

40 Weeks of Purpose

Week 14

When God Seems Distant

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT FROM LAST WEEK:

God wants ALL of me.

God doesn't want to be an appointment in your calendar, regardless of how long that appointment is... God wants all of your time, your energy and your thoughts.

VERSE TO MEMORIZE FROM LAST WEEK:

"Love the Lord your God with all your...." – Deut 6:5

What does Heart, Soul and Might mean to you?

QUESTION TO CONSIDER FROM LAST WEEK:

What is more pleasing to God right now, my public worship or my private worship?

Are we acting a certain way just for others to see?

- God is real, no matter how you feel
- It's easy to worship God when things are going great in your life... When He has provided food, friends, family, health and happy situations
- But circumstances are not always pleasant
 - How do you worship God then?
- It's easy when you can see the hand of God all around you, surrounding you with Love
 - But, what do you do when God seems a million miles away?
- The deepest level of worship is:
 - Praising God even in spite of pain
 - Thanking God even while experiencing a trial

- Trusting God even while being tempted
- Surrendering to God even while suffering
- Loving God even when He seems distant
- There are two common sayings that often describe relationships
 - 1) Distance makes the heart grow fonder
 - 2) Out of sight, out of mind
- Which one describes your relationship with God?
- Friendships are often tested by separation and silence
 - You often get divided by a physical distance or become unable to talk
- In your friendship with God, you won't always **FEEL** close to Him
- In order to mature your relationship, God will sometimes test it with periods of **SEEMING** separation
 - Times when it feels like God has abandoned you
- Besides Jesus, who do we know who was closest to God?
- Look how David expressed these times of absence from God:
- Psalm 10:1 NIV
 - 1) Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?
- Psalm 22:1 NLT
 - 1) My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me? Why do you remain so distant? Why do you ignore my cries for help?
- Psalm 43:2 MSG
 - 2) I counted on you, God. Why did you walk out on me? Why am I pacing the floor, wringing my hands over these outrageous people?
- Of course, God never really left David, and he never really leaves us
- God has promised many times:

- Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)

8) The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

- But, God didn't promise that we would always **FEEL** His presence

- Every one goes through these periods of distance from God at least once

- It's painful, disconcerting and a little bit scary, but it's vital to your growth

- Job knew this, and was confident:

- Job 23:8-10 (NLT)

8) “I go east, but he is not there. I go west, but I cannot find him.

9) I do not see him in the north, for he is hidden. I turn to the south, but I cannot find him.

10) But he knows where I am going. And when he has tested me like gold in a fire, he will pronounce me innocent.

- When God seems distant, it's common to think that it's your fault

- You might think that God is angry with you for what you have done

- You might think that He is disciplining you for some sin

- In fact, sin does disconnect us from intimate fellowship with God

- But often this feeling of abandonment has nothing to do with sin

- It is simply a test of your faith

- Will you continue to love, trust, obey and worship God even when you have no sense of His presence or visible evidence of His work in your life?

- God is more concerned that we trust Him than that we feel Him

- Faith, not Feelings is what pleases God

- The situations that will stretch your faith the most will be those times when life falls apart and God is nowhere to be found

- How do you praise God when you don't understand what's happening in your life?

- How do you stay connected to God in a crisis when you don't feel God near?

- How do you keep your eyes on Jesus when they are full of tears?

• Here are **FOUR** suggestions:

1) Tell God exactly how you feel

• Pour out your heart to God

• Unload every emotion that you are feeling

• Look at the example of Job:

• Job 7:11 (NIV)

11) “Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit,
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

• Oddly enough, admitting your hopelessness to God can be a statement of faith

• Look at what David said:

• Psalms 116:10 (NLT)

10) I believed in you, so I prayed, “I am deeply troubled, LORD.”

• Huh? “I trust God, but I’m deeply troubled”... It sounds like a contradiction

• This statement actually reveals his faith

• First, he believed in God

• Secondly, he believed that God would hear his prayer

• Lastly, he believed God would let him say what he felt and still love him

2) Focus on what God is

• Regardless of the changing circumstances in your life and how they make you feel

• Concentrate on the unchanging nature of God’s character

• Remind yourself of what you know is eternally true:

• God is good

• God loves you

• God is always with you

• God knows exactly what you are going through

• God has a wonderful plan for your life

• “Never doubt in the dark, what God has told you in the light..”

3) Trust God to keep His promises

- During times of spiritual darkness, you have to rely on the promises of God and not your emotions
 - Emotions are shallow
 - God's Promises are as deep as it gets... Solid Bedrock
- Trust God to fulfill His promises regardless of the circumstances
- Look at what Job said:
- Job 13:15 (CEV)

15) God may kill me, but still I will trust him

- When you feel abandoned by God, but continue to trust in Him, then you worship him in the deepest way possible

4) Remember what God has already done for you

- Even if God stops completely today, and never does anything else for you, He would still deserve your continual praise for the rest of your life because of what He has done for you already
- God gave his only son to die for you on the cross, and that is the greatest reason for worship
- We forget the cruel details of the agonizing sacrifice that God made on our behalf
- God gave his own son's life for your life
 - That alone is worthy of your continual thanks and praise
 - Never again should you wonder what you have to be thankful for...

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WEEK:

God is real, no matter how I feel

VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:

"I will never leave you. I will never forsake you." – Hebrews 13:5

QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:

How can I stay focused on God, even when He seems distant?