

Survival Tips for Spiritual Blahs

After several bout with the blahs, I've found no easy remedies. But I have discovered responses that keep me open to God's grace.

Recall the past goodness of God.

Regain your perspective by remembering occasions when God's presence seemed more real to you. Try recording your current experience—it can help clarify your thoughts and feelings. And the next time the blahs hit, you'll be able to see how God led you through the last time.

Pray with a little help from your friends.

You've run out of things to say to God and it doesn't seem like he's listening anyway. Quit struggling through lists of long petitions.

When words won't come, I've found the prayers of others keep me focused on God. David's prayers or Jehoshaphat's pleas can give voice to the longings I'm unable to express.

Break out of your familiar patters of prayer—pick up The Book of Common Prayer and discover how contemporary these age-old expressions of faith are. If using a prayer book is routine, go to a praise service or ask a friend to pray with you. And remember, you don't always have to say something. Sit quietly in God's presence. Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express (Rom. 8:26). God won't leave you waiting in silence forever. Listen for his voice.

Continue to read Scripture.

If you want to communicate with a friend, don't disconnect the phone. Come to God's Word expectantly and search for his perspective until you find it.

For me, a dry spell isn't the best time to follow a prescribed program of Scripture reading. If Leviticus doesn't speak to my concerns, I turn to the Psalms, I review God's promises, I meditate on the life of Joseph or Job. There are no rules on what to read; the important thing is to keep the lines of communication open.

Offer praise.

Offer the sacrifice of praise—whether or not you feel like it. Reading a hymn, singing a praise chorus, or listening to favorite music can allow you to praise God despite your feelings.

Share with others.

It's exhausting to pretend the Christian life is one of constant victory. Share your struggles with a trusted friend, pastor, or mature church member. You'll find others have gone through similar experiences and can reassure and guide you. Although you may feel like withdrawing, remember, too much introspection is counter-productive. Take the focus off yourself and get involved with those around you.

Renew yourself in God's creation.

Draw inspiration from nature and experience the presence of God in new ways. Allow for the unexpected. During one bad dry spell, I took a listless walk through a local museum—until I stopped to gaze in growing wonder at an exhibit of exotic stuffed birds. Suddenly it hit me anew: these weren't evolutionary accidents but the extravagant creations of an Artist experimenting freely with form and color. In one grace-laden moment, God reminded me that life did have meaning—and my whole perspective changed.

by Jan Senn

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