

Dealing With A Desert Experience

“I used to have such a passion to read and study God’s word. Suddenly, that passion is gone. It is difficult for me to even pick up my Bible. What has happened?”

“I used to have such a close relationship with the Lord. I haven’t heard from Him in a long time. I am no longer interested in reading the Bible or praying. I don’t even want to go to church.”

“I’ve fallen into sin – big sin, after all these years of walking with the Lord. I feel so far away from Him. What has happened to me?”

“It’s like someone slammed a door in my face. I no longer get anything out of reading my Bible, and I don’t hear from the Lord. I feel like all my prayers go unanswered, I don’t even feel like praying.”

All these comments and many more similar to these, are received on a daily basis by Daniel and I via letters and E-mails. These Christians are in what is called a “Desert Experience.” They feel like they no longer have a life, they are spiritually dry and distant from the Lord. Yet Jesus said,

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” John 7:37-38

Why then, do most all Christians have this experience of spiritual dryness and discouragement? What can we do about it when it does happen?

Many Reasons For Spiritual Dryness

There are many different causes for such spiritual dryness. But, if you stop to think about it, every one of the above complaints has a common thread running through them. *“I no longer feel . . .”* God created each one of us with a whole range of emotions. We live in our feelings. But we must understand that all human beings have emotional ups and downs. We are never in the same emotional state two days in a row, often not even for two hours in a row. That’s just the way we are. Many things can contribute to our emotions. This is true in our walk with the Lord just the same as it is true in all our relationships with other human beings. There are 5 major causes for these periods of spiritual dryness in our lives. Let us look at each one, and then look at the cure.

1. *An Uncleansed Life*

When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and prayed “the sinner’s prayer,” we probably said something like this: “Lord Jesus, I want you to be my Lord and Savior. Please forgive all my sins and come into my heart.”

When you prayed that prayer, in that instant, God did a purely supernatural work in your life. He placed you under the covering of the blood of Jesus and changed your position. You were “born anew,” and became a “new creature in Christ Jesus.” Before you prayed that prayer, you were a sinner separated from God. After you prayed that prayer, you became a child of God by adoption.

However, even though you are now saved and on your way to heaven, you still need to cleanse your life. It is most unfortunate that this principle is not taught in our churches today. The Apostle Paul taught us very clearly:

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Cor. 7:1

It is our responsibility to cleanse our own lives! How do we do this? The answer is given in the First Epistle of John:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

The key here is found in the word *confess*. What does that word mean? A *confession* is a *specific statement of fact*. When you *confess* a sin, you clearly name exactly what the sin was. So you see, when you prayed “the sinner’s prayer,” asking God to “forgive all your sins,” you were not making a *confession* of sins. You were not being specific about your sins. You were instead entering into a covenant with God to be placed under the covering of the blood of Jesus and to become a “son of God” by adoption.

As you read through the book of Acts, you will see over and over again, when people asked the disciples what they must do to be saved, the first word they received was *repent*. (Acts 2:38) What does the word *repent* mean? In the Greek, it literally means “*after*” and “*to think*.” It means that the person thinks about what he or she has done wrong, and makes a decision to no longer do these things. It also means a “*change of mind*.” You now recognize certain actions as being “*sin*.” That is, abhorrent to God. This is exactly what you do when you confess your sins as well.

If you have never done so, you need to set aside the time to thoroughly cleanse your life. Both of the sins you have committed, and of the demon spirits that came into you through certain of those sins. (See *Becoming A Vessel of Honor*, by Rebecca Brown, M.D.)

Here's how some desert experiences occur: When a person receives Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they get all excited and on fire. Then, some months or years later, the fire goes out, and they enter a period of dryness. Many times so severe that they actually turn away from serving the Lord. Why? For two reasons. First, it's really hard to consistently serve the Lord with a million pounds of sin on your back which you never cleansed. Secondly because of the demons -- demons that came into a person's life through something such as sexual immorality or involvement in the occult, or inheritance. These demons will, at the time of the person's salvation, go dormant. They will hide and remain quiet. But then, at some later date, they will rise up and exert tremendous influence in the person's life. This is the reason why some Christians suddenly fall into deep sin after walking close to the Lord for a number of years. When the demons in their life rise up, they become overwhelmed with temptation and fall. Often, they are amazed at themselves, and cannot understand what happened to them.

Often, when such demons rise up, the person will feel like some "slammed shut the door" in their relationship with God. Suddenly they can no longer hear from the Lord, no longer pray or study the Bible effectively.

Often, a person will come out of some exceedingly sinful life style. They will walk close with the Lord for a period of time, and suddenly, they fall away and find themselves back into their old life style. Once again, this is a clear symptom of an uncleansed life. The demons from their past are rising up to influence and control them.

Beloved, if you have never taken the time to do a thorough cleansing of your life, I urge you to do so immediately! Please get my books *Becoming A Vessel of Honor*, and *Unbroken Curses*. Cleanse your life and break all the generational curses off of your life. These two books will tell you how to do this in a very simple way that anyone can follow. If you will do this, you will find your desert experience coming to an end very shortly.

2. Unconfessed Sin

After we have done a thorough cleansing of our lives, we need to keep short accounts with God. It is so easy to allow little sins to build up in our lives. We get busy and skip spending time with the Lord one day, and then the next day, and then the next. Allowing the sin of neglecting to spend time in God's word and praying, to grow in our life will quickly erect a barrier in our relationship with the Lord. Be quick to recognize it and confess it to God, asking for His forgiveness. As you do, understand this: *God's forgiveness and restoration is instantaneous!* You don't have to wait to be forgiven and restored. *Do you feel your relationship with the Lord is cooling and becoming dry? Stop and examine your life!* It is quite possible that you have allowed small sins to slip by unconfessed and undealt with.

These small sins can be something as simple as unresolved arguments and difficulties in a marriage relationship. This can quickly affect your walk with the Lord.

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them [wives] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, *that your prayers may not be hindered.*"

1 Peter 3:7

Allowing sin to come into any of our relationships will hinder our walk with the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if you have any unconfessed sin in your life.

3. Unstable Emotions

As we mentioned earlier, no human being on the face of this earth has stable emotions. Our emotions are up and down. Some people experience this more than others, but everyone experiences it to some extent. You cannot stay on an emotional high with the Lord any more than you can stay on an emotional high in anything else. It just doesn't work that way. That's why God puts such emphasis on *faith*.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, *the author and finisher of our faith* . . ." Hebrews 12:1-2

*There is no sight in faith, and there are no emotions in faith. You cannot base your relationship with the Lord on emotions. If you do, you are bound to become ship wrecked. You must understand that there will be times when you will *feel* wonderful. You will *feel* a passion for God and for His word. But there will also be times when you won't *feel* anything! Those are the hardest times, because when you don't feel anything, it is easy for you to become discouraged and turn away from God.*

Are you in such a dry time? Then there are three things you must do. First, you must stand! Understand that you will not always experience the emotions of enthusiasm you would like to experience. Realize that your relationship with God is based upon faith, not emotions. Faith in

who God is, and in His character. God never changes! We are the ones who change. God has not changed just because we no longer have the feelings we used to have.

Secondly, it is our responsibility to “stir up” the gifts and Holy Spirit within us. Paul wrote to Timothy about this:

“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”
2 Timothy 1:6

Each one of us has received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are to stir up His gifts. How? By using them whether we feel like it or not. If I waited to go minister and teach until I felt like doing so, I would very rarely go out. I go in obedience to God, using self-discipline, and God honors that.

Lastly, you express to God in prayer just what you are feeling. *Get on your knees and pray!* In doing so, you humble yourself before the Lord acknowledging His greatness. Don’t turn away from God because you feel nothing, that is the time when you must seek Him the most. The prophet Isaiah rebuked the Children of Israel for this very thing:

“And there is no one who calls on your name,

Who stirs himself up to take hold of You . . .”

Isaiah 64:7

It is our responsibility to stir ourselves up. How can we do this? Several ways.

Set your will to seek the Lord no matter what.

Discipline yourself to maintain regular times of Bible study and prayer, no matter how you feel. If you are having difficulty in this area, I recommend you obtain and read some books of good Christian literature along with your Bible study during your quiet times.

Get some anointed tapes or CDs of praise and worship music. Sit down and listen to them, sing along with them and praise and worship the Lord. Set your heart to uplift God.

If you will consistently do these things, your desert experience will be greatly shortened.

4. God Is Testing Your Faith

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:6-7

Our faith is so valuable to God that He frequently tests it. God does not want a puppet on a string! He wants you to serve Him of your own free will. *He wants you to serve Him in faith not for emotional rewards.* He will make opportunities in your life to grow your faith. He not only does this through allowing various trials to come into your life, but sometimes He seems to withdraw and remain silent for periods of time. You no longer have any emotional or “supernatural” experiences. You may not hear the Lord speak to you for some time. That’s because God wants to grow your faith. He wants you to determine that you will serve Him, no matter what.

Stand firm during these times. Don’t get discouraged and give up on spending time studying God’s word and praying. Remember James’ admonishment:

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” James 4:17

You know you must spend time every day studying God’s word and praying. Do not stop doing this just because you no longer feel like doing it. If you do, you will be sinning. Stand strong, and be faithful, and eventually God will restore the emotions to you.

5. Demonic Interference

“Then he said to me, ‘Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.’” Daniel 10:12-13

Daniel set his heart to pray and seek the Lord for some answers. God heard Daniel’s prayer immediately and sent an angel to bring the answer. But a powerful demon spirit called the “Prince of Persia” fought against this angel to prevent him from coming to Daniel. In fact, he held back the angel for 21 days until God sent help.

I believe this sometimes happens in our own lives. If you feel this is what is happening, then you need to pray to God for the solution. This is the time to bring your case into God's courtroom as we wrote in *Unbroken Curses*, and in much more detail in *Standing On The Rock*.

We are at war, dear brothers and sisters. Satan and his kingdom will attempt to destroy your relationship with God more than anything else. Many times I have had people tell me, "I don't feel like my prayers are getting to God. It feels like they stop just above my head. Something blocks them." This is a common experience. But remember this, even though the enemy surrounds the camp, "the Lord is in the midst of the camp." (Deut 23:14) The Holy Spirit is inside you. He hears every thought you think and every word you say. It doesn't matter what you feel, God always hears your prayers if you are praying in the name of Jesus.

War In The Heavens

While we are on the subject of Satan's kingdom fighting against God's people, I want to share with you something the Lord spoke to Daniel about the other night. God told Daniel, *"Right now, my angels are fighting one of the hardest battles they have ever fought. The war in the heavens is massive. Unfortunately, my angels aren't receiving much of any help from the prayers of My people. Especially in America, My people are asleep. They are only thinking about their own comfort and their finances. They don't understand the battle they are facing. They do not understand that the goal of all of Islam is to wipe Christianity off of the face of the earth. The battle in Iraq was necessary to hold back the flood of terrorism coming to America. My people are busy fighting politics instead of praying. Also there is so much hatred coming against America from all the Arab nations that a huge flood of demons is following that hatred. My angels are trying to hold them back. Satan is sending his most powerful demons to the various terrorist cells to teach them to be more skillful in their attacks. These demons are whipping up their hatred against Christians into a frenzy, and they are giving them great power to influence others to their cause. My people are asleep. They are not praying as they should against all this, which makes the battle my angels are fighting much more difficult. How My people need to wake up and see the enemy that is at their door!"*

Satan's stronghold is growing fast in America through an all out attempt to wipe Christianity out of the public and the schools. Satan is pushing sex so strongly in our public school system here in America because his goal is to bring our children to a place where they are willing to have sex with demon spirits. This will take place in the last days, and once again giants will walk in the land. Computer games will soon be available in virtual reality which will totally take over the minds of children. They will become addicted to virtual reality. They will engage in sex and murder in virtual reality. This usher them right into the spirit realm. Many will no longer be able to control their own minds. Beware! Beware! It's time to get on your knees. It is time to bring the youth back into the center of the church."

If any youth in your church do not have Godly involved parents, you need to assign mentors to them to help them walk through all the attacks that Satan is bringing against them.

Ministry Update

We want to thank all of you for your prayers for Rebecca. She is doing better now, and we are trusting God for her complete healing. She is able to be up and functioning half days now, and we are trusting that she will be well enough to travel to England to minister the last two weeks of February.

We want to thank all of you who sent extra gifts to help us with her medical expenses. Thanks to your generosity, all our medical expenses (which came to several thousand dollars) have been met. Praise the Lord, and thanks to you!

We are still short in our basic needs because of our time off the road. We really need you to continue to help us with some extra this month as well. Then, Lord willing, we should be O.K.

We have written about our desire to build a convention center. A building that can be used both for an evangelistic outreach and for teaching seminars. We are happy to be able to tell you that the building is half way up. We are hoping to have the outside completed within this month. We have enough funds just to finish the outer part of the building. Then we will work on the inside bit by bit as the Lord brings in the finances.

We are looking forward to a new year of evangelism. Daniel will be traveling to Michigan, in May, to help with a blessing of the bikers, and we will be holding one here in Arkansas March. We eagerly look forward to getting our building to the place where we can use it for an extensive outreach to the bikers.

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2003 has been a very difficult year for us. Both of us have been attacked by Satan in our physical bodies. But our spirits are not hindered! God told Daniel that 2004 is to be a year of restoration, and we are praying for that in our ministry, and our bodies. There is so much work to be done in God's kingdom! We eagerly look forward to the new doors that we know God will be opening up for us.

Love Offerings

We are a faith-supported ministry. We depend on your obedience to God and your love offerings to keep us on the road and to continue this ministry. We deeply appreciate those of you who do support us. As you send your gifts, we pray over each one, asking the Lord to richly bless the sender in return. Please send your offering in the enclosed envelope.

Copies

You are always welcome to copy any of our newsletters to give to other people. If you know of someone who would like to receive our newsletter, if they live inside the U.S., please send their name and address to us. We will be happy to add them to our mailing list.

Our newsletters are translated into Spanish, Portuguese and French each month. You can find them on our web site in each one of these languages. Simply go to our English web site at www.harvestwarriors.com and click on the link to our other web sites in those languages.

Evang. Daniel Yoder

Rebecca (Brown) Yoder, M.D.

Harvest Warriors Outreach Ministries

P.O. Box 65

Clinton, AR 72031

We Are Warring to Harvest