

Week 5: Why Does God Feel Distant Sometimes?

Message Overview: At some point, every believer experiences moments when God feels far away. In Psalm 13, David wrestles with this feeling but ultimately chooses to trust God even in the silence. This message will address the question “What do I do when I don’t feel close to God?” It will remind students that Jesus understands our struggles, and even when we don’t feel God’s presence, His promises remain true.

Key Scripture: Psalm 13

Key points:

Introduction:

- Illus: Imagine texting your best friend and getting no response for days. How would you feel? Ignored? Annoyed? Sometimes, we feel like this with God – we pray, seek Him, but it seems like He isn’t responding. Have you ever had a season like this with God?
- Many Christians – even strong believers – experience seasons where God feels distant.
- David, one of the greatest men of faith, felt this too. In Psalm 13, he writes an honest prayer when God seemed far away.

David Cries to God (Psalm 13:1-4)

- David expresses real emotions – He is brutally honest with God (vv 1-2)
 - He feels forgotten (but isn’t)
 - He feels like God is hiding (He isn’t)
 - This shows us it’s ok to be real with God when we struggle!
- David pleads for God to answer him (vv 3-4)
 - David assumes/fears that his enemies will win.
 - Sometimes when God feels distant, we assume the worst – God doesn’t care, He’s punishing me, He’s not real
- Feelings are real, but they aren’t always true.
 - God never actually left – David just felt like He did.
- Illus: on a cloudy day, the sun is still shining, even when we can’t see it.
 - Just because we don’t feel God’s presence doesn’t mean He’s not there.

Why does God feel distant?

- Unconfessed sin (Isaiah 59:2)
 - We create distance by ignoring God – choosing ourselves over Him.
 - Confess your sins and seek forgiveness! (1 John 1:9); Example: if you ignore a friend for weeks, you will feel distant – but the friendship isn’t over!
- Doubt (Psalm 34:18)
 - Difficult circumstances can make us doubt.
 - When life is hard, we can feel like God isn’t paying attention.
- Growing in Faith
 - God may be growing us in faith, building a deeper trust in Him. (James 1:2-4)
 - Example: a coach may not talk much during a big game – but their silence doesn’t mean they don’t care.

How should we respond? **Keep seeking Jesus**

- Keep praying (even when you “feel” nothing)
 - Psalm 13:3-4 – David still prays, despite feeling abandoned.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – pray even when it feels like nothing is happening.

- Romans 8:26 – when we don’t know what to pray the Spirit intercedes for us.
- Illus: if your WiFi signal drops, you don’t throw away your phone! You stay connected, knowing the signal will return. We stay in prayer, even when we don’t feel connected.
- Keep reading God’s Word
 - Psalm 119:105 – God’s Word is a lamp to our feet! It brightens the darkness!
 - Isaiah 55:11 – even when it feels dry, God’s Word still works in us.
 - When we don’t feel God, the Bible reminds us of what’s true.
 - Illus: Pilots fly through thick fog, relying on their instrument panel, not feelings. Our instrument panel = God’s Word.
- Keep Worshipping and Stay in Christian Community
 - Psalm 13 – read the end of the Psalm – David keeps worshipping!
 - Hebrews 10:24-25 – Don’t stop meeting together, even when you’re struggling.
 - Psalm 22:3 – God is present in the praises of His people.
 - Others can encourage you in faith when you feel weak.
- Choose to Trust (Psalm 13:5-6)
 - We notice a turning point in Psalm 13:5-6: David chooses to trust.
 - David doesn’t wait for his feelings to change – he chooses to trust.
 - We can trust God’s past faithfulness to give us hope for today.
 - Application: keep a prayer journal – write down every answered prayer! When you feel far from God, go back and read what He’s already done! God has been faithful.

Jesus made a way

- Jesus experienced true separation from God on the cross ***so that we never have to.***
 - Jesus knows what it feels like to experience God’s silence (on the cross)
- Because of Jesus, God is always with us, even when we don’t feel it.
- God’s presence isn’t based on our feelings – it’s based on His promise.
- Jesus makes this promise: Matthew 28:20, John 10:28-29.
 - Jesus is the bridge that keeps us connected to God.

Conclusion/Practical Application Summary

- Three steps this week:
 - Pray daily: pray every day this week, even if you don’t feel like it.
 - Read Psalm 13 and write down one way God has been faithful in your life.
 - Stay connected – connect with at least one person this week to talk about God and be encouraged. Don’t isolate from Christian community.
- **Gospel Proclamation:** Faith isn’t just about feelings – it’s about trusting God no matter what. Have you fully put your trust in Jesus, even when He feels distant?

Key question/application: How can you keep seeking God, even when you don’t feel His presence?

Community Group Questions:

- Read Psalm 13. What emotions is David feeling in this passage?
- Have you ever felt like God was distant? What was that experience like?
- What are some practical steps you can take when you feel distant from God?
- What is a past experience where you felt close with God or knew God was faithful? Use this experience to encourage you when God feels distant.
- How can you encourage someone who is struggling with doubt or feeling far from God?