

Is Your Religion Boring?

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MAIN VERSES

[Revelation 21:3](#) • [Leviticus 19:30](#) • [Ezekiel 11:16](#) • [Ephesians 2:19-22](#) • [Psalm 8:3-4](#) • [Psalm 32:2-3](#) • [Psalm 40:1-3](#) • [Psalm 42:1-2](#) • [Psalm 51:10-12](#) • [Psalm 119:18](#) • [Psalm 1:1-3](#) • [Isaiah 58:10-11](#) • [Genesis 1-2](#) • [Genesis 28:17-22](#) • [Genesis 32:24-30](#) • [Exodus 25-31](#) • [Deuteronomy 10:12-13](#)

Is Your Religion Boring?

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love? A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God? Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

Well, I titled my message today "Is Your Religion Boring?" and this will be a pretty simple message that I put together. As many of you might know, we're a couple weeks away from the month of Elul. Now, if you don't know what that month is, traditionally on the Hebrew calendar, this month occurs right before the fall feast days. And traditionally, this month is associated with repentance and introspection, self-examination, and recommitting to God in preparation to meet him and to fellowship with him during the fall feasts.

So we're a little early, but in light of this upcoming season, I wanted us to wrestle today with some heartfelt questions. And the main question that I want to start with today is: do you ever have moments in your life when you just do not care about God? When you just do not desire God from your heart? What I mean by that is, sure, you may intellectually believe in God, you may keep his commandments, you may go to church, you may be involved in ministry even, but you've lost that deep affection and desire for his presence in your life. Maybe some of you even feel that way today. I know that I felt that way in my life.

When Faith Feels Empty

A while back I went to lunch with a friend back home in St. Louis, and he confessed similar struggles that I'm describing to me. I had heard that he just became agnostic. Like he renounced

his faith and had doubts and didn't really think that he believed in God anymore. So I met with him and we were just talking about it. Intellectually, he grew up in church his whole life. He was involved in ministry. His dad was a pastor. He played drums in the worship band. And yet, he ended up denying God.

When I pressed him on that, when I was asking him about it, it didn't really have anything to do with intellectual doubts about God. His main reason for denying God was that he can't believe in something that he can't feel. He can't believe in something that he can't really experience or doesn't really experience. And I don't really believe that my friend's struggle is unique here. I've heard similar stories from many believers, and most of us thankfully don't go so far as to deny God's existence. We understand, and hopefully we're mature enough to know that we are not led by our emotions. We are not to be led by our emotions, but our emotions do not dictate what the truth is.

However, emotions are important at the same time. Feelings are important. And I think we've all struggled with feeling like God is distant or not really involved in our lives at one time or another. So I believe this is something that we need to figure out, and I'm excited to talk to you guys today and if that's you, to hopefully offer some hope and some advice that I've learned in my walk with the Lord.

What Does God Want Most?

So I'd like to begin today by asking a question, and I believe this is really the main question: What does God want more than anything? What is the deepest desire of God's heart? Because I want to submit to you that what God wants more than anything is what we need more than anything. I would submit to you today that the deepest desire of God's heart is to dwell among his people. That's his deepest desire—to have a relationship with us, to relate to us.

Now, many of us might not feel that way all the time. We might not feel like God wants to have anything to do with us a lot of the time. But if we put our feelings aside and if we just look at the scriptures, this is what life is all about. That's why God commanded Israel to build the tabernacle. It wasn't just so that they could have a nice building. He commanded it so that he may dwell among his people.

Many commentators have pointed out, and I believe Pastor Matthews even pointed this out in some of his messages, that the first chapters of Genesis have all kinds of allusions to the temple. That God, if you will, created us in the beginning as if he was creating a place for his

presence to dwell. It was a cosmic temple for his presence to dwell among his people. So our very point of existence, the very reason for our existence is to have that fellowship with God.

And in fact, the climax of the entire Bible, the conclusion of all existence, ends with this. This is what it says in [Revelation 21](#), 3, referring to the New Jerusalem in the world to come: And the most exciting part about this narrative, about what John is saying here as he's writing this, is finally, this is the conclusion, this is the climax of the story, this is what it's all about—we're finally here, this is what I finally see happening in the world to come: that God will dwell among his people. He will dwell among his people. It will be like the Garden of Eden, if you will, when God walked with Adam.

God's heart is to dwell with his people, and everything, I would submit to you, everything that he does in your life is working towards that goal. In [Leviticus 26](#), one of the blessings for obedience is that God will dwell with us and he will walk with us. So the commandments—we don't obey God merely for the sake of keeping the commandment. The commandment is not an end in itself. The commandment is a means to an end. We keep the commandments to relate to God. We keep the commandments to connect with him. That's what it's all about. It all goes back to that relationship.

The Majesty of God's Interest in Us

So how often do you think about that? How often do you really dwell on that fact that God desires a relationship with you? Think about it from this perspective: You are a speck of dust. In the grand scheme of things, in the big picture, in this vast universe, you are a piece of dirt on a rock floating around in space, and yet God desires to dwell with you.

I love this psalm. In Psalm chapter 8, the author writes, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? What is man? Who am I?"

What strikes me about this psalm is the utter humility of the author. He has a grasp of his place, right? He has a grasp of the majesty and the gloriousness and the beauty and the holiness of God. And this strikes him with a sense of wonder and awe that God would want anything to do with him.

I bring this up because I think it's relevant to our questions today. This psalmist had a sense of reverence for God. He had a sense of reverence for God. And if you don't have a love and a passion and a desire for God, I want to submit to you that it's possibly due to a lack of reverence for God.

Understanding Reverence

What do I mean by reverence? Well, this is how the dictionary defines reverence: it's a deep respect for someone or something. And as a verb, it means to stand in awe, to have a deep respect or honor.

In Hebrew, one of the words translated as reverence is often translated as fear—when we are to fear the Lord. It comes from this Hebrew word, *yareh*, and it's a verb, and it's used of a person in an exalted position. *Yahweh* connotes standing in awe. This is not simple fear. This is important—it's not simple fear, but reverence, whereby an individual recognizes the power and the position of the individual revered and renders him proper respect. And that's talking about the song of Moses after they cross the Red Sea and God destroys their enemies, right? They sing the song of Moses, and it's emphasizing their reverence for God, that they stood in awe of him, of his majesty and his wonder and his love. This definition comes from Vine's complete expository dictionary, by the way.

So let's look at a passage in which this word reverence is used, *yare*, in context of this. In [Genesis 28](#), we see that Jacob left home and was on his way to his Uncle Laban's. And when he was traveling to see his Uncle Laban, he stopped for the night and then he fell asleep. And then he had a dream and he had an encounter with the Holy God in this dream. God encountered him and he saw a ladder reaching up to heaven and angels ascending and descending from this ladder. And then the Lord himself stood at the top of this ladder and encountered Jacob and spoke to him and confirmed to him the promise that he made to Abraham.

So this is how Jacob reacted to this encounter from the Lord. [Genesis 28](#) beginning in verse 17 says, "and he was afraid, *Yahweh*, he was afraid and said, how awesome, *Yahweh*, is this place. This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." So early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of the place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and the stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house."

And of all that you give me, I will give a full tenth to you. So what do we see here? Jacob had an encounter with the holy God, and he was struck with a complete awe and reverence. He said he was afraid and it said, "How awesome is this place? How awesome is this place where I've had this encounter?" And this sense of awe inspired him to treat that place as a sacred place. It

inspired him to recommit his life to the Lord. He said he made vows. He also committed to give. He was inspired to give to the Lord—everything that I give, I'm going to give back to you, God—because of this encounter.

Reverence Moves Us to Action

If someone has a reverence for God, we should expect the same type of attitude. I believe that a serious reverential fear of the Lord moves us to action. It inspires us to recommit our lives and to give and to treat the place where we have this encounter with God as a sacred place. It even says in the verses we just read that Jacob woke up early. I believe it inspires us to wake up early. I believe it inspires us to go out of our way, to go out of our comfort zone, because many of us like to sleep in. I know I do. But it inspires us to wake up early, to go out of our way, to serve God, to love God.

Deuteronomy 10, starting in verse 12, uses this word again: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord, your God, require of you? You are to fear Yahweh, the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and the statutes of the Lord which I am commanding you today for your good." That's what the Lord requires of us. So here we see that reverence for God, a fear of the Lord, is the basis for what? For our walking in His ways, for our serving Him, and even our loving Him. So our love for God must include a reverence and an awe for Him. Otherwise, I would submit to you that it's not a complete love for God. Our love for God and our serving Him and our walking in His ways must be from that basis of a reverence and an awe of the Lord.

Western Christianity's Lost Reverence

I think one of our problems, especially in Western Christianity, Western religion, is that we've sort of lost a sense of reverence for God because of false teachings and false conceptions of who God is in America. I think too often we treat God not as a king, a holy God of the universe to be revered, but we treat Him like a cosmic Santa Claus whose job is to serve us, to give us presents, and to make sure we're happy and comfortable in this life. We don't really know God as the King of the universe, whose presence is to be regarded as utterly holy.

Leviticus 19:30: "You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary. I am the Lord. You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary." So here we learn that reverence of God is connected to two things. What are they connected to? It's connected to His Sabbaths and His

sanctuary. We're to reverence His sanctuary. The word for sanctuary, by the way, is mikdash, and it means a sacred place. Often this word is connected, as we see in the scriptures, to the temple or the tabernacle of God. This word comes from a root meaning to separate or to be holy. So the emphasis here is that this sacred place of God that we are to reverence is holy. It is special as God's dwelling place.

So in other words, when we reverence the dwelling place of God, we are not to treat that as a light matter. Reverencing the dwelling place of God means not treating it lightly.

Created for Fellowship

So to bring this back around to where I started: What does God want more than anything? We were created for that fellowship with God. And what God wants most is what we need most. But here's a problem. What's the problem? We've lost access to the fullness of God's presence and His glory through the Fall of Adam. We were exiled from His presence due to the Fall of Adam and Eve.

But since God loves us and wants to dwell with us, what was one of the things He did to solve this problem? Well, He commanded the building of a tabernacle, right? He said, "I want you to build a tabernacle. I want to have a place to meet with you, to be able to dwell among you so that through this you can have a taste of My presence here. Still, even though you're in this fallen, corrupt world, even though you've been exiled from My presence due to sin, because I love you, because it's the deepest desire of My heart to dwell with you and to be with you, I want you to do this so that I can."

The Temple Destroyed, But God Remains

But now we have another problem. What's the other problem? We don't have access to a temple or tabernacle in Jerusalem. It was destroyed in 70 AD. I recently read a really deeply moving article. It was written on the 9th of Av, which commemorates the destruction of the temple and other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people throughout history. And this article was written by an Ethiopian Jew. And up until this person was nine years old, he believed that the second temple was not destroyed. His parents and his community all believed that they had this desire and this yearning to return to Jerusalem to be able to partake in the temple service, to see the temple service, because they didn't know that the second temple was destroyed. So they sort of lived believing that it wasn't destroyed, that the temple was still standing in Jerusalem.

And it was really heartbreaking because when his family actually immigrated to Jerusalem and he found out that the temple had been destroyed, he was utterly devastated and heartbroken because their entire lives revolved around this. Their entire lives and their community revolved around that yearning and desire to go to Jerusalem to encounter God.

So if God wants to dwell with us, and we've established that He does, what is His solution to these problems? Is He just going to leave us hanging? As I pointed out earlier, in the New Jerusalem, we know that God's presence will dwell with man in fullness again. And through the Messiah, God's glory and His image is being restored in this world even now. And that's wonderful that we can look forward to and hope in, but what good does that alone do us right now in Fort Mill, South Carolina, or wherever you're watching online? How do we encounter the presence of God today? How does He dwell with us today?

There's an interesting verse in Ezekiel. And of course, Ezekiel was written while the Jewish people were in Babylon. This is what He says: "The Lord says, He will be to us like a little sanctuary in the countries where we've been scattered." And that word there—mikdash—

God's Presence Wherever We Are

So even though Israel was in Babylon and didn't have access to Jerusalem or the temple, God said He would still carve out a sacred place for them. He would still meet with them.

And God promises—and I believe that's a principle for us today—that even though the temple has been destroyed, even though we're in exile, so to speak, physically, God promises to carve out a mikdash for us, to make a sacred place where we are, in the countries where we are.

So God's presence is not restricted to the temple in Jerusalem. God's presence can meet us even right now in Fort Mill, South Carolina.

Making Sacred Spaces

According to Jewish tradition, the phrase "little sanctuary" or "little mikdash" refers to the synagogue or even Jewish homes according to their traditions. And you can read about this in the Babylonian Talmud 29a where they have these discussions. But that's why you'll notice many of the prayers and the rituals in the synagogue are related to the temple service. And also in the home, if you do the traditional blessings and prayers and rituals for Sabbath, for Erev Shabbat, and for the Havdalah service, you'll notice that these traditions—the candles, the challah bread—all relate back to that temple service. Because the tradition or the idea is that we

are making the synagogue and a home a sacred place. We are carving out a sacred place for the presence of God to dwell.

Now this idea of carving out a sacred place, making a place for God to dwell among us, is not just in Jewish tradition, but it's also taught in the New Testament. We actually see a similar idea here. In the New Testament, we see the mikdash as a reference to the body of Messiah. The apostles wrote about the need for God's people to congregate together, to be together, and to work together to be a house for God. Why? So that His presence could be made manifest in their midst. This is what it says in Ephesians. Paul is writing, he says...

Encountering God's Presence Today

And 1 and 2 Corinthians also speak of this idea. It speaks of the church as being God's temple among His people where His presence dwells. So I would submit to you that one way that we encounter the presence of God today is through our joining together with other believers in devotion and worship to God. We just experienced it today, right? In worship service, when we were singing together and worshipping together, the presence of God was in our midst.

Now, don't get me wrong—I'm not saying that you can't experience the presence of God personally or alone. I believe that this refers to all of life. Yeshua says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," right? But I believe this is one area that is especially important, and that's the church service.

I believe that's especially important. Even though God meets us where we are individually and alone, I truly believe that is amplified when we congregate together, when we are together with believers, all in unity and devotion to the Lord. When we gather together as the body for Sabbath service or any other time, we are essentially preparing a mikdash for his presence to dwell with us.

So now I'm going to ask a hard question. Do you keep God's Sabbath, and do you reverence his sanctuary? That's what we're commanded to do, right? We're commanded to reverence the mikdash of God, the sanctuary of God, and we've established—if you've been following the logic—we've established that God will be a mikdash even in the countries where we dwell, and we've established that when believers congregate together, that we are creating a sacred place for God to dwell among us, a mikdash. Wouldn't that command therefore apply to the church service? When two are congregating together in worship and devotion, what do you do to prepare your heart for God to dwell with you in the church?

Preparing Our Hearts

When we look at the tabernacle service and everything that was involved there, we can see, again, that fellowshiping with God was not a light matter. That reverence, that awe and wonder—that's key. Yet so often, we treat the sanctuary of God differently, as a light matter. We don't really come to encounter God, and so it's no wonder that we don't.

Imagine if you were hosting a dinner for the President of the United States. Whether you like Donald Trump or not, hopefully you would have a reverence and a respect for the position that he's in, that position of authority. If you had that honor, that he was going to come to your house for dinner, how would you treat that occasion? You would likely treat it as a very special time. It wouldn't be just like any other dinner, right? You would clean up the house. You would make something extra special for dinner. So if we would do that for the President of the United States, how much more ought we to prepare our hearts to fellowship with the Almighty God of the universe? How much more ought we to prepare and reverence that sacred space, that sacred time that we get to encounter and fellowship with God?

Do you reverence the sacred place of God's presence in your home, in the church? Do you come to Sabbath service anticipating a move from God, expecting to be touched by his spirit, expecting to be convicted, expecting to encourage others in the Lord? Because if not, what's the point? If not, what's the point? We can hang out anywhere. If the point is just fellowship, we can do that at somebody's house, at home. We can watch TV together. If the point is not to worship God and to encounter his holy presence, there is no point to even why we're here.

Understanding Irreverence

I want to talk about irreverence real quick. Since we talked about reverence, this is what irreverence means according to the dictionary: it's a lack of respect for people or things that are generally taken seriously. So it's the opposite of reverence. Go figure.

In this context, when we talk about irreverence, we're talking about a disregard for the things of God. We're talking about not treating the things of God—which are to be treated with high regard and respect—treating that disrespectfully, as not a big deal. And ultimately, it comes down to a spiritual apathy, a spiritual boredom, a disinterest in God. The reason many of us don't experience God in our lives today is because we've grown lazy and we've grown bored. And from the basis of this laziness and this apathy, we also become critical.

We have a consumer mentality as American Christians. We expect to receive all the benefits of religion without really putting anything into it. And then when we don't get anything out of it, instead of looking at ourselves and asking ourselves what we have not done to really prepare our hearts for God, we instead blame religion. We blame the church. Maybe God isn't real. Well, if you haven't really done anything to seek him, it's no wonder that you feel that way.

"I'm not really getting anything out of the messages at church. I've heard all this stuff before. I'm not really learning anything new. So I'm just not going to come anymore. It's the pastor's fault. I don't really like the music. It's not my style. It doesn't really move me. So I can't really worship God."

I hate to break it to you guys, but worship is not about you. The leadership here at Founded in Truth, the worship team—they're not performers here to entertain you. They're here to facilitate an encounter with the Holy God.

The Choice Is Ours

I love this quote by James Piles. He's a Messianic Jewish teacher. He says: "Is your church or synagogue boring, not real, irrelevant? Maybe that's because you are. If you want something more out of your religion, start putting more into it. Stop acting like religion is something you've just added to your pre-existing life and start acting like you cannot live without an active, pulsating, moment-by-moment encounter with God."

Do you live that way? Or is your relationship with God just an accessory on your life because you grew up with it? Because it's just what you do on Saturday or Sunday or whatever? Or is your faith your life? Because it should be.

If you really want to experience God, I do believe that much of it comes down to us. Much of it comes down to our choices that we make. And that choice comes down to: will you honor him and reverence him and seek him and worship him regardless of your feelings and regardless of your comfort and regardless of your preferences?

It's the same thing in any relationship. Just look at marriage, for example. If you've lost the connection in your marriage, you don't just sit there and blame your spouse. Many people do, and that's why they're messed up. But you do something. You intentionally make that effort to rekindle that spark. You intentionally make that effort to spend time together, to spend quality time together, to go on dates. It's practical choices that you make.

I think a lot of us just like to withdraw because it's easier, because we're lazy. It's too much effort. So we withdraw and then nothing ever changes. Nothing ever gets better.

When God Still Feels Distant

One possible reason for why your religion is boring is because you are. One possible reason for why you do not experience God in your life is because you don't actively pursue him in your life.

However, here's my caveat. Perhaps you are someone who isn't spiritually apathetic. Perhaps you are someone who really does yearn to experience God. And you do put forth an effort to reconcile what you believe in your mind and the disconnect in your heart. And yet, despite your efforts, despite what you desire, despite what you long for, God still feels distant. How do you get that back? How do you reconnect with God?

Well, before we get there, I want to talk about some possible causes for why this may be the case.

Causes of Spiritual Distance

We already talked about a lack of reverence. These are some other causes I would submit to you.

One is unconfessed sin. Sin is the very reason we are exiled from God's presence to begin with. So sin is something that keeps us from having that connection.

Another possible cause is demonic attack. We shouldn't ignore the spiritual realm, the spiritual reality that exists around us and how it influences us. We need to fight against that. We need to fast. We need to pray. We need to engage in that spiritual warfare. We need to seek counseling from other believers. Have the body pray for us.

Another possible cause is trials and tribulations. This is something I talked about last time I spoke here about why God allows suffering. But trials and tribulations have a huge emotional impact on us and often cause us to wonder if God is really there and if he really cares. So I spoke a lot last time about some ideas, and when we're in that situation, how we can reconnect with God. And that he wants to connect with us and that he has a special place in his heart for hurting people.

Another possible cause is distractions. Just the routines of life. We're too busy. We have too much going on.

And lastly, there's unmet expectations. Now this last one, I think, is probably the most misdiagnosed cause of spiritual indifference. Why do I say that? Because when we have unmet expectations, when something fails to meet our expectations, we usually focus on whatever has failed to meet our expectations rather than taking responsibility for how we react to that.

Let me say that again. When we have unmet expectations, we usually are tempted to focus on everything wrong that happened, whatever has failed to meet our expectations. That's what we focus on. That's what we want to blame, rather than looking at our reaction to that.

The Impact of Unmet Expectations

So, for example, Christian hypocrisy. And that's something that depresses me all the time when I see believers, people that confess the name of the Lord, and yet they don't live that way. They're oppressing people. They're hurting people. They're dishonest people.

Another thing that often depresses us is when we expect something, when something doesn't work out the way that we had planned. And we let that impact us and drag us down, and it's demotivating.

I've had moments, just to be honest with you guys, moving here in April. My wife and I, we prayed, and it was just such an amazing spiritual time for us. We just knew that God was calling us to South Carolina, and we just had all these big ideas and thoughts of what was going to happen, what that was going to look like. And then we get here, and we wait. And it's like the most anticlimactic feeling in the world. Like, we finally get here, and now we wait. And we're still waiting. We still have no idea. And then there have been moments where I've just been depressed, and I've just been sitting on our porch, and I'm like, I miss my friends.

Why am I here? Why did God call us? Did I even hear God right to begin with? So now that we've discussed some possible causes, let's talk about some practical solutions here. I have a list of 10 solutions that I believe are based on the Bible as well as my personal experience that I hope will help you guys. I'm not suggesting that these steps are some guaranteed formula that once you do them, you're going to immediately get back on spiritual track and everything's going to be hunky-dory. I don't have a book to sell you, but I do believe these steps will be helpful. I believe that spiritual discipline is a key to resolving this issue because it's a spiritual issue. So we're going to go through some of these steps. If you want to write them down—if you have a smartphone—you can text them to yourself on your notepad.

Admit It

The first solution that I want to propose to you is that we are to admit it. Admit it. Admit that maybe you're not as spiritual as you want to be, or that you should be. The first step to solving a problem is recognizing that there is one. And so admitting in this—I'm including in this admitting it, confessing any known sin, which would include not loving God the way that he deserves. Confess that sin.

[Psalm 51](#), 10 through 12, David's praying. He says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit." So what is this? What's going on here? This is David's prayer of repentance, right? After his sin with Bathsheba. So what happened when David sinned? Well, we just read it. He said, he's saying, cast me not away from your presence. I feel disconnected from you, God. I feel far away from you, God. I need you, God. Please restore to me the joy of your salvation. I don't want to be separate from your presence anymore, God. He confessed his sin and he prayed for that spiritual renewal.

[Psalm 32](#), 2-3 said, "Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long." When he kept silent about his iniquity—about that sin in his life—it was eating away at his bones through his groaning and anguish. Do you have sin in your life? What are you keeping from God? What do you refuse to let go of that you know profanes his name, distorts the image that you're called to be, the image of God? Freedom comes through confessing sin to God. Freedom comes through repentance. And as David prayed, that is how we get restored joy.

Prayer and Fasting

The second step I want to propose to you is prayer and fasting. When we fast, we are making that choice to deny ourselves. We're denying ourselves a basic human enjoyment in order to reconnect with God. That's the entire point. By the way, fasting does not necessarily mean abstaining from food. We can fast from other things. We can fast from whatever is distracting us, whatever is taking up so much of our time—like turn off the TV, deactivate your Facebook page for a while, get away from the distractions, disconnect so that you can reconnect. I saw that on an internet meme one time. Disconnect so you can reconnect. Isn't that kind of ironic that I saw that on the internet? Anyway, I wasn't fasting at that moment, that's right.

So fasting sets the stage for spiritual breakthrough. It brings us to a place of humility and it brings us to a place of clarity that we can reconnect to God.

Struggle with God

The third step I want to propose to you is that we are to struggle with God. We are to struggle with God. So I would, this dovetails off of the second step. So while we are in prayer and while we are fasting and pursuing God, we ought to struggle with God. Jacob struggled with God and what does it say? It says he would not let go until God blessed him. In fact, his name—because of that—was changed to Israel and the name of Israel means struggle with God. So in the same way, I want to propose to you that we can feel safe to struggle. A lot of people have doubts. A lot of godly people have struggled. Just read the Psalms. David says a lot of things in the Psalms that aren't true because he's struggling. He's expressing his emotions and his anguish and his pain, and he feels safe to do that. Lamenting to God is throughout Scripture. It's a biblical expression that we can feel safe to engage in. We don't have to—the worst thing that we can do is to be dishonest with ourselves and with God.

Seek Spiritual Counsel

The fourth step is to seek spiritual counsel. Seek those in your life who can speak to you, who can counsel you, who can offer you advice on how to resolve these issues that you might be having.

Remember God

The fifth step would be to remember God. Remember what God has done in your life. Think about and reflect on how God has saved you, how God has blessed you. And we're commanded all the time throughout Scripture to remember, constantly remember, remember, remember. Every Sabbath and every Passover, we are told to remember our deliverance from Egypt. And that's what Passover is all about. And in Deuteronomy, when the Sabbath command is reiterated, it's a memorial, a weekly memorial of our deliverance from Egypt. We're to remember that. And as Christians, as believers in Yeshua, that story of deliverance from Egypt is a direct prophecy about our own lives, about our own salvation in the Lord.

So when we reflect, when we take that time to remember the things that God has done in our lives, it's a powerful way to rekindle your passion for God, to see that he's still at work, that he is involved, that he does care. That's why sharing testimonies and hearing testimonies from other believers is so powerful, because we get to see firsthand, wow, God, he's here, he's involved, he's still working.

Serve Others

The sixth step that I want to propose to you is to serve others. [Isaiah 58](#) 10 through 11 says, "If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places. He will satisfy your desire in scorched places. When? When you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted. And make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters do not fail."

So if you aren't doing anything to love and serve others, it's no wonder that you've lost your passion for God. It's no wonder. You're disregarding your calling and your duty as a child of God. That's what we're commanded to do. That's the second greatest commandment. Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. We are all called to ministry. We are all called to care for the least of these and to serve our community. And there is always something that we can be doing. Don't think that there's nothing you can do. I'll just let other people handle it. I'm not called to this particular area of ministry or whatever. I'm not a good speaker. I'm not good at sharing. There's always something you could be doing.

What encourages me more than anything, honestly, is when a good friend of mine sends me a text message just letting me know that he loves me, that he's praying for me and thinking about me. Just the fact that he thought of me to send that text message—that's something we can do. That's a little thing that we can do. Anyone can do that. If you have a phone, you can do it. Give a donation to charity. Give more than you think you should or more than you want to. Make a sacrifice. Give until it hurts. Love until it hurts. There's a lot of hurting people out there. We are told to weep with those who weep, mourn with those who mourn. And I believe that as [Isaiah 58](#) says, he will satisfy our desire when we do that.

Get in Touch with the Transcendent

The seventh step is to get in touch with the transcendent. Get in touch with the transcendent. What do I mean by that? I mean that we need to escape the distractions of life for a bit. We need to pursue experiences of beauty and wonder. We need to wake up early and watch a sunrise over a beautiful landscape. Soak it all in. Listen to classical music. And I'm not just saying, like, turn it on while you're doing dishes or chores around the house. No. Sit down, find a quiet place where you can be alone, and soak it in. I believe that when we open ourselves up to these experiences of sublime beauty that exists, and I believe that beauty comes from God. I

believe that it often produces a longing for something true and beautiful. We read that in the psalm that we read at the very beginning. The author said, when I look at the sky, when I look at the stars and the moon that you have set in place and the wonderful things that you've created, the beautiful things that exist, what is man that you are mindful of him? God created us with that longing. And he created us with that longing because he's the only one that can satisfy it.

The scripture says that deep calls to deep. So what do we need to do? We need to make room for the presence of God to reach deep into our spirits. [Psalm 42](#), 1 through 2 says, "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? Just that longing, that desire to stand before God. That's all you want. As a deer pants for flowing streams, as your body thirsts for God—that natural human need to survive. Our soul ought to thirst for the living God.

Praise God

The eighth step is to praise God. What I mean by this is to speak aloud, to shout, to thank God for everything that he's given you, and especially for the little blessings that we often take for granted. Now, I think a lot of people probably have the most trouble with this one because I believe it's hard to be thankful to God when we don't feel thankful. It's hard sometimes to worship God when we feel distant from him because none of us want to be hypocritical. None of us want to be insincere, right? That was my friend's problem that I talked about at the very beginning—who I had lunch with. He just couldn't believe in something that he didn't feel.

John Piper, he's a Christian pastor. He speaks to this in his book, *When I Don't Desire God*. I really liked what he said here. He said, "Your aim in loosing your tongue with words of gratitude is that God would be merciful and fill your words with the emotion of true gratitude. You are not seeking the praise of man. You are seeking the mercy of God. You are not hiding the hardness of ingratitude, but hoping for the inbreaking of the Spirit."

Draw Near to Him

If you didn't want to praise God, you wouldn't. Okay? The very fact that you desire to be sincere proves that you're sincere. The very fact that you want to desire God proves that you desire Him. So take that step. Draw near to Him—the Scripture says. The worship team quoted this

earlier. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you. When we take that step, He will meet us there.

Meditate on God's Word

The ninth step—I'm going to get through these quickly. Meditate on God's word. [Psalm 1](#) speaks of the man who meditates on the Torah day and night and how when he does that, he's like a tree planted by streams of water. He has that satisfaction, that nourishment for his soul through his meditation. So I want to encourage you guys, this is a step you can take. Pick a study topic and meditate on the Word. You can just meditate on the Psalms or you can study the Scriptures, pick a topic and study it until you have intellectual satisfaction with whatever it is, whatever question you might have. Dig into Bible commentaries and the Lord will reveal these things to you. The Lord will bring you fulfillment and satisfaction through encountering you through his revelation and his written word. [Psalm 119](#) says: For me personally, there is nothing more exciting and wonderful than learning something in the scriptures. Learning—either learning something new or being firmly established in a belief I already have—and there's depth added to that belief. That just happened recently with a study topic that I've learned something new about, and I was excited and I wanted to tell everyone about it and how cool God is and how cool his word is.

Wait Patiently

Finally, the tenth step is to wait patiently. [Psalm 40:1-3](#) says, "I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord."

Worship team, if you'd like to come up. We don't know how long exactly this author had to wait. The fact that it said he had to wait patiently entails that it wasn't instant, that he waited patiently and then God came and he delivered him from the miry bog, put a song of joy in his heart. I've known believers personally who've waited years. One of my best friends—he was my roommate as well. He lived with me for years, years and years. He struggled with waiting, with this very issue. And I distinctly remember the time when the Lord delivered him from that and gave him a new song of praise in his heart. So while you wait, serve the Lord faithfully and pray for him to give you breakthrough. Like Jacob, don't give up. Keep struggling with God. There is hope.

A Prayer for Your Journey

I want to encourage you guys to make this a priority as we enter this season of Elul in a couple weeks—that we make this a priority in our lives to rekindle that spark for the Lord. You guys want to pray with me real quick?

Heavenly Father, oh God, you—what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him? Who are we, God, that you would want anything to do with us? How big and majestic and powerful and holy you are, Lord. And yet, you do care, you do love, and Father, we just cry out to you today that you would put a new song of joy in our hearts. Father, that you would meet us where we are as we draw near to you in this moment, as we take that step, Lord, that you would meet us in that step. You would bless us with satisfaction in you, God. You would renew the passion within our spirits. You would rekindle the fire for you. I pray that for everyone here, Lord, and everyone watching online, that, God, you would just stir up an enthusiasm among your people, that your spirit would be poured out, God, that people would cry out to the Lord in repentance, that lives would be changed, that people would be transformed—not just intellectually, Lord, emotionally, Father. Father, give us that gift of joy. We love you, Lord. We praise you and we thank you in Yeshua's name. Shalom.

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