

What to Do When I Don't Want God

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[0:00] If you've walked any amount of days with Jesus, then you know there are days that you don't feel like having anything to do with Him.! You know you should go meditate and pray and there's simply no desire there.

You know you shouldn't feel that way, but you do. That's where you're at. And you know you should be longing for God like a deer longs for a stream of water in the desert, but right now you're satisfied eating sand.

That's just where you're at. So when you're in that place, what do you do when you have no spiritual thirst for God?

These afternoons, we've been going through a series that I've called the aspects of spirituality.

These are different ways that we drink in God, that we enjoy Him and taste Him.

Psalms 63, the psalmist says, Oh God, You are my God. Earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My body longs for You in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

[1:12] The question that we've been trying to answer in this series is how do we drink in God? Where do we meet Him? We've looked at silence and solitude. We've looked at fasting.

Our last month we looked at meditation. And today I want to take a break from the different spiritual disciplines and simply ask, What do you do when you don't want to have anything to do with those things?

What do you do when you don't feel thirsty? So maybe you hear the psalmist in Psalm 42, As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you.

And you say, That isn't me. That's not me. I wake up and I don't care if I have devotions. I don't care. My soul isn't panting for God.

God doesn't seem, if I would be honest with myself and with everyone else, God doesn't seem that exciting to me right now. And so your heart feels like a dried up crust of bread.

[2:17] And the only feelings you have for God are maybe guilt and hopelessness. So God will never feel like water on a dry throat again.

And you feel guilty about it. You want to feel thirsty, but you don't feel thirsty. You don't do your devotions anymore. You don't meditate anymore because what's the point?

I never get anything out of them anyways. And you can go days without praying. Because what does it matter? God's going to do what God's going to do anyways. And if that's you, and that's all of us, if we would be honest, that's all of us from time to time.

But if that's you right now, let's talk about how we can find our joy again in God. How we can find that desire. How we can get to be thirsty again. And we just have two simple steps.

The first is see what you're missing. See what you're missing. If you know there's something spiritually wrong, then you probably know that something is missing.

[3:24] And so let's talk about that first. Turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 2 and verse 11. Jeremiah chapter 2 verse 11.

We'll just read a few verses. Jeremiah 2 verse 11. Has a nation ever changed its gods?

Yet there are no gods at all. But my people have exchanged their glory for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror, declares the Lord.

My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot hold water. However, if you aren't thirsty for God, do you see what you are missing?

You're missing God. You're missing God. You've exchanged God for something else. And do you see what God has called here? Look at verse 11. Their glory.

[4:31] He's called your glory. God is the one who makes you glorious. God is the one who makes your heart exult with glory. And God is not like worthless idols. He is worthy.

He is glorious. He's supremely valuable. And that's what glory means. And that is what you're missing. God is worth having. What else are you missing?

You're missing on the experience and the knowledge of all the attributes of God. The glory of God. You're missing out on experiencing God's power.

The power that he exerts to sustain the universe second by second. The power that he used to create the Milky Way. And if you started on one end of the Milky Way and you were traveling at the speed of light, you would get to the other side of the Milky Way in 100,000 years.

And God, with the word, flung it into existence. And that's power. And that's glory. But you're missing it. And if you don't want God, if you're not thirsty for God, then you don't want God's love.

[5:43] We talked about that in the Sunday school. God's love is glorious. But you're missing it. You're not enjoying it. And the glory of God's love is not so much that he loves us, but that he loves himself.

And he always has. And that might not sound glorious to you, but think about it for a second with me. God has infinite delight in himself. He loves himself with all of his heart.

And the father loves the son. Can you imagine the infinite delight that God the father has in his son even right now? And so the father wants to show his love for his son.

And so what does he do? He creates an entire universe. He creates worlds and people and nations. And he gives it to his son as a president because he loves him so much. He wants to do something nice for his son.

And so he gives his son everything. And when the father looks at the son, he sees looking back at him. He sees reflecting back every one of his perfect, infinite perfections.

[6:56] So the son is the perfect image of the unseen God. And so the father looks at the son and he sees blazing righteousness. And he sees infinite power.

And he sees steadfast faithfulness. And he sees gentle kindness. And he sees this fiery, ecstatic joy.

And God the father looks at that. And he loves his son. And so the glory, the bright shining of God's love is first not felt and seen by you.

It's not seen by people. It's not seen by humanity. But it's first felt and experienced in Trinity. When God the father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit, they love each other. That is where God's glory is best seen.

And so it's out of the overflow of God's heart, God the father's heart for his son. He loves you. And he loves his people with an unstoppable, never changing love.

[7:57] And that's glorious. That is glorious. It's glorious that God loves himself and that God the father loves God the son infinitely. And God the son is, his heart is going out to God the father in infinite love.

And that is wonderful. But if you're not thirsty for God, you're missing it. And I'm trying to show you what you're missing because I want you to be thirsty again.

And the only way you're going to be thirsty for God again is if you see how beautiful and wonderful God is. So the thought of cold iced tea.

When you're out in the yard on a really hot day. That gives you a ravenous thirst. You want it. And in the same way, thinking about God can make your spiritual taste buds, your spiritual appetite and thirst come alive.

And so where it was nothing but a withered wasteland, now you want, you desire. And so if you aren't thirsty, see what you're missing.

[9:04] Jeremiah goes on. They have forsaken me. The spring of living water and they have dug their own cisterns. They had me. I was this cold bubbling spring of living waters.

My water was alive. And they gave up on this beautiful refreshing spring. For what? This muddy, germ infested, bacteria ridden, lukewarm water that they dug with their own hands.

And now that it's leaking away. And they've traded that for me. And so God is the spring of living water. Jesus talked about that with a woman as he sat on a well in Sychar.

And he says, whoever drinks from the water that I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. And Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit.

And through Jesus, through Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit. And so if you aren't desiring God, if you aren't thirsty for God, you're missing the Holy Spirit's work in your life.

[10:12] And I'm not saying he's left you. I'm saying you've quit enjoying what he is doing. You're missing the satisfaction that the Holy Spirit can give. The contentment, the joy, the vitality of drinking cold, refreshing water.

You're missing that. And you're missing out on so much. If you're an unbeliever here, I'm talking mostly to the believers.

But if you're an unbeliever here, this obviously applies to you. Because you, Jeremiah says, you've made an awful, a horrifying, an appalling exchange.

You've traded the infinite glory of God, the value, his value, his beauty. And you've traded it for idols. And you know what?

I don't know what idols that you're bowing down to and you're worshiping. But I do know they're worthless. So you're treasuring a penny when Bill Gates is offering you a check with \$50 billion.

[11:24] You're saying, no thanks, I'll take this penny. And you're treasuring your dead hamster when your parents are offering you a pony. And you're trading this cardboard box in the alleyway with some old towels for a house.

When there's a mansion with a wide open door saying, come on in. And you're saying, no thanks. I'm happy right here in the alley with my dead mouse. And you know what that is?

That's insanity. That's insanity. And more than that, that's utterly, completely wicked. God is offering you his only beloved son.

And you're saying, no thanks. He's offering you his own glory. He's offering you forgiveness and fellowship and friendship. He's offering you beauty and glory and living water.

And he's offering you joy that would just totally ruin you for the sick world that we live in. But you don't want it. And so shame on you. Because hell is bad.

[12:30] But that is what you deserve. If God offers you his son and you say, no. Your son is nothing. Your glory is nothing.

So do you see what you're missing? You're missing Jesus. And Jesus is still standing ready to forgive you. If you'll take him.

If you'll turn away from treasuring something that is worthless to embracing him who is completely valuable. If you would exchange your empty treasure for his infinite treasure, he would save you.

And so one time a rather poor man was digging in a field and he found a treasure there. And he, in his joy, he went and he buried that treasure.

And then he left the field. He sold everything that he has, all of his possessions. And he went and bought the field. And you know what? Along the way, his friends were saying, what are you doing? Are you insane?

[13:31] Are you crazy? But he could barely contain himself. And when you see what you are missing is Jesus. And Jesus is there for the taking.

You can have him. Then there's no cost. There's no cost that's not worth paying. And so stop treasuring your worthless things.

And treasure Jesus Christ. That's what it means to repent and believe. It means give up on those treasures and accept Jesus as your final and ultimate treasure. And brothers and sisters, do you see what you're missing?

If you're not thirsty for God. You're missing Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Your friend. The Father's pleasure. Is knocking on the door. And so if you. Are thirsty. Then look who is standing on the doorstep waiting to come in and have fellowship with you.

[14:33] It's the one who gave his last final breath for you. And it's the one who even now. Rules on high.

Exalted above all people. All creatures. And all of heaven and earth. And he rules it for you. And you're missing out on him. He's praying for you.

He's defending you. He's loving you. And you're missing out on him. So the first step. To developing a spiritual thirst again is look at what you're missing.

You're missing God. You're missing Jesus Christ. You're missing the Holy Spirit. You're missing out on everything. The second step. Get into the word of God.

Get into the word of God. One time we had a cat. Who developed a kidney infection. Or some sort of bladder infection or something.

[15 : 31] And the cat needed antibiotics. And he needed to drink a lot of water. But I don't know if you know how this works with cats. When they need to drink for their health's sake.

They refuse to drink. And so they die. And brothers and sisters. The word of God is the water that we need. To kill the infection.

Of a lack of spiritual thirst. And that is the very thing that our hearts are so reluctant to take when we need it. It's the very treatment that we need. And we don't feel like drinking.

And so what do you do? You drink anyways. You drink anyways. And if you don't, you kill yourself. You kill yourself.

So we need to do the opposite of what we want to do in this situation if we're going to live. Do you see that? If you don't feel thirsty, you need to drink. And so you're going to have to do the opposite of what you feel like doing.

[16 : 31] And so when we don't feel like reading. We don't feel like meditating. We don't feel like fasting. Or taking time for silence and solitude. Or praying. Or any of the things that we are going to talk about. And that we have talked about.

What we need to do desperately is to do those things. Psalm 19 verse 7 says this. The law of the Lord is perfect.

Reviving the soul. And that's what we need. We need that life-giving water that the Word has. We need revival. And we need life enthused into us again. When we start withering away, we need life enthused into us again.

And that's what the Word of God does. But you say, that's the problem I have. That's my problem. I know that's what I should do. But I don't want to do it. What do I do? What do you do when you have to do something that you don't want to do?

[17 : 34] My spiritual taste buds are dead. And my appetite is gone. What can I do? Well, here's what you do. You argue with yourself to drink the Word from the Word.

You argue with yourself from the Word to take in the Word. You convince yourself to read the Word by reading the Word. So, remember what the Word of God is.

Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 46. Deuteronomy 32. This is Moses speaking. He's just finished giving the Israelites the law for the second time.

And look at verse 46. He said to them, Take to heart all these words I solemnly declare to you this day so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law.

They are not just idle words for you. They are your life. And by them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

[18 : 43] The Word of God is not idle. It's not vain. It's not a fruitless thing. The Word of God is your life. It's your life. So, think about that. The Word of God flowing in your spiritual life is like blood flowing in your body.

And your blood brings nutrients and oxygen so that you can have life. And that is the place that the Word of God has. It brings the nutrients, the oxygen that we need to live.

And so, the Word of God sustains you. It strengthens you. It gives you health. And it gives you life. And without it, you will die.

And so, Moses went on. By them you will live long in the land. And so, believing, obeying, trusting, being careful to do these things is the way that you have blessing. It's the way that you live long in the land.

It will give you peace. It will give you life. It will give you joy. And you're going to have everything. If you have the Word of God, you'll have milk and honey. I will be completely for you if you obey and if this Word is part of you.

[19 : 47] And so, if you're struggling, if you're struggling to get into the Word and you don't feel like it, tell yourself, the Word is my life.

And I don't want it, but I need life. And you want life. So, drink in the Word. Remember how powerfully it came to you. You heard the Gospel hundreds of times, thousands of times maybe. And then one time, it finally broke through and it gave you life. That's what Peter says. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.

So, the Word of God was a seed and God the Spirit planted it in your heart and it bore fruit and you came alive. You were regenerated.

And so, the Word of God is your life. It started your life. And it carries on your life. And so, get into the Word. Because if it had the power to give you life in the first place, then it has power to revive you again.

[20:56] But you say, I hear that. And I can tell myself that all day. And if someone asks me, I can, with a smile, I can say that exact same thing.

But when it really comes down to it, the desire is not there. I just don't believe that. I mean, I believe it intellectually, but it's not here in my heart.

I don't believe it in my heart. What can I do? The answer is this. To get into the Word. And the reason is the Word of God.

Because faith comes by hearing the Word. Faith comes by hearing. The Bible produces life precisely because it produces faith. And so, the Apostle John is putting the closing touches on his Gospel.

And maybe you remember what he says. These things are written that you may believe. The words were written for your faith. And Paul in Romans 10.17 says, Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message.

[22:01] And the message is heard through the Word of Christ. So, faith comes from hearing the message. And faith is exactly what you need if you're going to have life, if you're going to have desire. And so, the Word of God produces faith in you.

And so, it produces life in you. And faith is exactly what you need when you don't feel thirsty. Because faith will see that the Word of God is life. And it will see the glories of God that you're missing.

Faith will open your eyes. And then it opens your eyes to all these wonderful things that make you thirsty. And make you want to drink. So, even if you don't believe, dig into the Bible anyways. Take those promises. Take those promises and meditate on them. And pray them back. Pray them back to God. Take words with you and do that. And you will find encouragement coming to your soul.

So, God is glorified when we say, God, I need you. And I need this Word to produce faith in me.

[23:04] Because as I just read it here, I'm struggling. I need you to come and help me.

And so, read and read and pray and pray until that flame of faith begins burning brightly again. So, that's the power of the Word.

It's your life. It produces faith. And greatest of all, it brings the Holy Spirit. The Word is your life because the Holy Spirit brings life through faith.

And the Word revives you because the Word brings the Holy Spirit who revives you. The Word of God is God-breathed. It's breathed out from God.

And so, the Word is carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God empowers it and inspires it. And that's why you should dig into the Word, even when you don't feel like it, because the Word of God walks with the Spirit.

[24:03] And the Spirit is the one who brings life to us and brings faith. Listen to Galatians 3, verse 2. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Holy Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard?

Then in verse 5, Paul says, Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observed the law or because you believed what you heard? So, the Spirit comes when we hear, read, take in the Word by faith, with faith.

And the Spirit works when we hear with faith. And the Spirit revives and does miraculous things in our lives when we hear by faith. And so, the Spirit brings revival.

And that's why I say, if you're dry and you're thirsty and you're careless, I mean, you don't care, then dig into the Word. Get into the Scripture.

Because the Word of God revives your soul. And the Word of God brings the Holy Spirit. So, if you set your mind on the things of the Holy Spirit as they are in the Scripture, then He will bear fruit in your life.

[25:15] Didn't we see that in Hosea, chapter 14? I'll be a green pine tree for you. I'm going to produce all sorts of fruitfulness. And so, if you're quickly withering away in your love and your joy and your peace and your patience and your desire for God is just withering away, then you need new life.

And where you get it is from the Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit. And your heart will blossom under the Spirit's care. And when the Spirit is working with the Word, by power, you will begin doing and producing fruit that you never could.

And one of the chief fruits is just to want God, just to be with Him. I mean, fruitfulness depends on remaining in the vine.

And the desire to stay in the vine is one of the things that the Spirit of God does. And so, your heart will blossom if you hear the Word and you drink it in.

Well, what do we see? If you're lacking spiritual thirst, and that's all of us from time to time, one, see what you're missing. You're missing God.

[26 : 38] You're missing the glory of God. You're missing Jesus Christ. You're missing the Holy Spirit. And get into the Word of God. Well, may God reveal to us His glory, His gospel, that we would bear fruit to His praise.

Our Heavenly Father, I do pray for any brother or sister here tonight, or this afternoon, that is struggling with a lack of appetite, a lack of desire.

I pray that you would come and revive them. Help them to see the glory of God that they're missing, that they're not delighting in and not enjoying right now.

Will you win them back? Father, I pray for any unbeliever here. They've made an awful exchange. And the heavens are appalled. But I pray, Heavenly Father, will you show your great mercy and call them out of their sin and win them to yourself.

[27 : 54] We pray for their good and we pray for your glory that all would see more of how gracious you are, how perfect you are in power and holiness and justice, that more and more sinners would be saved and would begin drinking from that fountain of living water and out of their joy would worship you.

Thank you that you are the kind of God that has anything to do with us. Pray, Father, that all of our lives would be pointed to your worship and to your glory, to enjoying you and glorifying you forever. And it's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.