

# HOW TO GROW SPIRITUALLY WHEN YOU FEEL STUCK

OVERCOMING DRY SEASONS AND  
REKINDLING YOUR FIRE FOR GOD



## 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 The passion that used to wake you up early for devotions has been replaced by a spiritual numbness that frightens you.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.*

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### **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.*

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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.

Remember your first days with Jesus? Maybe you were fifteen, or twenty-five, or fifty-five when He captured your heart. But regardless of when it happened, you probably remember:

- The insatiable hunger for His Word—you couldn't put your Bible down
- The pure joy of worship—every song felt written just for you
- The urgency of prayer—you talked to Him about everything
- The boldness in sharing—you couldn't stop telling people about Jesus
- The simplicity of faith—you believed Him for impossible things
- The sweetness of His presence—just being with Him was enough

But somewhere along the way, something shifted. The Bible became a textbook instead of a love letter. Prayer became a shopping list instead of a conversation. Church became a routine instead of a celebration. Faith became a belief system instead of a relationship.

How does this happen? Let me identify some common culprits:

**1. The Professionalization of Faith** Like Francis, many of us turn our relationship with Jesus into a job. We study the Bible to teach others, not to encounter Him. We pray to lead others, not to commune with Him. We worship to create an atmosphere, not to adore Him. Soon, we're running on the fumes of yesterday's encounter.

**2. The Accumulation of Disappointment** That prayer that went unanswered. That healing that didn't come. That promise that seems delayed. That betrayal by other believers. Layer upon layer of disappointment can create a protective shell around our hearts. We still believe, but we no longer trust with abandon.

**3. The Distraction of Blessing** Ironically, God's blessings can become barriers to intimacy. The very things He gives us—ministry opportunities, relationships, success, influence—can slowly take His place. We fall in love with the gifts and forget the Giver.

**4. The Numbing Effect of Sin** Not necessarily the "big" sins, but the thousand little compromises. The critical spirit we've nursed. The unforgiveness we've harbored. The materialism we've embraced. The prayerlessness we've excused. Sin doesn't just separate us from God; it numbs our affection for Him.

**5. The Weariness of Warfare** Spiritual battles, prolonged trials, and relentless opposition can wear down even the strongest faith. We grow weary in well-doing. We lose our fight. We settle for survival instead of passion.

## The Divine Invitation

Here's what amazes me about Revelation 2:4-5. Jesus doesn't condemn the Ephesian church for losing their first love. He doesn't write them off or look for a replacement. Instead, He offers a pathway back: "Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first."

This is the heart of our God. He doesn't just diagnose our coldness; He prescribes the cure. He doesn't just expose our wandering; He illuminates the way home. And notice—He doesn't say, "Try to feel the things you felt at first." Feelings are the fruit, not the root. He says, "Do the things you did at first."

This is exactly what Francis Chan discovered in his season of hiddenness.

## Francis's Journey Back

When Francis moved his family to Asia, he stripped away everything that had complicated his faith. No staff to manage. No sermons to prepare. No expectations to meet. Just a man, his Bible, and endless hours to rekindle what had been lost.

"I started reading the Bible like I did when I first got saved," Francis recalls. "Not to prepare a message, but just to hear from God. I'd read a chapter and then sit in silence, asking, 'Lord, what are you saying to ME through this?'"

He began praying simple, honest prayers. Not the eloquent public prayers he'd perfected, but the raw, desperate cries of a man who knew he'd traded the pearl of great price for plastic beads.

He started sharing his faith again—not from a platform, but one-on-one with neighbors who'd never heard of his books or ministry. The joy of seeing someone encounter Jesus for the first time reignited something deep within him.

Most importantly, he learned to waste time with God again. "I used to schedule my time with God like a meeting," he confessed. "Fifteen minutes of prayer, thirty minutes of study, done. But love doesn't watch the clock. I learned to sit with Him without agenda, to enjoy Him without purpose, to seek His face instead of His hand."

What emerged from that season wasn't just a refreshed Francis Chan, but a completely transformed understanding of ministry. When he eventually returned to public ministry, everything had changed. The performance was gone. The pressure was gone. The professionalism was gone. What remained was a man simply in love with Jesus, inviting others to share that love.

## The Things We Did at First

So what are these "first things" Jesus calls us back to? Let's get practical. Here are the common elements of first love that we need to reclaim:

**1. Unhurried Time** When you first fell in love with Jesus, you had time for Him. Hours could pass in His presence without you noticing. You didn't read your Bible to check a box; you read it because you couldn't stay away.

*Return Practice:* Set aside one unhurried hour this week with no agenda except to be with Jesus. No prayer list. No study guide. Just you, your Bible, and an open heart. Read until something strikes you, then stop and talk to Him about it.

**2. Simple Wonder** Remember when a single verse could undo you? When the fact that God loved YOU was enough to bring tears? When worship songs weren't evaluated for their production quality but for how they helped you express your heart?

*Return Practice:* Read John 3:16 as if you've never seen it before. Substitute your name for "the world." Sit with the wonder that the God of the universe gave His only Son for you. Let yourself feel the weight of that love again.

**3. Honest Conversation** In the beginning, you told God everything. Your hopes, fears, dreams, failures—nothing was off limits. Prayer wasn't formal; it was real. You didn't use religious words; you used your words.

*Return Practice:* Write God a letter. Tell Him how you really feel about where you are spiritually. Don't edit yourself. Don't try to sound spiritual. Just be honest. Then listen for His response in His Word.

**4. Eager Obedience** When you first met Jesus, obedience wasn't a burden—it was a joy. If He said it, you did it. Not out of duty, but out of love. His commands weren't restrictions; they were invitations to life.

*Return Practice:* Ask God to show you one area where you've been delaying obedience. Don't overthink it—you probably already know what it is. Take one concrete step of obedience today, not to earn His love but to express yours.

**5. Reckless Faith** First love believes big. It prays audacious prayers. It attempts impossible things. It isn't paralyzed by past disappointments or potential failures. It simply trusts.

*Return Practice:* What impossible thing did you used to believe God for that you've stopped praying about? Write it down. Dare to pray for it again, not with the weariness of repetition but with the faith of first love.

**6. Unashamed Witness** New believers can't stop talking about Jesus. They share their faith with the boldness of someone who's found treasure and wants everyone to experience the wealth. They don't know enough to be self-conscious.

*Return Practice:* This week, share one thing God has done for you with someone who doesn't know Him. Don't preach. Just share your story with the enthusiasm of first love.

**7. Community Connection** Remember how you couldn't wait for church? How you hung on every word of teaching? How you loved being with God's people? Community wasn't an obligation; it was oxygen.

*Return Practice:* Re-engage with authentic community. Join a small group. Have coffee with a mature believer. Don't just attend church; connect with the church.

## **The Barriers to Return**

Now, let me be honest. Returning to first love isn't as simple as following a checklist. There are real barriers that must be addressed:

**The Barrier of Pride** It's humbling to admit we've lost our first love. We'd rather pretend everything's fine than acknowledge how far we've drifted. But Jesus already knows. He's not waiting for us to get it together; He's waiting for us to come home.

*Breaking Through:* Pray David's prayer from Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

**The Barrier of Busyness** "I don't have time for extended devotions." "My schedule won't allow for unhurried prayer." "I have too many responsibilities." We've all said it. But busyness is often a symptom of misplaced priorities, not unavoidable reality.

*Breaking Through:* Do a time audit. Track how you spend your hours for one week. You'll likely find time for what you truly value. What needs to be eliminated to make room for first love?

**The Barrier of Cynicism** Maybe you've been hurt by the church. Maybe you've seen too much hypocrisy. Maybe you've experienced too much disappointment. Cynicism feels protective, but it's actually poisonous.

*Breaking Through:* Separate your hurt with people from your relationship with Jesus. He's never failed you, even when His followers have. Choose to trust Him again, even if you can't trust them.

**The Barrier of Habitual Sin** That secret sin you've made peace with. That compromise you've rationalized. That disobedience you've renamed. Sin doesn't just grieve God; it deadens our affection for Him.

*Breaking Through:* Come into the light. Confess to God and to a trusted believer. Get help if needed. Freedom is possible, and it's the pathway back to first love.

**The Barrier of Substitutes** We've replaced intimacy with activity, presence with performance, relationship with religion. We've settled for less because less feels safer, more manageable, more predictable.

*Breaking Through:* Identify your substitutes. What have you allowed to take the place of genuine relationship with Jesus? Name them, repent of them, and return to the real thing.

## **The Beauty of Second-First Love**

Here's something I've discovered: Returning to first love doesn't mean recreating the past. You can't go back to being a new believer any more than a married couple can go back to being newlyweds. But what you can have is something even better—a mature love that combines the passion of first love with the depth of tested faith.

Francis Chan's faith today isn't the same as when he first met Jesus. It's deeper. Richer. More anchored. He still has the wonder, but it's coupled with wisdom. He still has the passion, but it's paired with patience. He still has the zeal, but it's wedded to understanding.

This is what Jesus offers—not a return to spiritual infancy, but a revival of spiritual intimacy. Not a recreation of the past, but a restoration of passion. Not just first love, but first love grown up.

## **A Practical Pathway Back**

Let me give you a practical 30-day journey back to first love. Don't rush this. Take it one day at a time:

### **Week 1: Remember**

- Day 1-2: Journal about your early days with Jesus. What was it like? What did you do? How did you feel?
- Day 3-4: Read your old journals, if you have them. Look at highlighted verses in your Bible. Remember.
- Day 5-7: Thank God for specific moments from your journey. Rehearse His faithfulness.

### **Week 2: Repent**

- Day 8-10: Ask God to show you where you've drifted. Be specific in your confession.
- Day 11-12: Make amends where needed. Clear up unfinished business.
- Day 13-14: Receive His forgiveness fully. Don't carry what He's already removed.

### **Week 3: Return**

- Day 15-17: Implement one "first thing" practice each day.
- Day 18-20: Eliminate distractions. Say no to good things to say yes to the best thing.
- Day 21: Sabbath. Spend an entire day focused on Jesus.

### **Week 4: Remain**

- Day 22-24: Establish sustainable rhythms. What practices will you maintain?
- Day 25-27: Find accountability. Who will help you stay the course?
- Day 28-30: Celebrate the journey. Thank God for what He's done and commit to what's ahead.

## **The Testimony of Others**

Francis Chan isn't alone in his journey back to first love. Throughout history, God's people have discovered the way back:

**John Wesley** experienced a dramatic cooling of his faith after years of methodical religion. It wasn't until his heart was "strangely warmed" at Aldersgate that he rediscovered first love—launching a revival that swept nations.

**Amy Carmichael** wrote about seasons where India felt more like a prison than a calling. But through simple obedience and daily choices to love, she found her way back to passion—serving joyfully for fifty-five years without a furlough.

**A.W. Tozer** lamented the "lost wonder" in the modern church and prescribed the cure: "Retire from the world each day to some private spot... Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God's presence envelops you."

Even the Apostle Paul, near the end of his life, had to guard against losing first love. He urged Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God" (2 Timothy 1:6). The flame was still there, but it needed stirring.

## **When the Journey Feels Long**

Can I be honest? The journey back to first love isn't always quick. Francis Chan spent months in obscurity. For some, it takes years to fully return. Don't be discouraged if your heart doesn't instantly ignite. Love—real love—often kindles slowly.

Think of it like a marriage that's grown cold. You don't fall back in love overnight. You make daily choices. You do loving things even when you don't feel loving. You remember what brought you together. You clear away the clutter. You invest time. And slowly, almost imperceptibly, warmth returns.

The same is true with Jesus. Every time you choose to open His Word when you don't feel like it, love grows. Every time you worship through the dryness, love grows. Every time you obey despite the cost, love grows. Every time you serve in His name, love grows.

## **The Promise of Return**

Jesus' words to the Ephesian church end with a promise: "To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). The way back to first love leads to life—abundant, eternal, overflowing life.

But we don't have to wait for heaven to taste this fruit. Every person I know who has made the journey back to first love testifies to the same thing: What they find on the other side is better than what they left behind. The second-first love is deeper, richer, more satisfying than the first-first love ever was.

Francis Chan says it this way: "I thought I was giving up everything when I left my church and platform. But what I found in the simplicity of just loving Jesus was worth more than all I'd left behind. I didn't lose a thing. I gained everything."

## **Your Invitation**

So here's my question: What's keeping you from returning? What excuse, what fear, what barrier stands between you and first love? Whatever it is, it's not worth it. Nothing—absolutely nothing—is worth missing the joy of intimate relationship with Jesus.

He's calling you back. Not to performance. Not to perfection. Not to religious activity. But to love. Simple, pure, transforming love.

The path is clear:

- Remember the height from which you've fallen
- Repent with sincere heart
- Return to the things you did at first

It really is that simple. And that difficult. And that possible. And that worth it.

## A Prayer of Return

*Jesus, I confess that I've complicated what You made simple. I've professionalized what You meant to be personal. I've lost the wonder, the joy, the simplicity of just loving You.*

*Like Francis Chan, I want to strip away everything that hinders love. Like the church at Ephesus, I want to return to first things. Not out of guilt, but out of desire. Not from duty, but from devotion.*

*Show me what needs to go. Show me what needs to return. Give me courage to make whatever changes are necessary. I don't want to waste another day in the far country when You're waiting to welcome me home.*

*Rekindle the fire, Lord. Fan the flame. Restore the joy of my salvation. Help me to love You with the passion of first love and the wisdom of mature faith.*

*I choose to remember. I choose to repent. I choose to return.*

*In Your precious name, Amen.*

## Reflection Questions

1. What specific aspects of your first love for Jesus do you miss most? Why?
2. Which of the five "culprits" of lost love resonates most with your experience?
3. What would it look like for you to "do the things you did at first" in your current season of life?
4. What barriers to returning to first love do you need to address?
5. If you stripped away all the complexity, what one simple practice could help you reconnect with Jesus?
6. Who in your life models sustained first love? What can you learn from them?

## Journal Space

*Use this space to write your own "return story." Where have you been? Where are you now? Where is Jesus calling you?*

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Remember: The journey back to first love isn't about recreating the past. It's about reclaiming the simplicity, wonder, and joy of just being with Jesus. He's waiting. And He's worth it.

# Chapter 3: Spiritual Dryness Is an Invitation, Not a Punishment

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." —James 1:2-4*

John Piper sat at his desk, staring at the blank page before him. The irony wasn't lost on him. Here he was, a man who had written extensively about desiring God, finding himself in a season where he desired nothing. The passion that had fueled decades of ministry had seemingly evaporated. The Bible that once thrilled his soul now felt like cardboard in his mouth. Prayer, which had been his lifeline, now felt like shouting into a void.

It was 2004, and one of Christianity's most influential voices was experiencing what the ancient mystics called "the dark night of the soul."

"I had always preached that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him," Piper later reflected. "But what do you do when satisfaction seems impossible? When joy feels like a foreign language? When the very desire for God seems to have died?"

Rather than hide this struggle, Piper did something courageous—he wrote about it. The result was "When I Don't Desire God," a brutally honest exploration of spiritual dryness. But what made the book revolutionary wasn't just its honesty. It was Piper's radical reframing of spiritual dryness: What if these desert seasons aren't God's punishment for our failures, but His invitation to deeper grace?

## The Punishment Paradigm

Before we can embrace dryness as invitation, we need to confront the lie most of us believe: that spiritual dryness is punishment. This toxic theology whispers:

- "If you were more faithful, you'd feel God's presence"
- "If you prayed harder, heaven wouldn't feel like brass"
- "If you had more faith, you wouldn't struggle like this"
- "If God really loved you, He wouldn't let you feel this way"

This punishment paradigm does incredible damage. It adds shame to our already heavy burden. It makes us hide our struggles instead of bringing them to light. It causes us to fake spiritual vitality while dying inside. Worst of all, it fundamentally misrepresents the heart of God.

Think about it: Would a loving father punish his child by withdrawing his presence when the child needs him most? Would a good shepherd abandon the sheep specifically when it's lost and frightened? Would a faithful friend ghost you as discipline for your imperfections?

Yet this is exactly what we accuse God of doing when we interpret dryness as punishment.

## The Biblical Pattern of Invitation

Scripture tells a different story. Throughout the Bible, we see God using wilderness experiences not as punishment, but as preparation. Consider:

**Moses and the Burning Bush** Moses didn't encounter the burning bush in Egypt's palace but in Midian's wilderness. Forty years of tending sheep in obscurity weren't punishment for killing the Egyptian—they were preparation for leading God's flock. The wilderness stripped away the prince of Egypt and revealed the servant of God.

**Israel's Wilderness Journey** Deuteronomy 8:2 reveals God's purpose: "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands." Not punishment—revelation and preparation.

**Elijah's Cave Experience** After his greatest victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah found himself in a cave, depressed and ready to die. God didn't rebuke him for his emotional state. Instead, He invited him into a new understanding of divine presence—not in the earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the gentle whisper.

**Jesus in the Wilderness** Even our Savior was "led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Matthew 4:1). The Spirit didn't lead Him there as punishment but as preparation for public ministry. The wilderness revealed His identity and solidified His mission.

**Paul's Thorn** When Paul pleaded for his thorn to be removed, God didn't say, "I'm punishing you." He said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The thorn was an invitation to experience grace in a new dimension.

## What Dryness Is Actually Doing

If spiritual dryness isn't punishment, what is it? Through his own dark night, Piper discovered several purposes God accomplishes in our desert seasons:

**1. Dryness Reveals Our True Foundation** When the feelings fade, we discover what we're really building on. Are we following God for the spiritual highs, or because He's worthy regardless of how we feel? Dryness strips away the extras and shows us the foundation.

During his dry season, Piper wrote: "I discovered I had been subsisting on yesterday's manna. I was coasting on past experiences, past insights, past encounters. God was inviting me to seek fresh bread, but first He had to show me how stale my current supply had become."

**2. Dryness Develops Spiritual Muscle** Just as physical muscles grow through resistance, spiritual strength develops through difficulty. When praise comes easily, our praise muscle

remains weak. But when we choose to worship through tears, declare truth through doubt, and pursue God through darkness, we develop a faith that can weather any storm.

A weight lifter shared this insight with me: "The burn means it's working. When your muscles shake and scream, that's when they're actually growing. Comfort never built strength." The same is true spiritually. The very struggle we want to avoid is producing the strength we desperately need.

**3. Dryness Deepens Our Desperation** Satisfied people don't seek. Comfortable people don't cry out. Self-sufficient people don't surrender. Sometimes God allows dryness to create a holy desperation that drives us deeper than we've ever gone before.

"I had become too familiar with holy things," Piper confessed. "I could preach about God without seeking God. I could write about joy without fighting for joy. The dryness forced me back to basics—crying out like a starving man for bread."

**4. Dryness Purifies Our Motives** Why do you serve God? Why do you read His Word? Why do you gather with His people? When the emotional payoff disappears, our true motives are revealed. This isn't to shame us but to refine us.

A missionary in China once told me: "I went to the mission field full of zeal and romance. Then loneliness hit. Discouragement hit. Dryness hit. I wanted to quit every day for two years. But in that desert, God purified my motives. I learned to serve Him simply because He's worthy, not because it felt good. That's when my real ministry began."

**5. Dryness Prepares Us for Others** 2 Corinthians 1:4 tells us God "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." Your desert experience is not just for you—it's preparation to minister to others who will walk where you're walking.

## The Shift from Punishment to Invitation

So how do we make this crucial shift in perspective? How do we stop seeing dryness as punishment and start seeing it as invitation? Here are practical steps:

**1. Examine Your Theology** What you believe about God determines how you interpret your experiences. If you believe in a God who is angry, distant, and punitive, you'll interpret dryness as rejection. But if you believe in a God who is loving, present, and purposeful, you'll interpret the same dryness as preparation.

*Practice:* Write down what you truly believe about God's character. Not what you think you should believe, but what your reactions reveal you actually believe. Then compare it to what Scripture actually says about His nature.

**2. Look for the Invitation** In every desert, God extends an invitation. The question is: What is He inviting you into?

- Deeper dependence?
- Greater authenticity?
- Renewed desperation?
- Fresh revelation?
- Purified motives?
- Preparation for ministry?

*Practice:* Ask God directly: "Lord, what are You inviting me into through this dryness?" Then listen. Journal what comes to mind. Look for patterns in what He's been teaching you.

**3. Reframe Your Story** The story you tell yourself about your dryness shapes your experience of it. Are you telling a punishment story or a preparation story? A rejection narrative or a refinement narrative?

*Practice:* Rewrite your current struggle as an invitation story. Instead of "God has abandoned me because I'm not good enough," try "God is preparing me for something that requires a deeper faith than I currently possess."

**4. Embrace the Process** James says to "let perseverance finish its work." There's a completion that comes through endurance. Don't short-circuit the process by seeking quick fixes or manufactured emotions.

*Practice:* Instead of praying only for the dryness to end, pray for grace to learn everything God wants to teach you in it. Pray for patience with the process and trust in the Potter's hands.

## Piper's Practical Discoveries

Through his own journey, Piper discovered practical helps for fighting for joy when joy seems impossible:

**1. Preach Truth to Yourself** "I learned to stop listening to myself and start preaching to myself," Piper wrote. "My feelings were preaching despair. My circumstances were preaching abandonment. I had to counter-preach with truth."

Every morning, before his feet hit the floor, Piper would declare truths like:

- "God is for me, not against me"
- "This light momentary affliction is preparing an eternal weight of glory"
- "Nothing can separate me from God's love"
- "He who began a good work will complete it"

**2. Feed on Scripture Strategically** During dryness, not all Scripture lands the same way. Piper found certain books especially helpful:

- Psalms (especially the lament psalms) for honest expression
- Isaiah 40-66 for promises of comfort

- Romans 8 for unshakeable truth
- Philippians for joy in suffering

He also discovered the power of memorization: "When I couldn't feel Scripture, I could still recall it. Hidden word became my lifeline when fresh word felt dead."

**3. Simplify Spiritual Disciplines** "I had to admit that my spiritual disciplines had become performative," Piper confessed. "I was trying to maintain a 'mature Christian' routine that was actually killing my soul."

He simplified:

- Instead of trying to pray for an hour, he prayed honestly for five minutes
- Instead of reading five chapters, he meditated on five verses
- Instead of complex theological study, he read simple devotionals
- Instead of leading worship, he listened to others worship

**4. Fight in Community** "The biggest mistake I made was trying to fight through dryness alone," Piper reflected. "Pride kept me from admitting my struggle to others who could have helped bear the burden."

When he finally opened up to trusted friends, he discovered:

- Others had walked this path and survived
- Shame thrives in secrecy but dies in the light
- Sometimes others can believe for us when we can't believe for ourselves
- Practical help often comes through community

**5. Do the Next Right Thing** When the big picture feels overwhelming, Piper learned to focus on the next small obedience. "I couldn't feel my way to faith, but I could act my way forward. Each small obedience was a deposit of trust that accumulated over time."

## Modern Stories of Invitation Accepted

Piper's story is far from unique. Let me share others who discovered invitation in their dryness:

**Sarah's Story: From Performance to Peace** Sarah was a worship leader who lost her voice—literally and spiritually. A vocal injury sidelined her from leading, and with it went her sense of purpose and connection to God. "I didn't realize how much my identity was wrapped up in my ministry until it was gone," she shared.

But in the silence, God issued an invitation: "Will you worship Me when no one is watching? Will you sing to Me when no one can hear?" Sarah discovered private worship in her living room that was more powerful than anything she'd experienced on stage. When her voice eventually returned, she led from a completely different place—not performing for God but responding to Him.

**Marcus's Story: From Success to Surrender** Marcus built a successful business that became his idol. When the economy crashed and he lost everything, he also lost his faith foundation. "I realized I had been worshipping the God who blessed me, not the God who is worthy regardless of my circumstances."

His financial desert became a spiritual invitation to discover God as Provider in new ways. "When I had money, I never really trusted God for daily bread. Poverty taught me dependence. Now that finances have stabilized, I still live with that desert-learned dependence. The dryness gave me a gift I couldn't have received any other way."

**Linda's Story: From Answers to Mystery** Linda was the woman with all the answers—Bible study leader, conference speaker, author of devotionals. Then her daughter was diagnosed with terminal cancer. "Every Scripture I'd taught others felt hollow. Every promise I'd claimed felt empty. I went from being the teacher to knowing nothing."

But in admitting she had no answers, Linda discovered a God who is comfortable with mystery. "I had reduced God to principles and promises. The desert introduced me to His presence—raw, unexplainable, but absolutely real. I still don't have answers about my daughter's death, but I have Him. That's enough."

## **The Glorious Secret**

Here's what Piper and countless others have discovered—the secret that transforms everything: The invitation hidden in dryness is not primarily about what God wants to do FOR you, but what He wants to do IN you. And ultimately, it's about WHO HE WANTS TO BE TO YOU.

In abundance, God is often the Blessor, the Provider, the Giver of good gifts. These are true and beautiful aspects of His character. But in dryness, we discover:

- God as Sustainer when there's nothing left to sustain us
- God as Comforter when comfort seems impossible
- God as Presence when we can't sense His presence
- God as Faithful when everything feels faithless
- God as Enough when everything else is stripped away

This is the glorious secret: Dryness is not about God taking something from you. It's about Him giving you more of Himself—dimensions of His character you can only discover in the desert.

## **Accepting the Invitation**

So how do we move from seeing dryness as punishment to embracing it as invitation? Here's a practical pathway:

### **Week 1: Recognize and Release**

- Acknowledge where you've believed the punishment lie
- Confess any bitterness toward God for allowing dryness
- Release Him from your expectations of how He should work
- Thank Him for trusting you with this desert experience

### **Week 2: Reframe and Receive**

- Write out your desert story as an invitation narrative
- Look for Biblical parallels to your experience
- Ask God what specific invitation He's extending
- Receive the grace to walk through this season

### **Week 3: Respond and Rest**

- Take one small step toward the invitation you're sensing
- Rest from striving to manufacture feelings
- Focus on faithfulness over feelings
- Trust the process even when you can't see progress

### **Week 4: Record and Remember**

- Journal what you're learning in the desert
- Create markers of God's faithfulness during dryness
- Share your journey with trusted friends
- Prepare to minister to others from your desert discoveries

## **When Dryness Lingers**

What if you've done all this and the dryness persists? What if you've accepted the invitation but the desert seems endless? Remember:

**God's Timeline Is Not Ours** Joseph spent thirteen years between his dreams and their fulfillment. Moses spent forty years in the wilderness before his calling commenced. Jesus spent thirty years in preparation for three years of ministry. God is never in a hurry.

**Some Invitations Take Years to Unwrap** The deeper the work God is doing, the longer it often takes. Quick fixes produce shallow change. Lasting transformation requires time.

**The Desert Has Seasons** Even within dryness, there are variations. Some days are harder than others. Some weeks bring glimpses of refreshment. Pay attention to the subtle shifts.

**You're Not Alone** Every spiritual giant has walked through extended dryness. You're in the company of saints, not the exception to the rule.

## **The Promise Beyond the Process**

James 1:4 promises that when perseverance finishes its work, we'll be "mature and complete, not lacking anything." This isn't prosperity gospel—it's spiritual reality. The you that emerges from accepted invitation is not the you that entered the desert.

Piper testifies: "I wouldn't choose to go through that dark night again. It was the hardest season of my spiritual life. But I wouldn't trade what I learned for anything. God didn't just restore my joy—He deepened it. He didn't just renew my passion—He purified it. He didn't just end my dryness—He transformed it into a well of ministry to others."

## Your Response to the Invitation

Right now, in your dryness, God is extending an invitation. Not to more religious activity. Not to greater spiritual performance. But to know Him in ways you've never known Him before. To experience dimensions of His character only revealed in the desert. To develop a faith that can thrive anywhere because it's rooted in Who He is, not how you feel.

Will you accept the invitation? Will you stop seeing your dryness as punishment and start seeing it as preparation? Will you trust that the God who led you into the desert is the God who will lead you through it?

The invitation stands. Grace awaits. The desert has gifts to give that no other landscape can offer.

Accept the invitation. The journey may be difficult, but the destination is glorious.

## A Prayer for Perspective Shift

*Father, forgive me for believing the lie that my dryness is Your punishment. I renounce the false theology that says You've abandoned me because I've failed You. I choose to believe what Your Word declares—that You are good, that You are present, that You are working all things for my good.*

*Open my eyes to see the invitation hidden in this desert. What are You calling me to discover? What are You preparing me to receive? What aspects of Your character do You want to reveal?*

*I accept Your invitation, Lord. Not grudgingly, but with growing anticipation. I trust that You never waste our pain, never abandon Your children, never work without purpose. Transform my perspective from punishment to preparation.*

*Give me grace for the journey. Patience with the process. Trust in Your timeline. And hope that the desert is not my destination but my pathway to deeper intimacy with You.*

*In Jesus' name, who knew His own wilderness and emerged victorious, Amen.*

## Reflection Questions

1. In what ways have you believed the "punishment paradigm" about your spiritual dryness?
2. Looking at the Biblical examples, which wilderness story most resonates with your current experience?
3. Of the five things dryness accomplishes, which do you see God doing in your life right now?
4. What specific invitation might God be extending to you through your current desert?
5. What practical step from Piper's discoveries could you implement this week?
6. How might your current dryness be preparing you to minister to others in the future?

## Journal Space

*Use this space to rewrite your dryness story from a punishment narrative to an invitation narrative. What changes when you view your desert through the lens of God's purposeful love rather than punitive distance?*

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Remember: Your dryness is not evidence of God's displeasure but of His deep trust in you. He only leads into the desert those He's preparing for greater things. Accept the invitation. The wilderness has treasures that can be found nowhere else.

# Chapter 4: Get Back in the Word (Even When It Feels Empty)

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." —Isaiah 55:10-11*

David Wilkerson stood at the window of his Times Square office, watching the chaos of New York City below. It was 1992, and the legendary pastor who had founded Teen Challenge and authored "The Cross and the Switchblade" was in the deepest spiritual drought of his life.

"I would open my Bible and feel nothing," he later wrote in his newsletter. "The words that once leaped off the page now lay there like dead letters. I would read entire chapters and retain nothing. It was as if someone had thrown a switch, and the lights went out on Scripture."

For a man who had built his entire ministry on the power of God's Word, this was devastating. Wilkerson had seen drug addicts transformed by a single verse. He had watched gang members weep as Scripture penetrated their hardened hearts. But now, in his own life, the Bible felt as dry as sawdust.

What Wilkerson did next would become a masterclass in faithfulness: He kept reading. Every day. Multiple times a day. Not because it felt good, but because he had learned a secret that many miss—God's Word works even when we can't feel it working.

"I decided to read Scripture like I take medicine when I'm sick," Wilkerson explained. "I don't take antibiotics because they taste good or make me feel instantly better. I take them because they're doing necessary work whether I feel it or not. The same is true with God's Word."

## The Reality of Scripture Drought

Let's be honest about what it feels like when the Bible becomes dry:

- You open to familiar passages and feel nothing
- Verses you've memorized sound like empty clichés
- Your mind wanders after every sentence
- You close your Bible feeling more discouraged than when you opened it
- You wonder if you're reading it wrong
- You feel guilty for not "getting anything out of it"
- You're tempted to stop reading altogether

If this describes you, you're not alone. Every mature believer I know has experienced seasons where Scripture feels lifeless. The question isn't whether you'll face this challenge—it's how you'll respond when you do.

## Why Scripture Sometimes Feels Empty

Before we explore how to persist, we need to understand why God's Word sometimes feels powerless in our lives:

- 1. Spiritual Dehydration** Just as physical dehydration affects our ability to taste food, spiritual dehydration impacts how we receive Scripture. When we're spiritually dry, even the richest passages can seem flavorless. This isn't the Bible's fault—it's a symptom of our condition.
- 2. Overfamiliarity** Sometimes we've heard certain passages so often they've lost their impact. The Christmas story, Psalm 23, John 3:16—these precious texts can become so familiar we stop truly hearing them. Our minds auto-complete the verses without engaging their meaning.
- 3. Unaddressed Sin** Psalm 66:18 warns, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Unconfessed sin can create a barrier that makes Scripture feel distant and convicting rather than life-giving.
- 4. Mental/Emotional Exhaustion** Depression, anxiety, grief, and mental fatigue all affect our ability to concentrate and receive. This isn't a spiritual failure—it's a human limitation that God understands.
- 5. Spiritual Warfare** The enemy knows the power of God's Word. If he can discourage us from reading it, he's won a significant battle. Sometimes the dryness we experience is direct spiritual opposition.
- 6. Divine Hiddenness** As we explored in previous chapters, sometimes God purposely hides the felt sense of His presence—including in His Word—to develop deeper faith and hunger in us.

## The Unstoppable Power of God's Word

Here's what David Wilkerson discovered and what we must grasp: The effectiveness of God's Word doesn't depend on our feelings about it. Isaiah 55:11 makes this crystal clear—God's Word will accomplish His purpose whether we feel it or not.

Consider these truths:

**God's Word Is Living and Active** Hebrews 4:12 declares Scripture is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword." This isn't poetry—it's reality. The Bible isn't just ink on paper; it's God-breathed, carrying His very life and power. That power doesn't diminish when your feelings do.

**God's Word Is Seed** Jesus repeatedly compared God's Word to seed. Seeds don't produce instant fruit. You plant them, water them, and wait. Much happens underground before anything breaks the surface. The same is true spiritually—God's Word is doing deep work even when you can't see results.

**God's Word Is Food** Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). You don't eat only when food tastes good—you eat to live. Scripture is spiritual sustenance whether it satisfies your emotional palate or not.

**God's Word Is Light** Psalm 119:105 calls God's Word "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Light works whether you appreciate it or not. You might not feel grateful for streetlights, but they still keep you from stumbling in darkness.

## **Wilkerson's Practical Strategies**

Through his season of dryness, Wilkerson developed practical approaches that helped him persist in Scripture when every instinct said to quit:

**1. Read Aloud** "I discovered that reading aloud engaged more of my senses," Wilkerson wrote. "When my eyes glazed over silent reading, speaking the words helped them penetrate. There's something powerful about hearing Scripture in your own voice."

Try this: Choose a passage and read it aloud slowly, emphasizing different words each time. You'll be amazed at what you notice when you engage multiple senses.

**2. Write It Out** Wilkerson began copying Scripture by hand. "The slow, deliberate act of writing forced me to consider each word. Passages I'd skimmed over for years suddenly revealed new treasures when I had to form each letter."

Start simple: Write out one verse each morning. Not typed—handwritten. Let your hand teach your heart what your eyes have missed.

**3. Pray the Scriptures** When his own prayers felt empty, Wilkerson turned Scripture into prayer. "I would take a psalm and make it personal. 'The Lord is MY shepherd' became 'Lord, YOU are my shepherd.' I turned declaration into conversation."

Practice: Take Psalm 23 and rewrite it as a personal prayer. "Lord, You are shepherding me today. You're making me lie down because I need rest. You're leading me beside still waters because my soul needs peace..."

**4. Focus on the Gospels** "When everything else felt dry, I returned to the red letters," Wilkerson shared. "I read the words of Jesus over and over. Sometimes faith comes simply from sitting at His feet, even when you can't feel His presence."

Challenge: For one month, read only the Gospels. Read them slowly, repeatedly, meditatively. Let Jesus' words wash over you without demanding immediate insight.

**5. Use Different Translations** Wilkerson found that reading familiar passages in unfamiliar translations helped break through the mental autopilot. "A fresh translation would make me stop and think, 'I've never noticed that before.'"

Suggestion: Read your daily passage in three different translations. Notice the differences. Let variety wake up your mind to nuance.

**6. Scripture Memory with a Twist** Instead of just memorizing, Wilkerson would memorize and then meditate on one word at a time. "I'd take John 3:16 and spend a whole day on 'loved.' What does it mean that God loved? Not liked, not tolerated—loved."

Try this: Choose a verse to memorize this week. Each day, focus on a different word from that verse. Journal what God shows you about that single word.

## The Breakthrough Pattern

Through his persistence, Wilkerson noticed a pattern that many others have confirmed:

**Phase 1: Discipline Without Delight (Weeks 1-4)** The hardest phase. You're reading out of obedience, not desire. Everything in you wants to quit. This is where most people give up. Don't. This is the seed-planting phase.

**Phase 2: Glimpses of Light (Weeks 5-8)** Occasional verses start to stand out. Not overwhelming revelation, just moments where something connects. These glimpses are like green shoots breaking through soil—evidence that life is stirring.

**Phase 3: Returning Appetite (Weeks 9-12)** Hunger slowly returns. You find yourself looking forward to your reading again. Not every day is revolutionary, but the dread is gone. The discipline is becoming delight.

**Phase 4: Deeper Than Before (Week 13+)** This is the surprise—when Scripture comes alive again, it's often deeper and richer than before the drought. The enforced discipline has created capacity for greater revelation.

## Modern-Day Testimonies

**Jennifer's Story: The Lawyer Who Found Life in Leviticus** Jennifer, a successful attorney, hit a spiritual wall where even her favorite passages felt meaningless. In desperation, she decided to read the book she'd always avoided—Leviticus.

"I figured if I was going to feel nothing, I might as well read the part everyone skips," she laughed. "But something strange happened. As I read about sacrifices and ceremonies, I began to see Jesus everywhere. The detail God put into approaching Him under the old covenant made me appreciate the new covenant access we have."

Her discipline of reading the "boring" parts during her dry season opened up a love for the Old Testament she'd never had before. "Now I tell people—read the hard parts when you're dry. You've got nothing to lose, and God might surprise you."

**Marcus's Story: The Pastor Who Preached What He Couldn't Feel** Marcus pastored a growing church while privately battling biblical dryness. "I'd study for sermons and get insights for others, but nothing for myself. I felt like a chef who'd lost his sense of taste—I could prepare meals for others but couldn't enjoy them myself."

Rather than fake it, Marcus began telling his congregation about his struggle. "I'd say, 'This week's passage hasn't moved me emotionally, but I'm choosing to believe it's true and powerful. Let's explore it together.'"

His honesty created space for others to admit their struggles. The church grew deeper as they learned together that God's Word works independent of feelings. Marcus's drought lasted eighteen months, but the authenticity it produced transformed his ministry permanently.

**Rachel's Story: The Student Who Discovered Lectio Divina** Rachel, a seminary student, found her academic approach to Scripture had drained it of life. "I could parse Greek verbs but couldn't hear God's voice. I knew about the Bible but had lost knowing God through the Bible."

A spiritual director introduced her to Lectio Divina—an ancient practice of slow, meditative Scripture reading. "Instead of analyzing, I learned to listen. Instead of conquering the text, I let it conquer me. I'd read just a few verses multiple times, asking 'What are You saying to me, Lord?'"

This contemplative approach broke through her analytical barriers. "I had to unlearn my need to master Scripture and learn to let Scripture master me. The dryness taught me a whole new way of approaching God's Word."

## Practical Exercises for Dry Seasons

Here are specific exercises to help you engage Scripture when it feels lifeless:

**The One-Verse Deep Dive** Choose one verse for an entire week. Read it in multiple translations. Write it out daily. Pray it back to God. Research its context. Memorize it. Journal about it. Let one verse become a deep well rather than skimming many shallow puddles.

**The Question Method** After reading a passage, ask:

- What does this tell me about God?
- What does this tell me about humanity?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- What action does this require from me?
- What promise can I claim?
- What prayer does this inspire?

**The Story Entry** For narrative passages, imaginatively enter the story. If reading about Peter walking on water, imagine the wind, the waves, the fear. What would you have done? What would Jesus' voice have sounded like? Make the story three-dimensional.

**The Artist's Response** After reading, respond creatively instead of analytically:

- Draw or doodle what you read
- Rewrite it as poetry
- Compose a simple song
- Create hand motions
- Build something that represents the passage

Engaging different parts of your brain can open new pathways for receiving truth.

**The Community Read** Share your struggle with trusted friends and read together. What feels dead to you might be alive to them. Their insights can prime the pump of your own reception. Don't pretend to be moved—just read together honestly.

## When Specific Books Help

During dry seasons, certain biblical books tend to be more accessible:

**Psalms** - Especially the lament psalms (42, 43, 77, 88) that give voice to spiritual struggle

**Ecclesiastes** - When everything feels meaningless, Solomon's honesty resonates

**Job** - His questions and struggles normalize our own

**Mark** - The fastest-paced Gospel, easier to engage when concentration is difficult

**Proverbs** - Short, practical wisdom that doesn't require emotional engagement

**1 John** - Simple, repetitive truths about God's love

Don't feel guilty about gravitating toward certain books during dry seasons. God can speak through any part of His Word.

## The Hidden Work

Here's what Wilkerson discovered after his drought ended: God's Word had been working powerfully even when he couldn't feel it. "I realized that during those dry months, Scripture was like water seeping into hard ground. I couldn't see it happening, but it was softening soil, preparing for future growth."

He noticed:

- Verses he'd read mechanically suddenly surfaced in moments of need
- Truth he'd ingested without feeling became foundation when storms hit
- His advice to others came from depths he didn't know existed

- His faith had roots that went deeper than his feelings

"The drought taught me that God's Word is always accomplishing something," Wilkerson concluded. "My job isn't to feel it working—my job is to keep showing up."

## A Sustainable Approach

As you commit to reading Scripture through dryness, remember:

**Start Small** Better to read five verses with presence than five chapters in a blur. Quantity isn't the goal—encounter is.

**Be Consistent** Same time, same place, same chair if possible. Routine reduces the mental energy needed to begin.

**Remove Obstacles** Keep your Bible open to tomorrow's reading. Remove phone distractions. Prepare coffee the night before. Make it as easy as possible to show up.

**Track Faithfulness, Not Feelings** Mark a calendar each day you read, regardless of how it felt. Celebrate consistency over experience.

**Give It Time** Commit to at least 90 days before evaluating. Seeds don't sprout overnight.

## The Promise That Sustains

Isaiah 55:10-11 contains a promise that changes everything: God's Word WILL accomplish what He sends it to do. Not might. Will. Your feelings don't determine its effectiveness. Your understanding doesn't limit its power. Your dryness doesn't diminish its purpose.

Every time you open Scripture in faith—even dry, desperate faith—you're planting seeds that will produce a harvest. You might not see the fruit today, tomorrow, or next month. But harvest is coming.

Wilkerson testified near the end of his life: "That season of dryness where Scripture felt dead? It produced more long-term fruit than many seasons of emotional highs. I learned to trust God's Word like I trust gravity—not because I always feel it, but because it always works."

## Your Next Step

Right now, make a decision. Will you commit to reading God's Word daily for the next 30 days, regardless of how you feel? Will you trust Isaiah 55:11 more than your emotions?

Here's a simple plan:

1. Choose a Gospel to read through

2. Set a consistent time and place
3. Read just one chapter daily
4. Use one practical strategy from this chapter
5. Mark your calendar each day you read
6. Don't evaluate until day 30

Remember: You're not reading to feel something. You're reading to feed your soul. Feelings may follow, but faithfulness comes first.

## A Prayer for Persistence

*Father, I confess that I've let my feelings dictate my faithfulness. I've treated Your Word like entertainment that needs to hold my attention rather than bread that sustains my life. Forgive me for the days I've chosen spiritual starvation over disciplines that felt dry.*

*I choose to believe Isaiah 55:11—that Your Word will accomplish Your purposes whether I feel it or not. Help me read like Wilkerson, with medical faithfulness rather than emotional dependence. Give me persistence when everything in me wants to quit.*

*Open my eyes to see wonders in Your Word, but help me trust You even if my eyes stay clouded. Let Your Word do its hidden work in me. Plant seeds that will bear fruit in Your timing.*

*I commit to show up, to read, to persist. Not because it's easy, but because Your Word is life. Sustain me through the discipline until delight returns.*

*In Jesus' name, the Word made flesh, Amen.*

## Reflection Questions

1. How would you describe your current relationship with Scripture? Dry? Intermittent? Struggling?
2. Which of Wilkerson's strategies most appeals to you? Why?
3. What obstacles keep you from consistent Bible reading? How can you remove them?
4. Have you been evaluating Scripture's effectiveness by your feelings? How might Isaiah 55:11 change your approach?
5. Which biblical book might be most helpful for you in this season?
6. Will you commit to 30 days of consistent reading regardless of feelings? What's your plan?

## Journal Space

*Use this space to write out your commitment to God's Word. Be specific about your plan. Include what you'll read, when, where, and which strategy you'll employ. Then track your faithfulness below.*

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Remember: Every spiritual giant has faced seasons where Scripture felt dry. What separated those who thrived from those who withered was simple—they kept reading. Your faithfulness in the dry seasons is preparing you for fruitfulness you can't yet imagine. Keep reading. The harvest is coming.

# Chapter 5: Serve While You Wait

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* —Galatians 6:9

Christine Caine stood in the back of the conference hall, holding a stack of programs and wearing a volunteer badge. It was 1995, and while the featured speakers commanded the stage, she was directing traffic, setting up chairs, and making sure the bathrooms had toilet paper. For the fifth year in a row.

Nobody knew her name. Nobody asked for her autograph. Nobody invited her to the green room. While others were being celebrated on platform, Christine was serving in obscurity, fighting feelings of frustration and wondering if God had forgotten her calling.

"I remember crying in the bathroom stall during one event," Christine later shared. "I could hear the speaker—someone younger than me with less experience—getting standing ovations while I was literally cleaning toilets. I wanted to quit so badly. The enemy whispered, 'You're wasting your life. God has forgotten you. You'll never be more than this.'"

But Christine made a choice that would define her future: She kept serving. Not grudgingly, but with renewed dedication. Not for recognition, but as worship. Not to be seen by people, but to be faithful to God.

Today, Christine Caine leads A21, a global anti-trafficking organization rescuing victims across multiple continents. She speaks to millions, has written bestselling books, and influences leaders worldwide. But she'll tell you quickly: "Everything I learned about ministry, I learned in those years of hiddenness. God wasn't punishing me by keeping me hidden—He was preparing me by teaching me to serve."

## The Waiting Room of Life

If you're in a spiritual dry season, chances are you're also in a waiting season. Waiting for breakthrough. Waiting for answers. Waiting for purpose. Waiting for God to move. And in that waiting, you face a critical choice: Will you sit idle until you feel God again, or will you serve while you wait?

The temptation during spiritual dryness is to pull back from everything:

- "I don't feel God, so why serve Him?"
- "I can't pour out when I feel empty"
- "I need to focus on my own spiritual life"
- "How can I help others when I can't help myself?"
- "I'll serve again when I feel passionate"

These thoughts seem logical, even spiritual. But they're actually the opposite of what God calls us to do. Throughout Scripture and history, God consistently uses service during waiting seasons as His primary tool for spiritual breakthrough.

## The Biblical Pattern of Service in Waiting

Scripture is filled with examples of those who served while waiting for God to fulfill His promises:

**Joseph: From Prison to Palace** Joseph didn't sulk in prison waiting for his dreams to materialize. He served Potiphar, then served in prison, interpreting dreams for fellow inmates who forgot him for two more years. Thirteen years of faithful service in hiddenness prepared him to serve as second in command of Egypt.

**David: From Shepherd to King** After being anointed as future king, David didn't wait idle for his throne. He served in Saul's court, played music to soothe the troubled king, fought Goliath, led military campaigns—all while being hunted by the very man whose throne he'd inherit. His service during waiting shaped the heart that would make him Israel's greatest king.

**Ruth: From Widow to Lineage** Ruth didn't know she was in the lineage of the Messiah when she was gleaning fields to feed her mother-in-law. She simply served faithfully in her season of loss and waiting. Her service positioned her for a divine encounter that changed history.

**Jesus: The Ultimate Servant** Even our Lord spent thirty years in hiddenness before three years of public ministry. He served in a carpenter's shop. He served His family. He served His community. The Son of God waited and served before His time came.

## Why God Prescribes Service for Spiritual Dryness

Christine Caine discovered what thousands before her have learned: Service during spiritual dryness isn't a distraction from healing—it's often the pathway to it. Here's why:

**1. Service Shifts Our Focus** When we're spiritually dry, we tend to become introspective to an unhealthy degree. We analyze every feeling, dissect every thought, and become consumed with our own spiritual temperature. Service forces us to look outward, breaking the cycle of spiritual navel-gazing.

"The moment I started focusing on others' needs instead of my own feelings, something shifted," Christine recalls. "I couldn't feel God in my prayer closet, but I could see Him in the eyes of people I served."

**2. Service Keeps Us Connected** Isolation is the enemy's playground during dry seasons. When we don't feel God, we're tempted to withdraw from His people. Service keeps us tethered to community even when we'd rather hide.

**3. Service Develops Character** Platform reveals character; obscurity develops it. The lessons learned in hiddenness become the foundation for future influence. Every towel folded, chair stacked, and floor mopped is building something eternal in us.

**4. Service Creates Capacity** You can't give what you don't have—unless you're connected to an infinite source. When we serve despite feeling empty, we discover that God's strength flows through our weakness. We learn to minister from His resources, not our reserves.

**5. Service Positions Us for Breakthrough** Throughout Scripture, breakthrough often comes not to those waiting passively but to those serving actively. The very act of service positions us where God is moving.

## Christine's Principles for Serving in Hiddenness

Through her years of obscure service, Christine developed principles that sustained her:

**Principle 1: Serve as Unto the Lord** "I had to constantly remind myself that my audience was One," Christine shares. "Whether I was setting up chairs or speaking to thousands, I was performing for God alone. This freed me from the need for human recognition."

She would pray before each act of service: "Lord, I fold these programs for You. I clean these bathrooms for You. I serve these people for You. Receive this as my worship."

**Principle 2: Excellence in Everything** "I decided that if I was going to clean toilets, they'd be the cleanest toilets in Australia," Christine laughs. "Excellence honors God and prepares us for greater responsibility. How we handle little things determines whether we'll be trusted with big things."

This commitment to excellence, even in unseen tasks, developed habits that would serve her well in global leadership.

**Principle 3: Celebration Over Comparison** "The enemy wanted me to compare my backstage to everyone else's frontstage," Christine reflects. "I had to learn to celebrate others' elevation without questioning my designation. Their promotion wasn't my demotion."

She made it a practice to pray for the speakers she served, to celebrate their impact, to rejoice in their opportunities. This heart posture protected her from bitterness.

**Principle 4: Prepare in the Waiting** Christine used her years of hiddenness to prepare for unknown future opportunities. She studied Scripture voraciously, took communication courses, learned leadership principles, developed administrative skills—all while serving in obscurity.

"I didn't know what God was preparing me for, but I knew He was preparing me. So I prepared too. When opportunity finally came, I was ready because I hadn't wasted the waiting."

**Principle 5: Find God in the Service** "When I couldn't sense God in traditional spiritual disciplines, I learned to look for Him in service. I saw Him in the grateful smile of a tired attendee. I felt Him in the satisfaction of a job well done. I heard Him in the testimonies of lives changed—even if I was just the one who made sure the microphones worked."

## **Practical Ways to Serve During Dryness**

You might be thinking, "This sounds good, but I barely have energy to get through my day. How can I serve when I feel so empty?" Here are practical, manageable ways to begin:

### **Start Small**

- Send an encouraging text to someone daily
- Make a meal for a stressed neighbor
- Offer to babysit for a single parent
- Write thank-you notes to people who've impacted you
- Pick up groceries for someone elderly

Small acts of service can crack open a dry heart.

### **Serve Secretly**

- Leave an anonymous gift for someone struggling
- Pay for the coffee of the person behind you
- Do a chore that's usually someone else's responsibility
- Pray daily for someone who doesn't know you're praying
- Support a missionary or ministry quietly

Secret service protects us from serving for recognition.

### **Leverage Your Pain**

- If you're battling depression, reach out to others who struggle
- If you're facing financial hardship, share resources with others in need
- If you're lonely, invite someone else who's alone for coffee
- If you're grieving, send cards to others who've lost loved ones

Your current pain qualifies you to minister to others in similar pain.

### **Serve in Your Strengths**

- Good with kids? Volunteer in children's ministry
- Administrative gifts? Help organize a church event
- Musical? Join the worship team (even if you don't feel worshipful)
- Hospitable? Host a small group (even if you don't feel like talking)
- Good listener? Volunteer for a prayer line or visitation ministry

Serving in your strengths feels less draining during dry seasons.

### **Create Service Rhythms**

- Weekly: Commit to one regular act of service
- Monthly: Take on a bigger service project
- Quarterly: Participate in a community service event
- Annually: Go on a mission trip or lead a major service initiative

Rhythms create consistency when feelings fluctuate.

## **Modern Stories of Service Breaking Drought**

**Michael's Story: The Executive Who Found God in a Food Pantry** Michael, a successful CEO, hit a spiritual wall after his daughter's death. "I couldn't pray. I couldn't worship. I couldn't read the Bible without anger rising up. But I could show up at the food pantry every Saturday."

For six months, he silently sorted cans and packed boxes. "I didn't talk about God. I couldn't. But I could hand groceries to struggling families. I could look them in the eye with compassion because I knew pain too."

One Saturday, a single mom broke down crying as he handed her groceries. "She grabbed my hands and said, 'You don't know what this means. I asked God for help, and He sent you.' In that moment, I felt God for the first time in months. Not in my prayer closet—in that food pantry. I realized I'd been looking for God in the wrong places. He was in the service all along."

**Sarah's Story: The Worship Leader Who Learned to Serve Off-Stage** After losing her position as worship leader due to church politics, Sarah battled bitterness and spiritual dryness. "I went from leading thousands in worship to sitting in the back row feeling nothing. I wanted to leave church altogether."

Instead, she started serving in the nursery. "I figured babies wouldn't know I used to be somebody," she says with a laugh. "But those babies taught me more about worship than any conference. Their complete dependence, their trust, their joy—I saw God fresh through their eyes."

Sarah now leads worship again, but she still serves in the nursery monthly. "Those hidden years reset my heart. I learned that worship isn't about the stage—it's about service. I'm a better leader because I learned to follow, a better teacher because I learned to receive from infants."

**James's Story: The Pastor Who Discovered Ministry in Maintenance** After burning out from pastoral ministry, James took a maintenance job at his church while battling deep spiritual dryness. "I went from preaching to plunging toilets. The humiliation almost broke me."

But in the quiet hours of fixing leaks and painting walls, James encountered God in new ways. "I'd pray for the people who would sit in the pews I was repairing. I'd intercede for the children

who would play on the playground I was building. Without the pressure of preparing sermons, I could just be with God while serving with my hands."

James eventually returned to pastoral ministry, but with a completely different approach. "Those years taught me that ministry isn't about words—it's about service. Now I spend as much time serving behind the scenes as I do preparing sermons. The maintenance years didn't detour my ministry; they defined it."

## Overcoming Common Obstacles

**"I don't feel qualified to serve when I'm struggling"** Remember: God doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called. Your struggles don't disqualify you—they often uniquely qualify you to serve others facing similar battles. Paul said God comforts us in our troubles so we can comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:4).

**"I'm too tired/depressed/anxious to serve"** Start tiny. Send one text. Smile at one person. Hold one door. Sometimes the smallest acts of service can begin to lift the fog. Don't commit to huge service—commit to consistent small service.

**"I might be serving for the wrong reasons"** Mixed motives are normal. Serve anyway. God can purify your motives as you serve. Action often precedes proper motivation. Do the right thing even with imperfect motives, trusting God to align your heart.

**"What if people ask about my spiritual life?"** Be honest without oversharing. "I'm in a challenging season, but serving helps me stay connected to God and others." Your honesty might free others to admit their own struggles.

**"I don't see any opportunities to serve"** Ask God to open your eyes. Opportunities surround us:

- The coworker who needs encouragement
- The neighbor whose lawn needs mowing
- The church ministry that needs volunteers
- The community organization that needs help
- The family member who needs support

Pray: "Lord, show me one person I can serve today."

## The Hidden Transformation

Here's what Christine Caine discovered after years of hidden service: The very things she thought were delaying her calling were actually developing it. Every unseen act of service was:

- Building humility that would keep her grounded in success
- Developing faithfulness that would sustain her through challenges

- Creating compassion that would fuel her ministry to trafficking victims
- Establishing work ethic that would enable her to lead globally
- Forging character that would withstand public scrutiny

"I thought I was waiting for ministry to begin," Christine reflects. "I didn't realize I was already in the most important ministry of my life—learning to serve like Jesus. Those hidden years weren't a delay; they were the foundation for everything that followed."

## The Spiritual Dynamics of Service

Something supernatural happens when we serve during spiritual dryness:

**We Partner with God's Activity** Even when we can't sense God, we can participate in His work. Service aligns us with what God is already doing, positioning us to experience Him in action rather than just in emotion.

**We Break the Grip of Self-Focus** Spiritual dryness often turns us inward. Service forces us outward, breaking the stranglehold of self-absorption that can prolong our dry seasons.

**We Exercise Faith Through Action** James says faith without works is dead. Sometimes our faith needs the CPR of action. Service is faith in work clothes—believing God can use us even when we can't feel Him.

**We Create Channels for God's Flow** Like priming a pump, service can create channels through which God's presence begins to flow again. We might not feel Him at first, but consistent service creates pathways for fresh encounters.

## Your Service Action Plan

Ready to serve your way through spiritual dryness? Here's a practical 30-day plan:

### Week 1: Observation and Preparation

- Days 1-3: Ask God to show you needs around you
- Days 4-5: List your skills, resources, and available time
- Days 6-7: Identify 3-5 simple ways you could serve this month

### Week 2: Small Steps

- Days 8-10: Perform one small act of service daily
- Days 11-12: Serve someone in secret
- Days 13-14: Rest and reflect on what you're learning

### Week 3: Increased Engagement

- Days 15-17: Take on a bigger service project
- Days 18-19: Serve with others (join a serving team)
- Days 20-21: Sabbath and celebration of progress

#### **Week 4: Establishing Rhythms**

- Days 22-24: Identify one regular way to serve weekly
- Days 25-26: Plan a monthly service commitment
- Days 27-28: Share your service journey with a friend
- Days 29-30: Commit to continued service

Remember: The goal isn't to feel different immediately. The goal is faithfulness. Feelings often follow obedience, but obedience is valuable regardless of feelings.

### **The Promise for Servants**

Galatians 6:9 promises that we will reap a harvest if we don't give up. This isn't prosperity gospel—it's spiritual reality. Every act of service during spiritual dryness is planting seeds that will produce fruit. You might not see the harvest today, but it's coming.

Christine Caine testifies: "Every toilet I cleaned, every chair I stacked, every program I folded was a seed. I couldn't see it then, but God was growing something beautiful in the hiddenness. When harvest came, it was abundantly more than I could have imagined. But it only came because I kept serving when everything in me wanted to quit."

### **Your Invitation to Serve**

Right now, in your dryness, God is inviting you to serve. Not because He needs your service—He could accomplish His purposes without you. But because He knows that service is often the pathway back to spiritual vitality.

Will you accept the invitation? Will you serve while you wait? Will you trust that God is working even when you can't feel Him working?

Your breakthrough might be hiding in an act of service. Your renewed passion might be waiting in a moment of selflessness. Your encounter with God might come not in your prayer closet but in the eyes of someone you serve.

Don't wait until you feel ready. Serve now. Serve small. Serve secretly. Serve consistently. And watch what God does in the serving.

### **A Prayer for Serving Hearts**

*Lord, I confess that I've been waiting to feel You before I serve You. I've believed the lie that I need to be spiritually full before I can pour out. Forgive me for letting my feelings dictate my faithfulness.*

*Like Christine Caine in hiddenness, like Joseph in prison, like David in the wilderness, help me serve while I wait. Give me eyes to see needs around me. Give me strength to meet those needs even when I feel weak. Give me joy in serving You by serving others.*

*I commit to serve this week, not because I feel like it, but because You're worthy of my service regardless of my feelings. Use my small acts of faithfulness to break through this spiritual dryness. More importantly, use my service to bless others and glorify You.*

*Help me serve as unto You, with excellence, without comparison, while preparing for whatever You have next. May I find You in the service even when I can't find You in the silence.*

*In Jesus' name, who came not to be served but to serve, Amen.*

## **Reflection Questions**

1. What obstacles keep you from serving during your spiritual dryness?
2. Which of Christine Caine's principles speaks most powerfully to your situation?
3. Looking at your current life, what opportunities to serve are already around you?
4. How might your current pain or struggle qualify you to serve others uniquely?
5. What small act of service could you commit to this week?
6. How might hidden service be preparing you for future purpose?

## **Journal Space**

*Use this space to plan your service during this dry season. What will you do? When? For whom? How can you serve as worship even when you don't feel worshipful?*

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Remember: Some of God's greatest servants discovered their calling not on platforms but in hidden service. Your willingness to serve while you wait might be the very thing that ushers in your breakthrough. Don't despise the day of small things. Every act of service is a seed. Keep planting. Harvest is coming.

# Chapter 6: Worship Until It Breaks

*"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken." —Acts 16:25-26*

*"After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: 'Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.' As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab..." —2 Chronicles 20:21-22*

Kari Jobe sat at her piano in an empty church sanctuary, tears streaming down her face. It was 2009, and the worship leader who would later pen anthems sung by millions was in the deepest valley of her life. Her father was battling cancer. Her heart was shattered from a broken relationship. Her dreams of music ministry seemed to be crumbling. And worst of all, the very act that had always connected her to God—worship—felt like going through empty motions.

"I would sit at the piano and feel absolutely nothing," Kari later shared in an interview. "The songs that once moved me felt like noise. My voice felt hollow. I would lead worship on Sundays with a smile while dying inside. I remember thinking, 'How can I lead others into God's presence when I can't find Him myself?'"

But then Kari received advice that would change everything. Her mentor told her: "Worship isn't about what you feel. It's about what you declare. Sometimes you have to worship until something breaks—either the heaviness breaks off you, or you break through to Him. But something always breaks when we persist in worship."

So Kari made a decision. Every day, whether she felt like it or not, she would sit at that piano and worship. Not for a song to write. Not for others to hear. Not until she felt something. But until something broke.

What happened in those months of determined worship would not only transform her spiritual life but birth songs like "Revelation Song" and "Forever" that would lead millions into breakthrough.

## The Weapon We Forget

In our spiritual dry seasons, worship often becomes the first casualty. We reason:

- "I can't worship when I don't feel God's presence"
- "Singing feels hypocritical when my heart feels dead"
- "Worship is supposed to flow naturally, not be forced"
- "I'll worship again when I feel something to worship about"
- "My worship would be fake right now"

But this reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of worship. We've reduced worship to an emotional experience rather than recognizing it as a spiritual weapon. Throughout Scripture, worship isn't presented as something we do when we feel good—it's something we do to break through when we don't.

Consider the biblical pattern:

- Paul and Silas worshipped in prison until the chains broke
- Jehoshaphat worshipped facing impossible odds until the enemy was defeated
- David worshipped in caves while running for his life
- Job worshipped after losing everything
- Jesus sang hymns on the way to Gethsemane

None of these were "feeling it." They worshipped not because of their circumstances but in spite of them. And in each case, worship became the catalyst for breakthrough.

## What Kari Discovered: The Layers of Breakthrough

Through her months of persistent worship, Kari discovered that breakthrough happens in layers:

**Layer 1: Breaking Through the Mind** "The first battle was just showing up," Kari recalls. "My mind would give me a thousand reasons not to sit at that piano. I had to literally force myself to walk to the sanctuary. The breakthrough started with breaking through my own resistance."

She developed a simple routine: Every morning at 6 AM, before her mind could talk her out of it, she would go to the church and play for one hour. No agenda. No pressure. Just show up.

**Layer 2: Breaking Through the Emotions** "For weeks, I felt nothing. I would sing words about God's goodness while feeling abandoned. I would declare His faithfulness while doubting it. But I kept singing. I realized my emotions had become a wall, and worship was the hammer."

Kari learned to separate the truth she was declaring from the emotions she was feeling. "I would literally say out loud, 'I don't feel this right now, but I choose to declare it's true.' That honesty with God while still worshipping Him created a crack in my emotional fortress."

**Layer 3: Breaking Through the Spiritual** "After about six weeks of daily worship, something shifted. Not dramatically—subtly. I realized the heaviness wasn't as heavy. The songs began to minister to me even as I sang them. I wasn't just singing words; I was prophesying to my own soul."

This is when Kari discovered that worship works in the spiritual realm whether we perceive it or not. "I think angels were being dispatched. Spiritual atmospheres were shifting. Chains were being broken. I just couldn't see it yet."

**Layer 4: Breaking Through to Encounter** "One morning, about two months in, I was singing a simple chorus—"I love You, Lord"—when suddenly the presence of God flooded that sanctuary.

It was like a dam burst. All the tears I'd held back came flooding out. All the pain found expression. And in that moment, I didn't just know about God's presence—I was swimming in it."

But here's what's crucial: Kari emphasizes that the breakthrough didn't make the previous weeks of dry worship worthless. "Every day I worshipped feeling nothing was laying foundation for that encounter. The encounter was glorious, but the discipline was equally valuable."

## The Theology of Worship as Warfare

To understand why worship breaks through, we need to understand what worship actually does in the spiritual realm:

**Worship Enthrones God** Psalm 22:3 tells us God is "enthroned on the praises of Israel." When we worship, we're not just singing songs—we're establishing God's throne in our situation. We're declaring His Kingship over our emotions, circumstances, and spiritual atmosphere.

**Worship Silences the Enemy** Psalm 8:2 declares, "Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger." The enemy cannot stand in an atmosphere of genuine worship. When we worship, we're doing spiritual warfare.

**Worship Aligns Us with Heaven** In Revelation, we see continuous worship around God's throne. When we worship on earth, we're joining the eternal song of heaven. We're aligning ourselves with heavenly realities rather than earthly circumstances.

**Worship Releases Faith** Worship is faith expressed in song. When we declare God's character despite our feelings, we're exercising and strengthening our faith. Each declaration is a faith muscle being developed.

**Worship Shifts Atmosphere** Both naturally and supernaturally, worship changes atmosphere. It lifts our countenance, adjusts our posture, and transforms our environment. What was heavy becomes lighter. What was dark becomes brighter.

## Practical Strategies for Worshipping in Dryness

Based on Kari's experience and the testimony of countless others, here are practical ways to worship when you feel nothing:

**1. Start with Honesty** Begin your worship by telling God exactly how you feel:

- "God, I don't feel like worshipping"
- "Lord, my heart feels dead right now"
- "Father, I'm choosing to worship out of obedience, not emotion"

This honesty doesn't negate worship—it purifies it.

**2. Use Written Prayers and Psalms** When your own words fail, borrow others':

- Sing Psalms back to God
- Use written liturgical prayers
- Worship with hymns that have stood the test of time
- Let the church's historical voice become your voice

**3. Engage Your Body** Worship isn't just mental—it's physical:

- Lift your hands (even if they feel heavy)
- Kneel (even if you feel distant)
- Dance (even if you feel foolish)
- Clap (even if it feels mechanical)

Your body can lead your emotions into worship.

**4. Create a Worship Environment**

- Find a private space where you won't be self-conscious
- Play worship music and sing along
- Light a candle as a visual reminder of God's presence
- Go outside and worship in creation

Environment matters when emotions don't cooperate.

**5. Worship with Your Life Circumstances** Instead of worshipping despite your situation, worship through it:

- "Lord, I'm confused, but You are Wisdom"
- "God, I'm broken, but You are Healer"
- "Father, I feel abandoned, but You are Ever-Present"
- "Jesus, I'm weak, but You are Strength"

Let your need become the backdrop for declaring His sufficiency.

**6. Set a Time Commitment** Decide beforehand how long you'll worship:

- Start with just 10 minutes if that's all you can manage
- Use a timer so you're not watching the clock
- Commit to the full time regardless of feelings
- Gradually increase as breakthrough comes

**7. Mix Methods** When one form of worship feels dry, try another:

- If singing feels empty, try instrumental worship
- If music feels hollow, try spoken declarations
- If words fail, try worship through art or movement
- If corporate worship is hard, try private; if private is hard, try corporate

## Modern Testimonies of Breakthrough Worship

**Rachel's Story: The Widow Who Sang Through Grief** After losing her husband suddenly, Rachel couldn't pray. Words wouldn't come. But she could still play the three worship songs he had loved. "Every morning, I sat at our piano and played those three songs. For months, I cried through every word. I didn't feel God. I felt pain. But I kept playing."

Six months later, during one of those morning sessions, something broke. "It was like sunshine breaking through storm clouds. Suddenly, I could feel my husband worshipping with me, not beside me but in the cloud of witnesses. I realized that every tear-soaked worship session had been healing my heart, note by note."

Rachel now leads a grief support group where worship is central. "I tell them, 'You don't have to feel it. You just have to do it. The feelings will follow, but the healing happens in the doing.'"

**Marcus's Story: The Businessman Who Discovered Dawn Worship** Marcus, a Type-A executive, treated his spiritual life like a business problem to solve. When dryness hit, he tried everything—more Bible reading, longer prayers, different churches. Nothing worked.

A friend challenged him to try one thing: worship alone in his car during his commute. "I felt ridiculous," Marcus admits. "A grown man singing worship songs in traffic. But I was desperate."

Every morning for three months, his commute became a worship service. "At first, I just played worship music. Then I started humming. Then singing quietly. Then belting out songs at stoplights."

The breakthrough came unexpectedly. "I was singing 'Good Good Father' when I had to pull over because I was crying so hard. Not sad tears—healing tears. Three months of rush-hour worship had broken through decades of performance-based religion. I finally understood grace."

Marcus now hosts monthly worship nights for businessmen. "We need to break the stereotype that worship is emotional manipulation. Sometimes it's the most logical thing we can do—declaring truth until our hearts believe it."

**Lisa's Story: The Rebel Who Worshipped Angry** Lisa's story breaks all the "proper worship" rules. Angry at God after multiple miscarriages, she decided to worship honestly. "I literally sang through gritted teeth. 'Blessed be Your name' sounded more like a challenge than worship. But I figured angry worship was better than no worship."

For weeks, her "worship" was more wrestling than singing. "I would sing a line then argue with it. 'You give and take away'—Yeah, You really do, don't You? 'My heart will choose to say blessed be Your name'—Well, my heart doesn't want to, but I'm saying it anyway."

The breakthrough wasn't sudden but gradual. "My angry worship slowly became honest worship, then questioning worship, then surrendered worship. God could handle my anger. He just wanted me to bring it to Him rather than walk away."

Lisa now leads worship at a church plant. "I tell people, 'Come as you are, even if you're mad. God's big enough for your real emotions. Just keep showing up. Keep singing. Something will break.'"

## **The Different Types of Breakthrough**

Not all breakthroughs look the same. Through persistent worship, people experience:

### **Emotional Breakthrough**

- Tears that have been locked up finally flow
- Joy returns after seasons of numbness
- Peace replaces anxiety
- Love overshadows bitterness

### **Mental Breakthrough**

- Clarity comes to confused situations
- Wisdom downloads for difficult decisions
- Perspective shifts on problems
- Truth displaces lies believed for years

### **Spiritual Breakthrough**

- Sense of God's presence returns
- Spiritual gifts are activated or renewed
- Prayer becomes effective again
- Scripture comes alive

### **Circumstantial Breakthrough**

- Relationships are restored
- Provision comes for needs
- Healing manifests in bodies
- Doors open that were closed

### **Ministry Breakthrough**

- New songs are birthed
- Fresh anointing flows
- Influence expands
- Calling becomes clear

The key is not to worship for a specific breakthrough but to worship until whatever needs to break, breaks.

## Creating Your Worship Battle Plan

If you're ready to worship until something breaks, here's a practical 30-day strategy:

### Week 1: Establishing the Discipline

- Days 1-3: Choose a consistent time and place for worship
- Days 4-5: Start with just 10 minutes daily
- Days 6-7: Experiment with different worship styles

### Week 2: Pressing Through Resistance

- Days 8-10: When you don't feel like worshipping, do it anyway
- Days 11-12: Add physical expressions (lifting hands, kneeling)
- Days 13-14: Worship with complete honesty about your feelings

### Week 3: Increasing Intensity

- Days 15-17: Extend your worship time to 20 minutes
- Days 18-19: Mix spontaneous worship with planned songs
- Days 20-21: Fast one day and spend extra time in worship

### Week 4: Expecting Breakthrough

- Days 22-24: Worship with expectation, not demand
- Days 25-26: Record what God shows you during worship
- Days 27-28: Share your journey with someone
- Days 29-30: Celebrate whatever breakthrough has come

Remember: The goal isn't to manipulate God through worship but to position ourselves through worship for whatever He wants to do.

## The Secret Kari Learned

After her breakthrough, Kari Jobe discovered something profound: The discipline of worshipping through dryness had given her something she couldn't have gained any other way—unshakeable worship.

"Before that season, my worship was dependent on my feelings. If I felt good, I worshipped well. If I felt bad, I struggled. But learning to worship through the darkness gave me a worship that could weather any storm."

This is the secret: Worship that's been forged in the fire of dryness becomes a weapon that works in any season. When you've learned to worship with tears, worship with joy is easy. When you've learned to worship in prison, worship in the palace is natural.

Kari concludes: "That season of forced worship—worshipping until it broke—didn't just break my spiritual dryness. It broke my dependence on feelings. It broke my small view of worship. It broke my limits on what God could do through simple obedience. Now I know: worship is not a feeling to wait for but a weapon to wield."

## Common Worship Mistakes in Dry Seasons

Avoid these pitfalls:

**Comparing Your Worship to Others** Your breakthrough worship might look different from everyone else's. Don't try to manufacture someone else's experience.

**Worshipping to Manipulate God** Worship isn't a formula to make God do what we want. It's surrender to what He wants.

**Giving Up Too Soon** Breakthrough often comes right after we want to quit. Persist one more day.

**Neglecting Corporate Worship** Even when it's hard, gathering with others for worship is powerful. Don't isolate.

**Making Worship Only About Music** Worship includes music but isn't limited to it. Find diverse expressions.

## Your Worship Breakthrough Awaits

Right now, something in your life needs to break:

- Maybe it's the depression that's held you captive
- Maybe it's the fear that's paralyzed your faith
- Maybe it's the bitterness that's poisoned your heart
- Maybe it's the confusion that's clouded your vision
- Maybe it's the dryness that's numbed your soul

Whatever needs to break, worship is the hammer. Not worship as performance. Not worship as feeling. But worship as warfare. Worship as declaration. Worship as persistent, consistent, resistant-crushing determination to enthrone God regardless of what you feel.

Will you join Kari at the piano? Will you join Paul and Silas in the prison? Will you join Jehoshaphat on the battlefield? Will you worship until it breaks?

Your breakthrough is waiting on the other side of persistent praise.

## **A Prayer for Breakthrough Worship**

*Lord, I confess I've reduced worship to an emotional experience. I've waited to feel You before I praise You. I've let my circumstances determine my worship. Forgive me for giving my feelings more power than Your worth.*

*Today, I choose to worship You because You're worthy, not because I feel worthy. I choose to declare Your goodness even when life doesn't feel good. I choose to sing of Your presence even when I sense only absence.*

*Give me strength to worship until something breaks. Whether it takes days, weeks, or months, I commit to persistent praise. Break through my mind that resists. Break through my emotions that rebel. Break through my spirit that's grown cold. Break through with Your presence and power.*

*I will worship in the darkness trusting that light is coming. I will worship in the prison believing that chains are breaking. I will worship in the battle knowing that victory is certain.*

*Let my worship be warfare. Let my praise be persistent. Let my declaration be determined. I will worship until it breaks.*

*In Jesus' name, who worshipped all the way to the cross, Amen.*

## **Reflection Questions**

1. What fears or misconceptions have kept you from worshipping during dry seasons?
2. Which layer of breakthrough (mind, emotions, spiritual, encounter) do you most need to break through?
3. What practical worship strategy from this chapter could you implement immediately?
4. How might your current struggle be preparation for unshakeable worship?
5. What would it look like for you to worship with complete honesty?
6. Will you commit to 30 days of persistent worship? What's your plan?

## **Journal Space**

*Use this space to create your worship battle plan. When will you worship? Where? How? What do you need to break through? Write your commitment to worship until it breaks.*

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Remember: Every spiritual giant learned to worship in the darkness before they could lead others in the light. Your persistent praise during this dry season is forging a worship that hell cannot stop and circumstances cannot shake. Keep singing. Keep declaring. Keep worshipping. Something is about to break.

# Chapter 7: Community Sparks Revival

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." —Hebrews 10:24-25*

Craig Groeschel sat in his car outside the small group meeting, engine running, wrestling with whether to go in or drive away. The founding pastor of Life.Church, one of America's largest churches, was battling a secret that was eating him alive: he felt spiritually dead inside.

"I was preaching to thousands every weekend about the abundant life while feeling like I was dying inside," Craig later confessed in his book "Divine Direction." "I knew all the right answers, could quote all the right verses, but I felt like a spiritual fraud. The worst part? I thought I had to hide it. I was supposed to be the one with answers, not questions. The one who was strong, not struggling."

For months, Craig had been isolating himself, convinced that a pastor of his stature couldn't admit to spiritual dryness. But that night in the car, desperation won over pride. He turned off the engine and walked into that living room where eight other men were gathered.

"When it came time to share prayer requests, something broke in me," Craig recalls. "I just started talking. I told them everything—the dryness, the doubts, the feeling of going through motions. I was sure they'd be shocked, maybe even lose respect for me."

Instead, something beautiful happened. One by one, the other men began sharing their own struggles. The successful businessman admitted his marriage was hanging by a thread. The worship leader confessed he hadn't felt God's presence in months. The elder revealed his secret battle with pornography.

"In that moment, I realized we'd all been dying alone when we could have been healing together," Craig reflects. "That night didn't instantly solve my spiritual dryness, but it started something. Week after week, as we met and shared honestly, something began to shift. Iron was sharpening iron. Confession was bringing freedom. Community was sparking revival."

## The Isolation Trap

When spiritual dryness hits, our first instinct is often to hide. We reason:

- "I don't want to burden others with my struggles"
- "People expect me to be strong"
- "No one else seems to be going through this"
- "I should be able to figure this out on my own"
- "What if they judge me?"
- "I'll reconnect with community when I'm doing better"

But isolation during spiritual dryness is like trying to start a fire with a single match in the wind. It rarely works. God designed us for community, and often the breakthrough we seek comes not in solitude but in connection.

The enemy knows this. That's why one of his primary strategies during our dry seasons is to convince us to isolate. He whispers:

- "You're the only one struggling like this"
- "Real Christians don't feel this way"
- "You'll bring others down if you share this"
- "Figure it out first, then reconnect"
- "You're too messed up for community right now"

These lies keep us trapped in cycles of dryness that community could break.

## The Biblical Power of Spiritual Community

Scripture consistently shows that breakthrough often comes through community:

**The Early Church's Example** Acts 2:42-47 shows believers "devoted to fellowship." The result? "Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs." Individual devotion was important, but corporate gathering released supernatural power.

**Jesus's Model** Even the Son of God didn't minister alone. He gathered twelve, sent them out in pairs, and in His darkest moment asked three friends to pray with Him. If Jesus needed community, how much more do we?

**The One Another Commands** The New Testament contains 59 "one another" commands:

- Love one another
- Encourage one another
- Bear one another's burdens
- Confess to one another
- Pray for one another
- Spur one another on

These aren't suggestions for when we feel like it—they're lifelines for when we don't.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** "Two are better than one...If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up...Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

This isn't just about physical help—it's profoundly spiritual. When we're too weak to stand spiritually, others can help us up. When we're under attack, others can defend us. When we feel breakable, community makes us stronger.

# What Craig Discovered: The Dimensions of Community Revival

Through his journey with that small group, Craig discovered several ways community sparks revival:

**1. The Power of Confession** "When I finally admitted my struggle, it lost its power over me," Craig shares. "Secrets grow in darkness but shrink in light. James 5:16 says 'Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.' I'd read that verse a thousand times but never really practiced it."

The group established a rule: What's shared in the room stays in the room. This safety allowed for radical honesty. "We didn't just confess sin—we confessed fears, doubts, dryness. And every time someone shared, the rest of us thought, 'I'm not alone.'"

**2. The Ministry of Presence** "Sometimes the guys didn't have answers for my dryness. But they showed up. They sat with me. They didn't try to fix me—they just loved me. Their presence reminded me of God's presence when I couldn't feel Him myself."

One particularly dark week, Craig's small group showed up at his house uninvited. "They didn't come with sermons or solutions. They came with pizza and presence. We watched a game, laughed about nothing important, and prayed briefly at the end. It was exactly what I needed."

**3. The Gift of Different Perspectives** "When you're in spiritual dryness, you develop tunnel vision. You can only see your problem from one angle. Community provides multiple perspectives that can break you out of mental ruts."

The businessman in the group approached faith differently than the artist. The engineer processed spirituality differently than the teacher. "Their different viewpoints helped me see my dryness from angles I'd never considered. Sometimes breakthrough comes from a perspective you could never have reached alone."

**4. The Accountability of Love** "The group didn't let me wallow. They loved me too much for that. When I wanted to skip Bible reading, they texted to ask what I'd read. When I wanted to avoid church, they saved me a seat. They held me accountable not from judgment but from love."

This accountability wasn't harsh or legalistic. "They'd say things like, 'We know you're not feeling it, but come anyway. Sit with us. Let us believe for you when you can't believe for yourself.'"

**5. The Multiplication of Faith** "There were weeks when my faith was barely a flicker. But sitting with eight other men whose faith was burning brighter, I could warm myself at their fire. Their faith literally strengthened mine."

Craig discovered what the early church knew: Faith is contagious. "When Tom shared how God had answered his prayer, it stirred hope in me. When Mike worshipped with abandon despite his pain, it gave me permission to worship in mine. We were multiplying faith to each other."

## **Modern Stories of Community Breakthrough**

**Sarah's Story: The Women Who Wouldn't Let Go** Sarah, a single mom, hit rock bottom when her teenage son was arrested for drugs. "I felt like a failure as a mother and as a Christian. I stopped going to church, stopped returning calls, stopped believing God cared."

But her small group of women wouldn't let her disappear. "They literally showed up at my door every Wednesday. The first week, I didn't answer. The second week, I let them in but didn't talk. The third week, I broke."

The women didn't offer platitudes or easy answers. "They cried with me. They shared their own parenting failures. One woman's son had been in prison—she knew exactly how I felt. Another was battling addiction in her family. I realized I wasn't uniquely broken."

Over months of meeting, something shifted. "My circumstances didn't immediately change, but I did. Their faith carried me when mine failed. Their prayers covered me when I couldn't pray. When my son eventually entered rehab, I had an army of women celebrating with me who had walked every step of the journey."

**David's Story: The Men's Group That Changed Everything** David, a successful surgeon, joined a men's group reluctantly. "My wife basically forced me. I figured I'd go once and check the box." But the honesty he encountered shocked him.

"These weren't weak men sharing feelings—they were warriors battling together. The contractor talked about his porn addiction. The CEO discussed his anxiety. The retired Marine shared about his PTSD. I realized strength wasn't hiding struggles—it was bringing them to light."

When David finally shared about his spiritual numbness following a patient's death he couldn't prevent, the group surrounded him. "They didn't try to theologize away my pain. They entered it. One guy had lost a child—he understood survivor's guilt. Another had left medicine for similar reasons—he knew the weight of playing God and failing."

"That group became my lifeline. We met at 5:30 AM every Friday—brutal for a surgeon's schedule. But I never missed it. In that circle of broken, honest men, I found God again. Not in the perfection I'd been pretending, but in the beautiful mess of real community."

**Maria's Story: The Unlikely Internet Community** Maria, a missionary in a closed country, couldn't access traditional community. "I was the only believer for hundreds of miles. The isolation was crushing my faith." Through secure internet, she found an online community of missionaries facing similar struggles.

"Every Tuesday at 2 AM my time, I'd log on and see faces of others serving in hard places. We couldn't share locations for security, but we could share hearts. When I wanted to quit, they understood in ways no one else could."

The group developed creative ways to "do life" together online. "We'd eat meals 'together' over video. We'd worship simultaneously from different continents. We'd pray in real-time for each other's struggles. It wasn't ideal, but it was life-saving."

"People think online community can't be real, but for those of us in isolation, it's a lifeline. That group kept me on the field when everything in me wanted to run. Now I help lead similar groups for isolated believers. Community finds a way."

## **Practical Steps for Finding Community in Dry Seasons**

**1. Start Where You Are** You don't need the perfect group. Start with what's available:

- Join an existing small group at church
- Ask one or two trusted friends to meet regularly
- Find an online community if geography is a barrier
- Join a recovery group if you're battling specific issues
- Start a simple Bible study in your home

**2. Be Honest About Your Need** When you join or form a group, be upfront: "I'm going through a spiritually dry season and need community." Your honesty will often give others permission to be honest too.

**3. Commit to Consistency**

- Show up even when you don't feel like it
- Prioritize group meetings like important appointments
- Give it at least 90 days before evaluating
- Be present even if you can't fully participate at first

**4. Practice Graduated Vulnerability** You don't have to share everything immediately:

- Week 1-4: Show up and listen
- Week 5-8: Share surface struggles
- Week 9-12: Share deeper challenges
- Week 13+: Practice radical honesty

**5. Look for These Qualities in Community**

- **Safety:** What's shared stays confidential
- **Authenticity:** Real struggles are welcomed, not hidden
- **Diversity:** Different perspectives and experiences
- **Consistency:** Regular, predictable gatherings

- **Grace:** Acceptance without judgment
- **Truth:** Honesty without harshness
- **Prayer:** Commitment to pray for one another

## Creating Safe Community for Others

As you experience breakthrough through community, you become equipped to create it for others:

**Be the Initiator** Don't wait for others to reach out. Text someone who's been missing. Invite someone for coffee. Start the group you wish existed.

**Model Vulnerability** Share your own struggles appropriately. Your honesty creates safety for others to be honest.

**Maintain Confidentiality** Never share someone else's story without permission. Trust is the foundation of transformative community.

**Avoid Fix-It Mode** Sometimes people need presence more than solutions. Learn to sit with others in their pain without rushing to repair.

**Celebrate Small Victories** Notice and celebrate any progress in others. Hope is contagious in community.

## Overcoming Common Community Obstacles

**"I've been hurt by community before"** Past wounds are real, but isolation isn't the answer. Start small with one safe person. Consider counseling to process past hurts. Remember: imperfect community is better than perfect isolation.

**"I don't have time for community"** We make time for what we value. If you're too busy for community, you're too busy. What needs to be eliminated to make space for life-giving relationships?

**"No one understands my specific struggle"** You'd be surprised. And even if your exact situation is unique, the human experience of struggle is universal. Connection happens at the heart level, not the detail level.

**"I'm too introverted for community"** Introverts need community too—just different kinds. Smaller groups, deeper conversations, less frequent but more meaningful gatherings. Design community that fits your wiring.

**"I'm in leadership and can't be vulnerable"** This was Craig's trap. Leaders need community desperately. Find peers outside your organization. Join a leaders' cohort. Get a spiritual director. Your influence depends on your health.

## The Ripple Effect

Here's what Craig Groeschel discovered: The revival that started in his small group didn't stay there. As he got healthier through community, his preaching changed. His leadership improved. His family thrived. The entire church was impacted by what happened in that living room.

"I thought I was protecting the church by hiding my struggles," Craig reflects. "But I was actually robbing them. When I finally got honest about my journey, it gave the entire congregation permission to be real. We went from a church that performed to a church that healed."

This is the ripple effect of community revival:

- One person gets honest
- Others find courage to share
- Healing begins to flow
- Faith gets rekindled
- Hope becomes contagious
- Revival spreads outward

## The Unexpected Gift of Dry Season Community

Those who find community during spiritual dryness often discover something surprising: The relationships forged in the valley become the most precious ones of their lives.

Craig's small group still meets years later. "We've been through everything together now—divorces, deaths, job losses, kids' rebellions, faith crises. The group that formed because of my dryness became the foundation for weathering every storm since."

There's something about struggling together that bonds souls:

- Pretense is stripped away
- Authenticity becomes the norm
- Grace is experienced, not just discussed
- Faith is shared like bread in famine
- God shows up in the gathering

## Your Next Step Toward Community

Right now, in your dryness, you have a choice. You can continue trying to weather this alone, or you can take one small step toward community. Here's a progressive plan:

**This Week:** Identify one person you could be honest with about your struggle. Text them. Set up coffee.

**Next Two Weeks:** Research existing groups at your church or in your area. Visit at least one. Give it three tries before deciding.

**Within a Month:** Either join an existing group or invite 2-3 others to start meeting regularly. Be honest about why you need community.

**Within Three Months:** Establish rhythms of regular gathering, honest sharing, and mutual prayer. Watch what God does.

Remember: You don't need the perfect community. You just need real community. Even Jesus's small group included doubters, deniers, and betrayers—yet it changed the world.

## **The Promise of Gathered Believers**

Jesus made a stunning promise in Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." This isn't just about His omnipresence—it's about a special manifestation of His presence in community.

When you can't sense God alone, gather with others. When your faith feels weak, borrow from others' strength. When your prayers feel powerless, join your voice with others. There's something supernatural that happens when believers gather honestly.

Craig Groeschel concludes: "I thought I needed to get my spiritual life together before I could really engage in community. I had it backwards. It was in community that my spiritual life came back together. The very thing I was avoiding—honest, vulnerable, consistent community—was the medicine I needed most."

## **A Prayer for Community Courage**

*Father, I confess that I've believed the lie that I need to handle my spiritual dryness alone. I've let pride, fear, and past hurts keep me from the community You designed me for. Forgive me for choosing isolation over connection.*

*Give me courage to take the first step. To make the call. To walk into the room. To speak the truth about where I am. Help me find safe people who will walk with me through this valley.*

*I pray for divine connections—people who will understand, encourage, and challenge me. Give me wisdom to know who to trust with my heart. Help me be the kind of community member I hope to find—honest, faithful, grace-filled.*

*Lord, I believe You show up uniquely when Your people gather. I position myself to receive from others what I can't seem to receive alone. Use community to spark revival in my dry heart.*

*Thank You that I don't have to walk alone. Thank You for the body of Christ. Thank You that breakthrough often comes through the ministry of others.*

*In Jesus' name, who modeled perfect community, Amen.*

## **Reflection Questions**

1. What fears have kept you from honest community during your dry season?
2. When have you experienced the power of authentic spiritual community?
3. What kind of community do you most need right now? What's one step toward finding it?
4. How might your current struggle equip you to create community for others?
5. What would it look like to be radically honest with even one other person this week?
6. Are you willing to commit to consistent community for the next 90 days? What's your plan?

## **Journal Space**

*Use this space to process your community needs and plans. Who could you reach out to? What groups could you explore? What fears need to be addressed? Write your commitment to breaking the isolation of spiritual dryness.*

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Remember: Every revival in history started with a small group of people getting honest with God and each other. Your breakthrough might be waiting in the living room of someone who understands. You weren't meant to walk through dryness alone. Community isn't optional—it's essential. The spark you need might come from someone else's flame. Gather, and watch the fire spread.

# Chapter 8: 90-Day Spiritual Growth Tracker

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." —Hebrews 12:1-2*

You've read the stories. You've learned the principles. You've seen how others have navigated their spiritual deserts and emerged with faith refined like gold. Now comes the most important part: your journey.

This isn't just another chapter to read—it's a roadmap to follow. The next 90 days could be the turning point in your spiritual drought. Not because this plan is magical, but because consistent, intentional action in the direction of God always bears fruit.

Think of this chapter as your spiritual training program. Just as an athlete doesn't get fit by reading about exercise but by actually training, you won't break through spiritual dryness by simply understanding it—you must walk through it with purpose.

## Why 90 Days?

Research shows it takes approximately 66-90 days to form new habits that stick. Spiritually, 90 days represents:

- A full season of growth
- Enough time to see real change
- Short enough to maintain focus
- Long enough to develop sustainable rhythms

The Israelites journeyed through the wilderness. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert. You're committing to 90 days of intentional spiritual practice. This isn't about perfection—it's about persistence.

## The Three Phases of Breakthrough

This 90-day journey is divided into three 30-day phases, each building on the last:

**Phase 1: Foundation (Days 1-30) - Psalm Journaling** Focus: Reconnecting with God's Word through the raw honesty of the Psalms

**Phase 2: Intensity (Days 31-60) - Worship & Fasting** Focus: Breaking through barriers with increased spiritual disciplines

**Phase 3: Overflow (Days 61-90) - Serve & Be Discipled** Focus: Cementing growth through service and community

Let's explore each phase in detail.

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## **Phase 1: Foundation Through Psalm Journaling (Days 1-30)**

**Why Psalms?** The Psalms give us permission to be human with God. They contain every emotion—doubt, anger, depression, joy, confusion, hope. When you can't find words for your spiritual dryness, the psalmists provide them.

**Daily Structure (20-30 minutes)**

**Step 1: Read (5 minutes)**

- Day 1: Psalm 1
- Day 2: Psalm 2
- Continue sequentially through Psalm 30
- Read slowly, out loud if possible

**Step 2: Reflect (5 minutes)** Ask yourself:

- What emotion is the psalmist expressing?
- How does this connect to my current season?
- What is God revealing about Himself?
- What phrase or verse stands out?

**Step 3: Respond (10 minutes)** Write in your journal:

- Copy the verse that most impacts you
- Write your honest response to God
- Turn the psalm into your personal prayer
- Note any promptings or insights

**Step 4: Rest (5 minutes)**

- Sit quietly before God
- Don't force anything
- Simply be present
- Listen without demanding

**Weekly Practices for Phase 1:**

- **Sunday:** Read your week's journal entries and note patterns

- **Wednesday:** Share one insight with a friend or small group
- **Friday:** Choose one verse from the week to memorize
- **Saturday:** Day of rest—no required reading, just reflection

### Sample Journal Entry:

*Day 7 - Psalm 7*

*Verse that struck me: "My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart." (v.10)*

*My response: God, I'll be honest—I don't feel shielded right now. I feel exposed, vulnerable, attacked by doubts. But David declares You as his shield even while being pursued. Help me declare truth even when I don't feel protected. Be my shield today, especially from my own thoughts that accuse You of abandoning me.*

*Prompting: Text Jennifer and ask how I can pray for her. My focus on my own struggles has made me blind to others' needs.*

### Common Challenges in Phase 1:

- **"I don't feel anything when I read"** - Keep going. You're planting seeds.
- **"I missed several days"** - Don't quit. Just pick up where you left off.
- **"The psalms feel depressing"** - They're honest. Let them teach you honesty.
- **"I don't know what to write"** - Start with "God, I don't know what to write, but..."

### Phase 1 Goals:

- Establish consistent time with God
- Practice emotional honesty in prayer
- Reconnect with Scripture without pressure
- Build foundation for phases 2 and 3

## Phase 2: Intensity Through Worship & Fasting (Days 31-60)

Building on your foundation of consistent Word engagement, Phase 2 adds spiritual intensity through focused worship and strategic fasting.

### Daily Structure (30-45 minutes)

#### Morning Worship (20 minutes)

- Play 3-4 worship songs (create a playlist)
- Sing along, even if you don't feel it
- Physical engagement: stand, raise hands, kneel

- Focus on declaration, not feeling
- End with 5 minutes of silence

### **Evening Reflection (10-15 minutes)**

- Journal about your day through a worship lens
- Where did you see God?
- What are you grateful for?
- How can tomorrow's activities become worship?
- Write a short prayer of consecration

**Weekly Fasting Rhythm:** Choose one day per week to fast. Options:

- **Sunrise to sunset fast** (easiest for beginners)
- **24-hour fast** (dinner to dinner)
- **Daniel fast** (vegetables and water only)
- **Media fast** (no screens, social media, entertainment)

### **Fasting Day Structure:**

- Begin with prayer of intention
- Replace meal times with prayer/worship
- Read Isaiah 58 about true fasting
- Focus prayers on breakthrough, not just personal needs
- Break fast gently with gratitude

**Worship Playlist Suggestions:** Create a playlist with variety:

- Declarative songs ("Great Are You Lord")
- Warfare songs ("Surrounded")
- Intimate songs ("Good Good Father")
- Scripture songs ("Psalm 23")
- Instrumental (for silent reflection)

### **Weekly Practices for Phase 2:**

- **Sunday:** Corporate worship with heightened engagement
- **Monday:** Create/update your worship playlist
- **Wednesday:** Fast and pray with focused intention
- **Friday:** Extended worship session (45-60 minutes)
- **Saturday:** Worship through service (practical acts of love)

### **Common Challenges in Phase 2:**

- **"Fasting gives me headaches"** - Stay hydrated, consider partial fasts
- **"I feel hypocritical worshipping"** - That's the point. Push through.

- **"I can't sing"** - God hears the heart, not the pitch
- **"Nothing's breaking through"** - Keep worshipping. Breakthrough often comes suddenly.

### **Phase 2 Goals:**

- Develop worship as warfare
- Experience the power of fasting
- Push past emotional barriers
- Build spiritual intensity and hunger

## **Phase 3: Overflow Through Service & Discipleship (Days 61-90)**

The final phase cements your growth by focusing outward through service and connecting with intentional discipleship.

### **Daily Structure (30-45 minutes)**

#### **Morning Foundation (15 minutes)**

- Read one Proverb (Day 61 = Proverbs 1, etc.)
- Choose one verse for the day
- Pray for opportunities to serve
- Ask: "Who can I bless today?"

**Daily Service Challenge** Each day, complete one intentional act of service:

- Week 9: Secret service (anonymous acts)
- Week 10: Practical service (meet tangible needs)
- Week 11: Spiritual service (pray, encourage, share faith)
- Week 12: Sacrificial service (costs you something)

#### **Evening Discipleship (15-20 minutes)**

- Journal about your service experience
- Read one chapter from a spiritual growth book
- Pray for your discipleship partner/small group
- Plan tomorrow's service

**Weekly Discipleship Rhythm:** Find a discipleship partner or join a small group:

- Meet weekly for 60-90 minutes

- Share honestly about your journey
- Pray specifically for each other
- Hold each other accountable
- Celebrate growth together

### **Service Ideas by Week:**

#### **Week 9 - Secret Service:**

- Pay for someone's coffee anonymously
- Leave encouraging notes in public places
- Secretly do someone's chore
- Send an anonymous gift
- Cover someone's parking meter

#### **Week 10 - Practical Service:**

- Bring a meal to someone stressed
- Help with yard work or home repairs
- Babysit for a single parent
- Run errands for someone elderly
- Volunteer at a local charity

#### **Week 11 - Spiritual Service:**

- Write and send 5 encouragement cards
- Pray with someone going through difficulty
- Share your testimony with someone seeking
- Lead a devotion for a group
- Visit someone who's lonely

#### **Week 12 - Sacrificial Service:**

- Give financially beyond comfort
- Serve where it costs you time
- Fast a meal and give the money saved
- Use vacation time to serve others
- Offer professional skills pro bono

#### **Finding a Discipleship Partner:** Look for someone who:

- Is slightly ahead of you spiritually
- Demonstrates faithful consistency
- Will commit to regular meetings
- Balances grace with truth
- Has walked through their own valleys

### Weekly Practices for Phase 3:

- **Sunday:** Serve in your local church
- **Tuesday:** Meet with discipleship partner/group
- **Thursday:** Extended prayer for others
- **Friday:** Plan next week's service
- **Saturday:** Celebrate the week's growth

### Common Challenges in Phase 3:

- **"I'm too drained to serve"** - Start tiny. Service energizes.
- **"I can't find a mentor"** - Start with a peer. Grow together.
- **"My service feels meaningless"** - God sees. That's enough.
- **"People don't appreciate my service"** - You're serving God, not people.

### Phase 3 Goals:

- Establish sustainable service rhythms
  - Connect deeply in discipleship
  - Move from receiving to giving
  - Cement the practices of phases 1 and 2
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## Daily Tracker Template

Use this simple template to track your 90-day journey:

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Day:** \_\_\_/90 **Phase:** \_\_\_\_

### Morning:

- Completed morning practice
- Time spent: \_\_\_\_\_
- Key insight: \_\_\_\_\_

### During the Day:

- Lived out today's focus
- Service act: \_\_\_\_\_
- God sighting: \_\_\_\_\_

### Evening:

- Completed evening practice
- Gratitude: \_\_\_\_\_

- Tomorrow's intention: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Weekly Reflection Questions:**

1. How has God shown up this week?
  2. What's changing in my spiritual life?
  3. Where am I resisting?
  4. What breakthrough am I seeing?
  5. How can I go deeper next week?
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## **Making It Stick: Keys to Success**

**1. Progress Over Perfection** You'll miss days. Don't quit. An imperfect journey completed beats a perfect journey abandoned.

**2. Adjust As Needed** This plan is a guide, not a law. If you need more time in one phase, take it. If something isn't working, modify it.

**3. Track Your Journey** Keep a simple record. You'll be amazed looking back at how far you've come.

**4. Share the Journey** Tell someone about your 90-day commitment. Better yet, invite them to join you.

### **5. Celebrate Milestones**

- Day 30: Celebrate consistency
- Day 60: Celebrate breakthrough
- Day 90: Celebrate transformation

**6. Plan for Day 91** Don't stop at 90 days. Use what you've learned to create sustainable rhythms for life.

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## **Common Questions**

**"What if I'm starting this while still in deep dryness?"** Perfect. This plan is designed specifically for desert seasons. Start where you are.

**"Can I modify the plan?"** Absolutely. Make it work for your life while maintaining the core elements.

**"What if I don't see breakthrough by day 90?"** Growth isn't always visible immediately. Trust the process. Consider another 90 days.

**"Should I do this alone or with others?"** Both work. Consider starting alone for phase 1, then inviting others for phases 2-3.

**"What if I'm already doing some of these practices?"** Great! Add the elements you're missing. Let this plan enhance what you're already doing.

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## Your 90-Day Commitment

Before you begin, make this commitment:

*Lord, I commit the next 90 days to intentional spiritual growth. I will show up even when I don't feel like it. I will persist when I want to quit. I will trust Your process over my feelings. I believe You will meet me in this journey and that Day 90 will find me different than Day 1. Give me grace for the journey and eyes to see Your work along the way. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Sign your commitment:** Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Accountability Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Journey Begins Now

You hold in your hands not just a plan but a pathway. The next 90 days could be the most transformative of your spiritual life. Not because of this program, but because of your decision to pursue God intentionally through your dryness.

Remember:

- Every spiritual giant had to learn to walk
- Every breakthrough was preceded by perseverance
- Every testimony includes a test
- Every harvest requires planting

Your spiritual spring is coming. These 90 days are your planting season. Plant faithfully. Water consistently. Trust patiently.

Your breakthrough is waiting on the other side of obedience.

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# Conclusion: Even in Silence, God Is Still Working

As we close this journey together, I want to leave you with one final story—my own.

Three years ago, I sat in my car outside my house, unable to go in. My family was inside, probably wondering where I was, but I couldn't face them. I couldn't face anything. After two decades of ministry, writing, and speaking about faith, I had none left.

The previous months had been a cascade of losses. My mother's death. A ministry betrayal. A child's rebellion. Financial pressure. And through it all, a silence from heaven so deafening it made me question everything I'd ever believed.

I had taught others about navigating spiritual dryness, but now I was drowning in my own. The Bible felt dead. Prayer felt pointless. Worship felt false. Community felt unsafe. Service felt impossible. Every tool I'd given others seemed broken in my own hands.

That night in the car, I gave God an ultimatum: "Either show up, or I'm done."

The silence continued.

But something made me open this book you've just read—except it wasn't a book then. It was a collection of stories I'd gathered over the years, testimonies of others who'd walked through spiritual deserts. I started reading about Mother Teresa's fifty-year darkness. About Francis Chan's journey back to first love. About John Piper's dark night of the soul.

And slowly, almost imperceptibly, hope flickered.

Not because my circumstances changed—they didn't. Not because I suddenly felt God—I didn't. But because I realized I wasn't alone. I wasn't the first to walk this path, and I wouldn't be the last. Others had survived. Others had even thrived.

So I did what I've encouraged you to do in these pages. I chose one small step. Just one. I decided to read one psalm each morning, even if it felt meaningless. That led to another small step—texting a friend for prayer. Then another—showing up at church even though I wanted to run.

The breakthrough didn't come dramatically. It came like sunrise—so gradually you don't notice until suddenly you realize the darkness has lifted. Six months into my journey, I was journaling when I wrote, "Thank You, Lord, for..." and realized I meant it. Somewhere in the disciplines, the service, the community, the worship—somewhere in the showing up when I didn't feel like it—my heart had begun to heal.

## What I Know Now

Looking back from the other side of that desert, I can see what I couldn't see then. God wasn't absent—He was working. Not in the ways I expected or demanded, but in ways I desperately needed:

**He was purifying my faith.** I had to discover whether I loved God or just loved what God did for me. The desert stripped away everything except the essential question: Is He enough?

**He was deepening my well.** The shallow springs of emotion-based faith had to run dry so He could dig deeper wells that wouldn't fail in future droughts.

**He was preparing my message.** Everything I'd taught from knowledge, I now knew from experience. My words carry different weight now—the weight of weathered faith.

**He was teaching me compassion.** I can now sit with others in their darkness without rushing to fix it, because I remember my own.

Most importantly, I learned that God's silence is not His absence. His hiddenness is not abandonment. He is the God who works in secret, who plants in darkness, who does His deepest surgery when we're under anesthesia.

## Your Journey Forward

As you close this book and begin (or continue) your own journey through spiritual dryness, remember:

**You are not alone.** Though the enemy whispers otherwise, you join a great cloud of witnesses who have walked this path. Your struggle is not unique—which means your breakthrough is possible.

**Your feelings are not your faith.** Faith is choosing to believe what God has said despite what you feel. Every day you choose trust over emotion, your faith grows stronger.

**Small steps lead to great distances.** You don't have to be heroic. You just have to be faithful. One psalm. One prayer. One act of service. One honest conversation. These small steps are carrying you home.

**God wastes nothing.** Your desert is not a detour—it's preparation. Every tear is collected. Every struggle is purposeful. Every day of faithfulness is planting seeds for future harvest.

**Breakthrough is coming.** It may not come when or how you expect. But God's Word never returns void. Your faithfulness will be rewarded. Morning always follows night.

## A Final Prayer

As you begin or continue your 90-day journey—or whatever path God has for you—I pray this blessing over you:

*May the God who spoke light into darkness speak into your night. May the Savior who knew abandonment never abandon you. May the Spirit who hovered over chaos bring order to your soul.*

*When you cannot sense Him, may you trust Him. When you cannot feel Him, may you follow Him. When you cannot hear Him, may you remember His words.*

*May your desert become a garden. May your valley become a highway. May your darkness become the backdrop for His brightest light.*

*And when you emerge—and you will emerge—may your story encourage another traveler that even in silence, God is still working.*

*Hold on, dear friend. Morning is coming.*

*In the name of the Father who never leaves, The Son who walked through darkness to defeat it, And the Spirit who groans when we have no words, Amen.*

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Your story isn't over. In fact, it may just be beginning. The desert you're walking through is not your destination—it's your transformation.

Keep walking. Keep believing. Keep showing up.

Even in silence, God is still working.

Especially in silence, God is still working.