

When God Feels Silent: A Bible Study Guide for New Believers

Introduction to This Study

Target Audience: New and young Christian believers (teens–young adults, first 1–3 years in the faith)

Core Theme: Learning to trust God’s presence when you can’t feel anything

Welcome

If you’ve picked up this study, chances are you’re experiencing something confusing and maybe even frightening: God feels far away. Maybe prayer feels empty, the Bible seems dull, and worship feels like just going through the motions. Perhaps you’re wondering if you did something wrong, if your faith was ever real, or if God has abandoned you.

First, hear this: **You are not alone.** What you’re experiencing is called spiritual dryness, and it’s one of the most common challenges believers face—even the heroes of the Bible walked through this wilderness. This study will walk with you through this season, helping you understand what’s happening and how to keep trusting God when you can’t feel Him.

How to Use This Study

For Individual Study:

- Work through one session per week (or at your own pace)
- Read all Scripture passages listed
- Journal your answers to the reflection questions
- Complete the practical application steps before moving to the next session

For Small Groups:

- Meet weekly to discuss one session
- Have everyone read the Scripture passages beforehand
- Use the discussion questions to guide your conversation
- Pray together and encourage one another
- Hold each other accountable for the application steps

A Note Before You Begin:

This journey is not about “fixing” yourself or forcing feelings to return. It’s about learning a deeper, more resilient faith—one that trusts God’s promises even when your emotions tell a different story. Be gentle with yourself, be honest with God, and remember: the silence is not the end of your story.

SESSION 1: Understanding the Silence

Why Does God Feel So Far Away?

Opening Thought

The initial shock of feeling distant from God can trigger fear and self-doubt. But understanding the nature of spiritual dryness is the first step to navigating it with hope. This is not a time for harsh self-judgment, but for grace-filled examination.

Key Scripture Passages

Read these passages slowly and thoughtfully:

1. **Psalm 42:1-5** - The soul that thirsts for God
2. **2 Corinthians 5:7** - Walking by faith, not by sight
3. **Matthew 28:20** - Jesus' promise of His presence
4. **Hebrews 11:1** - The definition of faith

Teaching Points

1. What is Spiritual Dryness?

- A state where a believer feels disconnected from God
- Common for Christians at every stage of their journey
- Characterized by: empty prayers, dull Bible reading, emotionless worship
- **Important:** This does NOT automatically mean God has abandoned you or that your salvation is in question

2. Why Does This Happen?

- **Unrealistic expectations:** Many new believers expect constant emotional highs
- **Spiritual maturity:** God is developing a deeper faith in you—one not dependent on feelings
- **Testing and refining:** God may allow perceived distance to deepen your trust
- **Human factors:** Physical exhaustion, mental health struggles, burnout, illness can all impact spiritual clarity
- **God's purposes:** Sometimes He withdraws the feeling of His presence to teach you to love Him for who He is, not just for the good feelings

3. The Foundation: Faith vs. Feelings

- **Faith** = Active trust in God's character and promises, regardless of circumstances
- **Feelings** = Internal emotional responses that are wonderful but unreliable
- Your salvation and God's presence are FACTS based on His Word, not on your emotions
- We are called to "walk by faith, not by sight" (or by feelings)

4. God's Unbreakable Promise

Jesus said, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Notice:

- He didn't say "when you feel me"
- He didn't say "when you're spiritually fervent"
- He said "always"—this is a declaration of fact, not dependent on your perception

Discussion Questions

1. What has your experience of spiritual dryness been like? What does it feel like when you try to pray or read the Bible?
2. Before this study, what did you think spiritual dryness meant? Did you think it meant you had failed somehow?

3. Read Psalm 42:1-5. What does the psalmist do with his downcast feelings? How does he address his own soul?
4. Why do you think God would allow us to go through seasons where we can't feel Him? What might He be trying to teach us?
5. What's the difference between faith and feelings? Can you have faith even when you don't feel anything?

Personal Reflection

Take time to journal your answers to these questions:

- When did you first notice God feeling distant? What was happening in your life at that time?
- What fears has this experience triggered in you? (Be completely honest—God can handle your fears.)
- Looking back, can you identify any physical, emotional, or circumstantial factors that might be contributing to your dryness?
- What would it mean for you to trust God's promise of presence even when you can't feel Him?

Practical Application Steps

This week, commit to:

1. **Memorize** Matthew 28:20: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
2. **Create a "Faith Anchor"** - Write out 3-5 Bible promises about God's presence and faithfulness on index cards. Put them where you'll see them daily (bathroom mirror, car dashboard, phone lock screen).
3. **Start a "Truth Journal"** - Each day this week, write down one truth about God from Scripture, even if you don't feel it. Example: "God is with me today (Matthew 28:20), even though I feel alone."
4. **Be honest in prayer** - At least once this week, pray a completely honest prayer about how you feel. Tell God exactly what you're experiencing, without trying to "fix" it or sound spiritual.

SESSION 2: You Are Not Alone—Biblical Portraits of Struggle

Even the Heroes of Faith Walked Through the Darkness

Opening Thought

One of the most comforting truths for a believer in a dry season is realizing this is a well-trodden path. The Bible is filled with stories of faithful people who wrestled with God's silence. These aren't stories of failure—they're stories of faith that was tested, refined, and deepened.

Key Scripture Passages

Read these passages and note the honesty and pain expressed:

1. **Psalm 13** - "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?"
2. **Psalm 22:1-5, 19-24** - "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
3. **Psalm 88** - The darkest psalm (read the whole thing)

- 4. **1 Kings 19:1-18** - Elijah's burnout and God's gentle response
- 5. **Job 23:1-9, 16-17** - Job's desperate search for God
- 6. **John 20:24-29** - Thomas's honest doubt

Teaching Points

1. The Psalms of Lament: A Language for Our Pain

- About one-third of the Psalms are laments—complaints brought to God
- They give us permission to be brutally honest with God about our pain
- They teach us that bringing complaints to God is not disrespectful—it's an act of faith

- Key pattern in laments:

- Honest expression of pain ("How long, O LORD?")
- Petition (asking God to act)
- A turn to faith (choosing to trust despite feelings)
- Often (but not always) ends with praise or hope

2. Psalm 13: Choosing to Trust

- David asks "How long?" four times—he's desperate and feels forgotten
- He doesn't pretend to be okay; he lays his despair bare
- But then: "But I have trusted in your steadfast love"
- This isn't a sudden emotional shift—it's a deliberate choice
- David preaches to his own heart, reminding it of what is true

3. Psalm 88: When There's No Happy Ending

- The darkest psalm in the entire Bible
- Ends with "darkness is my closest friend"—no turn to hope or praise
- **Why is this in the Bible?** Because God validates unresolved suffering
- Even in the deepest pit, crying out to God IS an act of faith
- God is big enough to handle your unresolved pain

4. Elijah: Burnout and God's Gentle Care

- Fresh from a great victory, Elijah crashes into deep depression
- Symptoms: exhaustion, hopelessness, isolation, wanting to die
- **God's response:** He doesn't rebuke—He provides rest, food, and gentle presence
- God speaks in a "still small voice," not in wind, earthquake, or fire
- Sometimes the most spiritual thing to do is rest and care for your body
- God gently corrects Elijah's wrong thinking and gives him renewed purpose

5. Job: The Silence in Suffering

- Job's greatest agony wasn't his pain—it was God's silence
- "I go forward, but he is not there... I cannot perceive him"
- When God finally speaks, He doesn't answer Job's "why" questions
- Instead, He reveals His majesty and wisdom
- Job's response: "I had heard of you... but now my eye sees you"
- God's silence doesn't equal His absence or disapproval

6. Thomas: Jesus is Patient with Doubt

- Thomas refuses to believe without physical proof
- Jesus doesn't scold him—He graciously meets him at his point of need
- Jesus invites Thomas to touch His wounds
- Result: Thomas makes the greatest confession—"My Lord and my God!"
- Jesus blesses "those who have not seen and yet have believed"—that's us!

Discussion Questions

1. Which of these biblical characters do you relate to most right now? Why?
2. Read Psalm 13 aloud as a group. How does David move from despair ("How long?") to trust ("But I have trusted")? What would it look like for you to make that same turn?
3. Why do you think God included Psalm 88 (which ends in darkness) in the Bible? What comfort does this offer to someone in deep spiritual darkness?
4. What strikes you about God's response to Elijah's depression? How does God care for both Elijah's body and spirit?
5. Thomas needed to see and touch to believe. Jesus accommodated his need but then blessed "those who have not seen." What does it mean to believe without seeing (or feeling)?

Personal Reflection

Take time to journal:

- Write your own lament prayer to God. Be completely honest about your pain, confusion, and feelings. Use the pattern: express your pain → ask God to act → make a choice to trust (even if small).
- Which physical or emotional needs are you neglecting right now? How might caring for these be an act of faith?
- Job came to a deeper knowledge of God through his suffering. What might God be trying to teach you about Himself through this dry season?

Practical Application Steps

This week, commit to:

1. **Pray a Psalm of Lament** - Choose one (Psalm 13, 22, 42, or 88) and pray it out loud to God at least three times this week. Let it give you words for your pain.
2. **Care for Your Body** - In honor of Elijah's story, take one practical step to care for your physical well-being: get 8 hours of sleep, eat nutritious meals, take a walk, or rest without guilt.
3. **Share Your Struggle** - Find one trusted Christian friend or mentor and say, "I'm in a dry season and struggling to feel God. Will you pray for me?" Don't walk through this alone.
4. **Read Job 38-42** - Read God's response to Job. Notice what God reveals about Himself. Journal: "What does this teach me about who God is?"

SESSION 3: Assurance in the Storm

Your Salvation is Not Based on Your Feelings

Opening Thought

Perhaps the most terrifying question that arises from spiritual dryness is: "Did I lose my salvation? Was my faith ever real?" This session addresses that fear head-on with the unshakeable truth of the Gospel.

Key Scripture Passages

Read these passages as anchors of assurance:

1. **1 John 5:13** - That you may KNOW you have eternal life
2. **John 19:30** - "It is finished!"
3. **Romans 8:16, 38-39** - The Spirit's witness and nothing can separate us
4. **Ephesians 2:8-9** - Saved by grace through faith
5. **Hebrews 13:5** - "I will never leave you nor forsake you"
6. **1 John 1:9** - Confession and forgiveness
7. **Philippians 1:6** - He who began a good work will complete it

Teaching Points

1. The Fear Behind the Silence

- When God feels distant, we fear we've lost our salvation
- This fear strikes at the foundation of our hope
- **Critical truth:** Your salvation has NEVER depended on the intensity of your feelings or the perfection of your performance

2. Three Pillars of Assurance

PILLAR #1: The Absolute Trustworthiness of Scripture

- The Bible was written so you could KNOW you have eternal life (1 John 5:13)
- This is not hope, wish, or maybe—it's knowledge, certainty grounded in God's testimony
- God's promises don't change based on your feelings

PILLAR #2: The Finished Work of Jesus Christ

- "It is finished!" (John 19:30)—redemption is COMPLETE
- Jesus paid the full penalty for all your sins: past, present, and future
- Salvation is a gift received by grace through faith, not earned or maintained by spiritual fervor
- To think your salvation is lost because feelings faded is to put the burden back on yourself

PILLAR #3: The Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit

- When you became a Christian, the Spirit took residence in you
- "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16)
- This inner conviction is a gift from God, a divine confirmation of your adoption

3. The Difference Between Loss of Assurance and Loss of Salvation

- **Loss of assurance** = losing your sense of confidence that you belong to God
- **Loss of salvation** = actually ceasing to be a Christian (which true believers cannot do)
- Sin can grieve the Holy Spirit and diminish your SENSE of assurance
- But it does not nullify the covenant God made with you in Christ
- Your feelings of distance don't mean God has left you

4. Spiritual Dryness vs. Backsliding vs. Apostasy

Spiritual Dryness:

- Primarily emotional—a perceived absence despite trying to engage
- The desire for God remains (even if faint)
- Feels passive—something happening TO you
- God often allows this for holy purposes: to purify motives, deepen trust

Backsliding:

- Primarily volitional—willful disobedience and drifting
- Active failure to move forward spiritually
- Involves neglect of God's Word and gratifying fleshly desires
- **Good news:** The path back is clear—confession, repentance, restoration (1 John 1:9)

Apostasy:

- Complete abandonment of the faith
- Demonstrates that the person was never truly regenerate (1 John 2:19)
- An apostate lacks the concern and internal conflict that you have
- **If you're concerned about your distance from God, this is evidence your heart is still oriented toward Him**

5. The Unbreakable Promise

"For I am convinced that 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, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

Your security rests not in your grip on God, but in His unbreakable grip on you.

Discussion Questions

1. What fears about your salvation have surfaced during your dry season? Be specific.
2. Which of the three pillars of assurance (Scripture's promises, Christ's finished work, the Spirit's witness) do you most need to anchor yourself to right now?
3. Read Romans 8:38-39 together. Make a list: What things might try to separate you from God's love? Now read the promise again. How does this address your list?
4. What's the difference between losing your sense of assurance and actually losing your salvation? Why is this distinction important?
5. If someone in our group is backsliding (willfully turning from God), what does 1 John 1:9 promise? What does restoration look like?

Personal Reflection

Take time to journal:

- Complete this sentence: "I know my salvation is secure because..." (Use Scripture, not feelings, to complete it)
- Is there any unconfessed sin in your life that might be creating distance from God? If so, take time right now to confess it to Him and receive His forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Read Philippians 1:6: "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion." What "good work" has God begun in your life? What evidence do you see that He's still working?
- How would your daily life change if you fully believed that nothing—absolutely nothing—can separate you from God's love?

Practical Application Steps

This week, commit to:

1. **Memorize** Romans 8:38-39 (the whole passage). Write it out, break it into phrases, repeat it daily until you can say it by heart.

2. **Create an “Assurance List”** - Write down evidence of God’s work in your life:
 - How did you come to faith?
 - What changes has God made in you since salvation?
 - When have you seen God answer prayer?
 - What spiritual desires do you have (even faint ones)?
 3. **Declare Truth Daily** - Each morning this week, stand before a mirror and read Romans 8:38-39 aloud, then say: “Today, nothing can separate me from God’s love. He is with me.”
 4. **If needed: Confess and Restore** - If the Holy Spirit has convicted you of specific sin, confess it to God, receive His forgiveness, and if necessary, make restitution. Then walk in the freedom of forgiveness.
-

SESSION 4: Walking When You Can’t See

Practical Disciplines for Dark Seasons

Opening Thought

Understanding spiritual dryness is important, but knowledge alone isn’t enough. Faith is a walk—a series of daily choices. When you can’t see or feel God, you must learn to walk by the light you have: the truth of His Word and the practical disciplines He’s given. These aren’t ways to earn God’s favor or force feelings, but acts of faith that keep you on the path.

Key Scripture Passages

Read these passages about perseverance and discipline:

1. **2 Corinthians 5:7** - “We walk by faith, not by sight”
2. **Hebrews 10:23-25** - Hold fast, encourage one another, don’t neglect meeting together
3. **Hebrews 4:12** - The Word is living and active
4. **Hebrews 13:15** - Sacrifice of praise
5. **Galatians 6:2** - Bear one another’s burdens
6. **Psalm 77:11-12** - Remember the deeds of the Lord
7. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - Your body is a temple

Teaching Points

1. The Discipline of Showing Up

During a dry season, your feelings will tell you to give up—that prayer is pointless, the Bible is boring, church is a waste. The most important act of faith: gently but firmly refuse to listen.

2. How to Pray When You Feel Nothing

- Prayer in dryness is about presence, not performance
- Show up before God as you are, not as you think you should be
- **The most honest prayers are often the most powerful**
 - “God, I’m here. I feel nothing. I’m empty. But I believe You’re here, and I’m not leaving.”
 - Use Psalms of Lament as your script—they give you words
 - Set a consistent time (even 5 minutes) and simply be present
 - Don’t measure success by feelings—measure it by faithfulness

3. How to Read the Bible When It Feels Like Dry Toast

- Shift your goal: read for information, not just inspiration

- Approach it like a student learning about someone you love
- Ask: What does this teach me about God? About His plan? About myself?
- Try different methods: audio Bible, different translation, devotional guide
- Focus on small portions: one chapter or a few verses daily
- **Remember:** God's Word is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12)
- It can do its work in you even when you don't consciously feel its effects

4. How to Worship When Your Heart is Silent

- Worship is not primarily emotional expression—it's a declaration of worth
- It's an act of obedience that shifts focus from internal circumstances to God's unchanging greatness
- **When you don't feel like worshiping is precisely when you need to do it**
- Create a playlist with theologically rich lyrics
- Focus on the truth of the words, not on trying to feel something
- Declare God's goodness, faithfulness, sovereignty—even when your heart feels none of it
- This is a "sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15)—deeply pleasing to God

5. The Power of Community

Spiritual dryness thrives in isolation

- The temptation: withdraw because you feel like a fraud
- This is a strategy to cut you off from your lifeline
- Make church attendance non-negotiable
- Being with believers, hearing God's Word preached, singing together is an anchor
- Find a smaller group for honesty—you don't need to tell everyone, but tell someone
- "I'm in a dry season and struggling. Will you pray for me?"
- Bringing struggle into the light robs it of power
- Others can carry your burden (Galatians 6:2) and remind you of truth

6. The Action of Trust

Remember God's Faithfulness:

- Your memory is a powerful tool
- When the present feels empty, look to the past
- Write down ways God has been faithful to you
- When did He answer prayer? Provide for a need? Feel near?
- Read Psalm 77:11-12 as a model
- Remembering God's track record builds confidence

Serve Others:

- Get out of your own head by meeting others' needs
- When focused inward, your world shrinks
- When you serve, your world expands
- Find a practical way to serve in church or community
- This shifts focus from what you're not receiving to what you can give

Obey in the Small Things:

- Do the "next right thing"
- When you don't know what to do, obey what you already know
- Be kind to family, honest at work, forgive wrongs
- These daily acts of obedience are powerful affirmations of faith
- They say: "God, even though I don't feel You, I trust and obey You"

7. Care for Your Whole Self

- You are an integrated being—spiritual health is connected to physical/mental health
- God's care for exhausted Elijah is our model
- Ask yourself: Am I getting enough sleep? Eating well? Exercising?
- Neglecting these creates a state that mimics spiritual dryness
- Caring for your body is stewardship of the Holy Spirit's temple (1 Cor 6:19-20)
- Be attentive to mental/emotional health
- No shame in seeking help from a Christian counselor or doctor
- God works through medical professionals to bring healing

Discussion Questions

1. Which spiritual discipline do you find hardest to maintain during your dry season: prayer, Bible reading, worship, or church attendance? Why?
2. What's the difference between "showing up" out of obligation and "showing up" as an act of faith? How can we shift our perspective?
3. Read Hebrews 10:23-25. Why does the writer emphasize not neglecting meeting together? How has Christian community (or lack of it) affected your spiritual journey?
4. Share a time when serving someone else or obeying God in a "small thing" affected your spiritual state.
5. How are you caring for your physical and mental health? What's one area where you could improve, and how might that affect your spiritual dryness?

Personal Reflection

Take time to journal:

- Create a weekly "Showing Up" plan. For each day, write down one small, specific commitment:
- Monday: Pray for 5 minutes, even if I feel nothing
- Tuesday: Read one Psalm
- Wednesday: Attend small group
- (Continue for the week...)
- Make a "Faithfulness List": Write down 5-10 specific ways God has been faithful to you in your life. When did you see Him work?
- What is one practical way you can serve someone this week? Write it down and commit to doing it.
- Which area of self-care are you most neglecting? Physical? Mental? Emotional? What's one small step you can take this week?

Practical Application Steps

This week, commit to:

1. **The "5-Minute Presence" Practice** - Set a daily alarm. When it goes off, spend 5 minutes in God's presence. Don't worry about "doing it right." Just show up. Use Psalm 13 or simply say, "God, I'm here."
2. **Attend Community** - Go to church this Sunday and one small group or fellowship event this week. Even if you feel nothing, show up.

3. **Serve Someone** - Do one specific act of service this week (prepare a meal, help with a task, volunteer, visit someone lonely, etc.). Write down what you'll do and when.
 4. **Scripture Memory** - Choose one verse from this session's Scripture list and write it on a card. Read it aloud three times each day.
 5. **Physical Care** - Choose one area: Get 8 hours of sleep three nights this week, exercise three times, or eat three healthy meals each day. Track it.
 6. **Create a Worship Playlist** - Make a playlist of 10-12 worship songs with rich, biblical lyrics. Listen to it at least three times this week, focusing on the truth of the words, not on feeling something.
-

SESSION 5: The Purpose in the Process

What God is Doing in the Darkness

Opening Thought

What if the darkness isn't a detour from God's plan but actually part of it? What if these dry seasons, though painful, are where some of the deepest spiritual growth happens? This session explores the purpose behind God's perceived silence and the transformation that can emerge from it.

Key Scripture Passages

Read these passages about God's purposes in trials:

1. **James 1:2-4** - The testing of your faith produces perseverance
2. **1 Peter 1:6-7** - Refined faith more precious than gold
3. **Romans 5:3-5** - Suffering produces perseverance, character, hope
4. **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** - God's grace sufficient in weakness
5. **Hebrews 12:5-11** - God disciplines those He loves
6. **John 15:1-5** - The vine and branches (pruning for fruitfulness)
7. **Deuteronomy 8:2-3** - God led Israel in the wilderness to test and teach them

Teaching Points

1. The Wilderness School

- Throughout Scripture, the wilderness is where God does profound work
- Israel in the desert for 40 years (learning dependence on God)
- Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days (preparing for ministry)
- Paul in Arabia (after conversion, before ministry)
- **The wilderness is not wasted time—it's where faith is forged**

2. God's Purposes in Spiritual Dryness

Purpose #1: To Purify Our Motives

- In early faith, we're often motivated by spiritual feelings and consolations
- We can unconsciously begin to love the gifts more than the Giver
- God allows dryness to wean us off "spiritual candy"
- He teaches us to love and serve Him for who He is, not for the experiences He gives
- **Question:** Am I seeking God, or am I seeking the feeling of God?

Purpose #2: To Deepen Our Trust

- When feelings are absent, we're forced to live by raw faith
- We learn to trust His unseen presence, His character, His promises
- This produces a more mature, resilient faith
- Like a child learning to walk—the Father must step back for us to take steps of faith
- **This is “walking by faith, not by sight” in action**

Purpose #3: To Increase Our Hunger

- Sometimes we need to experience thirst to realize how much we need water
- Dryness creates a holy desperation for God
- “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1)
- The longing itself is evidence of spiritual life, not spiritual death

Purpose #4: To Cultivate Humility

- When we feel close to God, we can become spiritually proud or self-reliant
- Dryness reminds us of our dependence on God's grace
- “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6)
- It strips away self-sufficiency

Purpose #5: To Prepare Us for Service

- Those who've walked through darkness can guide others through it
- “Comfort others with the comfort you've received” (2 Corinthians 1:4)
- Your current struggle is equipping you for future ministry
- God wastes nothing

3. The Refiner's Fire

- 1 Peter 1:6-7: Faith is “tested by fire” and proven genuine
- Gold is refined by heating it until impurities rise to the surface
- God's “fire” brings hidden things to light: pride, self-reliance, false motives, idols
- The process is painful but produces something precious
- The goal: faith “more precious than gold”

4. The Pruning Process

- John 15: Jesus is the vine, we are branches, Father is the gardener
- He “prunes every branch that bears fruit so it will be even more fruitful”
- **Pruning doesn't mean you're dead—it means you're alive and being prepared for greater fruitfulness**
- The pruning season feels like loss, but it's actually preparation for growth
- What is God pruning from your life? Distractions? False securities? Wrong priorities?

5. The “Dark Night” as Divine Mercy

- St. John of the Cross: “Dark Night of the Soul” is severe mercy
- God allows intense dryness to detach faith from dependence on emotional highs
- Roots faith solely in God Himself
- A personal participation in Christ's passion
- Journey through confusion that leads to glorious, stable union with God
- **The deepest darkness can be a sign not of God's rejection, but of His intention to do deeper work**

6. What We Gain in the Wilderness

The journey through dryness can produce:

- **Deeper roots** - Faith rooted in truth, not feelings

- **Greater compassion** - Understanding for others who struggle
- **Increased dependence** - Recognition of our need for God
- **Purer motives** - Loving God for Himself
- **Resilient faith** - Able to withstand future storms
- **Intimate knowledge** - Like Job: "Now my eye sees you" (Job 42:5)

Discussion Questions

1. Before this study, did you see your dry season as purposeful, or did it just feel like meaningless suffering? How has your perspective changed?
2. Read James 1:2-4. How can we "count it all joy" when we face trials? What does the testing of faith produce?
3. Looking at the purposes God might have in spiritual dryness, which resonates most with you? What might God be trying to accomplish in you through this season?
4. Read John 15:1-5. What's the difference between a dead branch and a branch being pruned? What might God be pruning from your life?
5. When you come through this dry season (and you will), how might your faith be different? Stronger? Deeper? More compassionate?

Personal Reflection

Take time to journal:

- Complete this sentence: "I think God might be using this dry season to..." (Be specific about what He might be teaching, pruning, or developing in you)
- What "spiritual candy" might you have been living on? (Emotional highs, specific feelings, experiences) How is God weaning you from these?
- Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. How might your current struggle equip you to comfort others in the future?
- Imagine yourself five years from now, looking back on this season. Write a letter from that future self to your present self. What would you say? What did you learn? How did you grow?

Practical Application Steps

This week, commit to:

1. **Memorize** James 1:2-4 or 1 Peter 1:6-7. Let this become your lens for viewing this season.
2. **Gratitude Practice** - Each day, write down one way God might be working in you through this dry season. Start with "God might be using this to..."
3. **Identify What's Being Pruned** - Spend 30 minutes in prayer asking God: "What are you pruning from my life? What needs to go so I can be more fruitful?" Journal what comes to mind.
4. **Read Spiritual Biography** - Find and start reading a biography or testimony of a Christian who went through spiritual dryness and came out stronger (examples: Corrie ten Boom, John Bunyan, C.S. Lewis, Amy Carmichael). Learn from their journey.
5. **Write a "What I'm Learning" List** - Create a running list throughout this week of lessons you're learning in this season. Add to it whenever you have an insight.

SESSION 6: Waiting for the Dawn

Holding On When the Night is Long

Opening Thought

You've learned what spiritual dryness is, seen biblical examples, anchored yourself in assurance, practiced spiritual disciplines, and understood God's purposes. But what do you do when you've done all these things and the night is still dark? This final session is about perseverance, hope, and the promised dawn.

Key Scripture Passages

Read these passages about waiting and hope:

1. **Psalm 130:5-6** - "I wait for the LORD... more than watchmen for the morning"
2. **Isaiah 40:28-31** - Those who wait on the LORD will renew their strength
3. **Lamentations 3:22-26** - Great is His faithfulness; good to wait quietly
4. **Habakkuk 3:17-19** - Though nothing is going right, yet I will rejoice
5. **Romans 8:24-25** - Hope that is seen is not hope; we wait with patience
6. **Psalm 27:13-14** - Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart
7. **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** - Don't lose heart; our troubles are temporary
8. **Philippians 1:6** - He who began a good work will complete it

Teaching Points

1. The Discipline of Waiting

- Waiting is not passive resignation—it's active, expectant trust
- It's choosing to remain faithful when nothing seems to be happening
- **Biblical waiting always involves hope:** confident expectation that God will act
- The psalmist waits for God "more than watchmen for the morning"
- Watchmen KNOW morning is coming—they've seen it before—they wait with certainty
- You can wait with the same certainty: the dawn WILL come

2. When You've Done Everything and Still Feel Nothing

This is the hardest place: You've been honest in prayer, read Scripture, stayed in community, remembered God's faithfulness, served others—and you still feel empty. What now?

Remember:

- Feelings are not the measure of faithfulness—obedience is
- God sees your perseverance even when you don't see results
- Your continued "showing up" is beautiful to Him
- The absence of feeling doesn't mean the absence of spiritual reality or growth
- **You are being transformed even when you can't perceive it**

3. The Promise of Completion

- Philippians 1:6: "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion"
- God doesn't abandon His projects
- He doesn't start something in you and then give up
- Your dry season is part of the "good work" He's doing
- He will complete what He started—this is His promise and His character

4. Living in the "Not Yet"

- We live in the tension between "already" (saved, sealed, secure) and "not yet" (full glory revealed)

- Romans 8:24-25: Hope that is seen is not hope; we wait with patience
- This life will always involve some level of waiting and faith without sight
- Full clarity, full feeling, face-to-face communion—that awaits heaven
- **For now, we walk by faith**

5. When to Seek Additional Help

Sometimes spiritual dryness overlaps with or is caused by other issues that need professional attention:

Consider seeking help from a pastor, counselor, or doctor if:

- Feelings of hopelessness are persistent and severe
- You have thoughts of self-harm
- You've lost interest in all activities (not just spiritual ones)
- Physical symptoms: extreme fatigue, insomnia, changes in appetite
- Duration: If dryness lasts many months without any relief
- **There is NO shame in this—God works through medical and mental health professionals**

6. Testimonies of Those Who Waited

- Throughout church history, saints have endured long “dark nights”
- C.S. Lewis: Hold on to truth learned in the light when you’re in the dark
- Mother Teresa: Experienced decades of spiritual dryness yet served faithfully
- Martin Luther: Battled depression and spiritual darkness yet clung to Scripture
- **Common thread:** They kept walking by faith, and their faith was proven genuine and powerful

7. The Ultimate Dawn

- Your current darkness is temporary (2 Cor 4:17-18)
- The ultimate dawn is coming: when faith becomes sight
- “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor 13:12)
- One day you will see Jesus face to face
- All questions answered, all tears wiped away, all darkness ended
- **This is your certain hope**

8. The Invitation to Hope

Even in the darkest night, you can make the choice that the psalmists made:

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? **Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.**” (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5)

This is not fake positivity—it’s a choice to trust God’s character over your current experience.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Psalm 130:5-6. What does it mean to wait for the Lord “more than watchmen for the morning”? How can you cultivate that kind of certainty?
2. What’s the difference between passive resignation (“I give up”) and active waiting (“I will trust and persevere”)?
3. Read Habakkuk 3:17-19. Habakkuk says even if everything goes wrong, “yet I will rejoice in the LORD.” How is this even possible? What’s the source of his joy?
4. What encouragement do you draw from Philippians 1:6—that God will complete the work He started in you?

5. As we end this study, what's one thing you're taking away? How has your perspective on spiritual dryness changed?

Personal Reflection

Take time to journal:

- Where are you right now in your journey through spiritual dryness? Has this study helped? How?
- Write your own prayer of hope. Pattern it after Psalm 42:5: Acknowledge your downcast feelings, then command your soul to hope in God.
- What would it look like for you to wait for God “more than watchmen for the morning”? What are you waiting for Him to do?
- Five years from now, when you’re helping someone else through spiritual dryness, what will you tell them? What have you learned?
- Complete this statement: “Even though I don’t feel God right now, I know...”

Practical Application Steps

This week, commit to:

1. **Memorize** Psalm 42:5 or Isaiah 40:31. Make this your anthem for waiting with hope.
2. **Create a “Hope Anchor”** - Write Philippians 1:6 on a card and place it where you’ll see it daily: “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.”
3. **Perseverance Plan** - Write out a simple plan for the next month: What spiritual disciplines will you commit to, regardless of feelings? (Be realistic, not overly ambitious)
4. **Letter to Your Future Self** - Write a letter dated six months from now. Describe where you are now, what you’re learning, and your hopes for the future. Seal it and open it in six months.
5. **Community Check-In** - Reach out to your small group, mentor, or trusted friend. Tell them, “I’m committing to keep walking by faith through this dry season. Will you check in with me monthly and pray for me?”
6. **If Needed: Seek Help** - If your symptoms match those listed in Teaching Point #5, make an appointment with a pastor, Christian counselor, or doctor this week. Write down the appointment date.

Conclusion: You Are Not Alone

If you’ve worked through all six sessions, you’ve done something courageous: you’ve chosen to keep walking when the path was dark. You’ve chosen faith over feelings. You’ve chosen to trust God’s promises even when you couldn’t trace His presence.

Remember the central truth of this entire study:

God’s presence is a promise to be trusted, not a feeling to be chased.

The journey through spiritual dryness is one of the most challenging aspects of the Christian life, but it’s also one of the most transformative. Your experience, though painful, is normal. Your salvation is

secure, anchored not in your fluctuating feelings but in the unshakeable rock of Christ's finished work. You're walking a path trodden by the giants of faith—David, Elijah, Job, and even Jesus Himself.

This season is not a sign of God's rejection. It may well be His invitation to a deeper, more mature faith—a faith that loves Him for who He is, not just for the good feelings He provides.

Do not despair. The silence is not the end of the conversation.

Your part is not to conjure up feelings or to strive in your own strength. Your part is to persevere in the small, faithful steps of obedience: to pray honestly, to read His Word, to stay in community, and to wait with hope. Trust that the God who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

Hold fast to this ultimate promise—a truth that no feeling of distance can ever nullify:

“For I am convinced that 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, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(Romans 8:38-39)

The dawn will come.

Comprehensive Verse Reference List

God's Promises of Presence & Faithfulness

- **Matthew 28:20** - “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- **Hebrews 13:5** - “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
- **Deuteronomy 31:6** - “He will not leave you or forsake you.”
- **Psalm 139:7-8** - “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!”
- **Lamentations 3:22-26** - “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness... The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.”
- **Romans 8:38-39** - “For I am convinced that 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, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Walking by Faith, Not by Sight

- **2 Corinthians 5:7** - “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”
- **Hebrews 11:1** - “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
- **John 20:29** - “Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”
- **Romans 8:24-25** - “For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”
- **Proverbs 3:5-6** - “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”
- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** - “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day... as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.”

Assurance of Salvation

- **1 John 5:13** - “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”
- **John 19:30** - “It is finished!”
- **Romans 8:16** - “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
- **Philippians 1:6** - “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
- **John 10:28-29** - “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”
- **1 John 3:9** - “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him.”
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** - “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Confession, Repentance & Restoration

- **1 John 1:9** - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- **Jeremiah 3:22** - “Return, O faithless sons; I will heal your backslidings.”
- **Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12** - David’s prayer of confession and restoration after sin
- **James 4:8** - “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”
- **1 John 2:1** - “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Biblical Examples of Doubt, Struggle & God’s Silence

Psalms of Lament

- **Psalm 13** - “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?... But I have trusted in your steadfast love.”
- **Psalm 22:1-5, 19-24** - “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?”
- **Psalm 42** - “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?... Why are you cast down, O my soul? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.”
- **Psalm 43:5** - (Repeats the refrain of hope from Psalm 42)
- **Psalm 88** - The darkest psalm, ending with “darkness is my closest friend”
- **Psalm 77:11-12** - “I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.”

Elijah’s Story

- **1 Kings 19:1-18** - Elijah’s burnout, depression, God’s gentle care, and the still small voice

Job’s Story

- **Job 23:1-9, 16-17** - “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him...”
- **Job 42:5** - “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.”

Thomas's Doubt

- **John 20:24-29** - "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails... I will never believe." Jesus: "Do not disbelieve, but believe."

Jesus's Experience

- **Mark 15:34 / Matthew 27:46** - "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")
- **Luke 22:39-44** - Jesus in Gethsemane, sorrowful even to death
- **Hebrews 4:15** - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses."

Faith vs. Feelings

- **Jeremiah 17:9** - "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"
- **Proverbs 28:26** - "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered."
- **Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5** - Commanding the soul to hope in God despite downcast feelings

God's Word is Living & Active

- **Hebrews 4:12** - "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword."
- **Psalm 119:105** - "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
- **Isaiah 55:10-11** - God's word accomplishes what He purposed

Worship & Praise

- **Hebrews 13:15** - "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God."
- **Psalm 103:1** - "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!"
- **Psalm 34:1** - "I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Community & Fellowship

- **Hebrews 10:23-25** - "Let us hold fast... and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together."
- **1 Corinthians 12** - The body of Christ; each part needs the others
- **Galatians 6:2** - "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10** - "Two are better than one... for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow."

Spiritual Growth Through Trials

- **James 1:2-4** - "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."
- **1 Peter 1:6-7** - "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith... may be found to result in praise and glory."
- **Romans 5:3-5** - "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope."
- **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** - "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
- **Hebrews 12:5-11** - God disciplines those He loves; it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness
- **John 15:1-5** - The vine and branches; the Father prunes every fruit-bearing branch

God's Purposes in Wilderness Seasons

- **Deuteronomy 8:2-3** - "Remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you... in the wilderness... that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart."
- **Hosea 2:14** - "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her."
- **James 1:12** - "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial."

Waiting with Hope

- **Psalm 27:13-14** - "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"
- **Psalm 130:5-6** - "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning."
- **Isaiah 40:28-31** - "They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
- **Lamentations 3:25** - "The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."
- **Habakkuk 3:17-19** - "Though the fig tree should not blossom... yet I will rejoice in the LORD."

Comfort & Encouragement

- **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** - "Blessed be the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction."
- **Psalm 23:4** - "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."
- **Isaiah 41:10** - "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you."
- **Matthew 11:28-30** - "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
- **Psalm 34:18** - "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

Our Bodies Are Temples

- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."
- **Matthew 11:28** - "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The Future Hope

- **1 Corinthians 13:12** - "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully."
- **Revelation 21:3-4** - "He will dwell with them, and they will be his people... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more."
- **2 Corinthians 4:17** - "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."

Apostasy & Backsliding

- **1 John 2:19** - "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."
- **James 4:6** - "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Additional Resources for Further Study

Books:

- Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross
- The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer
- A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis
- Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering by Timothy Keller

Online Resources:

- GotQuestions.org - Search “spiritual dryness” or “assurance of salvation”
- Desiring God (desiringgod.org) - John Piper’s resources on faith and feelings
- The Gospel Coalition - Articles on spiritual struggles

If You Need Help:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (call or text)
 - Focus on the Family Counseling: 1-855-771-HELP
 - Find a local Christian counselor through the American Association of Christian Counselors (aacc.net)
-

Final Encouragement

Dear friend,

If you’re in the wilderness right now, please hear this: Your faithfulness in showing up, in working through this study even when you feel nothing, is beautiful to God. He sees you. He is with you. He will complete the good work He started in you.

The dawn will come.

Hold on to His promises. Keep walking by faith. Stay in community. And remember:

Nothing—absolutely nothing—can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You are deeply loved.

“Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”
 — Psalm 42:5

Bible Study Guide Created: December 14, 2025

Based on Research Report: Biblical Research - When God Feels Silent