our way to faith.

5. Resist the Temptation to Manufacture Feelings When we're desperate to feel God again, we might be tempted to:

- Attend increasingly emotional worship services
- Seek out sensational spiritual experiences
- Compare our insides to others' outsides
- Try to work up feelings through effort

Resist this. God is weaning you off spiritual milk to give you solid food. Don't go backward.

6. Find Your "Calcutta" Mother Teresa couldn't feel God's presence in prayer, but she could see Him in the faces of the dying. She wrote, "I see God in every human being. When I wash the leper's wounds, I feel I am nursing the Lord himself."

Where is your Calcutta? Where can you serve in such a way that you see Jesus? Sometimes when we can't feel God in the prayer closet, we find Him in the soup kitchen, the nursery, the hospital room, or the neighbor's yard.

7. Remember: This Too Shall Pass No season lasts forever. David wrote in Psalm 30:5, "Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." Your morning may not come tomorrow or next month or even next year. But it will come. And when it does, you'll have a testimony that will strengthen others who walk where you're walking now.

A Modern-Day Example

Let me tell you about Sarah, a worship leader at a thriving church. For three years, she led others into God's presence while feeling absolutely nothing herself. Every Sunday, she'd raise her hands and sing of God's goodness while inwardly battling thoughts of walking away from faith altogether.

"I felt like the biggest hypocrite," she told me. "Here I was, telling people to enter His presence with thanksgiving, and I couldn't even sense His presence in my own life. I'd go home after church and cry, wondering if I'd lost my salvation."

But Sarah kept showing up. She kept serving. She kept choosing to believe what she couldn't feel. And slowly, almost imperceptibly, something began to shift. Not in her circumstances, but in her. She developed a faith that wasn't dependent on emotional experiences. She learned to worship from her will, not her emotions.

Today, Sarah says those three years of silence were the most formative of her spiritual life. "I wouldn't choose to go through it again," she admits, "but I wouldn't trade what I learned. I know now that my faith isn't built on feelings."

It's built on the unchanging character of God. And that's a foundation that can weather any storm."

The Hidden Gift of Silence

Here's what Mother Teresa discovered in her fifty years of darkness: The silence of God can become a strange gift. She wrote, "I have begun to love my darkness, for I believe now that it is a very, very small part of Jesus' darkness and pain on earth."

When we can't feel God, we share in a unique fellowship with Christ, who experienced the ultimate divine silence on the cross. We understand, in a way those who've never experienced spiritual dryness cannot, what it means to walk by faith alone.

And perhaps most beautifully, we become safe harbors for others in their storms. When someone comes to us confessing they can't feel God anymore, we don't offer platitudes or quick fixes. We can sit with them in their darkness and say with hard-won authority, "I know. I've been there. And I can tell you—He's still there, even when you can't feel Him. Hold on. Morning is coming."

A Prayer for the Darkness

Lord, I confess that I often equate Your presence with my feelings. I've believed the lie that You've abandoned me when the truth is You're closer than ever, doing a deep work I cannot see. Help me to trust Your character over my emotions. Help me to stand on Your Word when everything in me wants to give up.

Like Mother Teresa, help me to serve You faithfully in the darkness. Like David, help me to pour out my honest heart while still choosing to trust. Like Job, help me to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15).

I choose to believe that You are here in this silence. I choose to believe that You're working all things for my good. I choose to believe that this darkness is not my destination but a passageway to deeper faith.

And Lord, when my morning comes—when I feel Your presence again—help me never to forget what I learned in the night. Use my story to encourage others who walk where I'm walking now.

In Jesus' name, who knew the ultimate darkness so I would never be alone in mine, Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. Which type of spiritual silence are you experiencing right now? How do you know? 2. What lies about God have you been tempted to believe during your dry season? 3. Read Psalm 13 in its entirety. How does David move from despair to hope even though his circumstances haven't changed? 4. What spiritual disciplines could you commit to maintaining even when they feel empty? 5. Where might God be inviting you to see Him in new ways during this season? 6. Write a prayer of

honest struggle but chosen faith. What truths about God will you choose to believe today regardless of your feelings?

Journal Space

Use this space to process what God might be saying to you through this chapter. Be honest about your struggles, but also intentional about declaring truth.

Remember: You are not alone. God has not abandoned you. And this silence, as painful as it is, may be preparing you for a faith and a ministry more powerful than anything you could have imagined.

Hold on. He's still there.

CHAPTER 2

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”

— Revelation 2:4-5

Francis Chan had it all. A megachurch of thousands. Best-selling books. Speaking invitations from around the world. By every external measure, he was at the pinnacle of ministry success. Yet in 2010, at the height of his influence, he did something that shocked the Christian world: he walked away.

Not from faith. Not from Jesus. But from the machinery of modern ministry that had slowly stolen his first love.

“I got up to preach one Sunday,” Francis later shared, “and I realized I was more worried about what people thought of my sermon than whether I had actually spent time with Jesus that week. I was reading the Bible to prepare messages, not to meet with God. I was praying impressive prayers in public while my private prayer life was almost non-existent. I had become a professional Christian.”

So Francis did what few have the courage to do. He resigned from his church, moved his family to the other side of the world, and disappeared into obscurity. No platform. No spotlight. No book deals. Just a man desperately trying to find his way back to his first love.

What he discovered in that season of hiddenness would revolutionize not just his ministry, but his entire understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

The Anatomy of Lost Love

Before we explore Francis’s journey back, we need to understand how first love gets lost in the first place. It rarely happens overnight. Like a marriage that slowly grows cold, our relationship with Jesus can imperceptibly shift from passionate pursuit to religious routine.