

26 QUENCHING SPIRITUAL THIRST



Receive

Jeremiah 15:1-21

“When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.” (Jeremiah 15:16, NIV)



Reflect

How can Scripture quench my spiritual thirst?

Do I turn to the Bible even when I am discouraged and frustrated?

Do I have faith that God is good, even when my circumstances aren’t?

Jeremiah didn’t have an easy time of it. For 52 chapters we listen to him prophesize the same message over and over, a message that continued to fall on deaf ears. He urged his people to repent, to rid themselves of idols and false gods, and turn back to the one true God again and again—yet they never listened. Worse, they mocked him and imprisoned him, and still God asked Jeremiah to continue to prophesize the same message. No wonder he felt discouraged and frustrated; no wonder he doubted God’s intentions and fell into despair. Yet through all his hardships, Jeremiah continued to return to God and His Word for comfort and sustenance. Despite everything, God’s words still brought him joy and delight.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, help me hear Your message of unwavering love and mercy as I read Your Word*

Consider What’s Real: Sometimes when we find ourselves in a spiritually dark place, we are tempted, like Jeremiah, to cry out to God in frustration and despair. That’s okay. God values every kind of communication, even our cries of anger and hopelessness. After all, a cry of frustration to God is better than no communication at all. When we find ourselves mired in this kind of despair, it’s helpful to return to a favorite passage in the Bible, to remind ourselves of His goodness and love. Keep these special verses top of mind, so that you can return to them in a time of need to find His peace and joy again. Or try memorizing a couple of key verses that you can repeat to yourself as a mantra of hope when you need it.

Additional Verses to Consider: Psalm 23, Romans 15:13

27 RELEASING ANXIETY



Receive

Luke 21:29-36

“I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Luke 21:32-33, NIV).



Reflect

How can I overcome the anxieties of life?

Do I turn to the Bible as a source of strength and hope, or am I looking for a quick fix to my problems?

What does it mean to me when Jesus tells me His words “will never pass away?”

It’s easy to feel lonely and isolated when we are in the midst of suffering and pain. We retreat into ourselves, forgetting that God reaches His hand to us, ready to rescue us from our suffering. We feel unstable, unbalanced, like the world is tilting off-kilter and the ground is shifting beneath our feet. Yet one thing remains steady, a rock-solid foundation in times of trouble: God’s Word. “My words will never pass away,” Jesus reminds us—they are always there, available, an ever-flowing wellspring of hope and promise to quench every anxiety and fear.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, fill my heart with the trust to know, truly know, that You are the stronghold in my life, always present, always available, no matter what.*

Consider What’s Real: God is our source of strength and hope, but He needs us to turn toward Him in order to receive His love. We need to be an active participant in this transformation from desolation and hopelessness to renewal and light—it doesn’t just happen on its own. One of the ways we can begin this turn toward God is by returning to His Word, again and again, day after day. He speaks a message crafted especially for each one of us there. We need only open the pages of His book to discover what that message is.

Additional Verses to Consider: Psalm 34:4, 1 Peter 5:7

28 DOING GOD'S WILL



Receive

Ezekiel 36:24-38

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27, NIV)



Reflect

How does God enable my human spirit to do His will?

God has given me a new heart, but am I allowing my heart to follow His will, or am I resisting in some way?

Am I letting God move me or am I acting according to my own will?

No matter how egregious our sins or how far we have fallen, God forgives us again and again, creating in us a new, clean spirit and offering us a fresh start. Then He goes a step further and breathes his own Holy Spirit into us, to serve as a Counselor and Guide and to lead us along the right path. The key, though, is that God also gives us free will, which allows us to decide whether we will follow His Spirit and His will, or whether we will act according to our own motives and desires. Just because we have a new heart, a “heart of flesh,” and God’s very own Holy Spirit residing in us doesn’t mean we will always make the right choices. God prepares us to follow His will, but in the end, the choice is ours. What choice will you make today?



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, thank you for giving me grace in abundance every day, for forgiving my sins and giving me a fresh start and a clean heart. I pray that I will follow the prompts of your Holy Spirit and do Your will.*

Consider What’s Real: God lavishes graces on each one of us every day, no matter what our transgression or how terrible our sin, but He also gives us free will to choose exactly how we will act on that grace. Don’t forget, both Judas and John were imbued with a clean heart and the power of the Holy Spirit, but both chose to act in very different ways. One chose God’s will, the other, his own.

Additional Verses to Consider: Jeremiah 25:4-7, 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

29 LIVING BY FAITH



Receive

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

“Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8, NIV)



Reflect

What must I do to live by faith, not by sight?

What steps can I take to relinquish control and hand my life over to God?

Do I truly trust that God is with me, even in times of trouble and even when I can't sense His presence?

We live in a sight-based culture. So much of what we “know” about the world around us is based on what we see with our own eyes. Yet what happens when we see things we can't control, circumstances we can't fix? What happens when our loved one is dying before our very eyes and we can do nothing to help? Or when we witness abuse, poverty, sickness, violence, hunger, or homelessness and are powerless to end it on our own? It's then that we must live by faith, in confident trust that God is gracious, merciful and loving and knowing that He has the power to transform all circumstances into good. We must hand over everything—our lives, ourselves, our circumstances—to Him.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, help me let go of my tight grip; help me hand over control and surrender entirely to You. Help me embrace true faith in my heart, trusting that Your love and goodness will prevail.*

Consider What's Real: “Let go of trying to do, let go of trying to control...let go of my own way, let go of my own fears,” writes Ann Voskamp in *One Thousand Gifts*. “Bend the knee and be small and let God give what God chooses to give because He only gives love... This is the fuel for joy's flame. Fullness of joy is discovered only in the emptying of will.” Today, meditate on these words, trusting and believing that God is all good, all love, and thanking Him for the peace He gives in every circumstance.

Additional Verses to Consider: Hebrews 11:1-12, John 14:1-4

30 ONE IN CHRIST



Receive

Ephesians 2:11-22

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22, NIV)



Reflect

*Why are selflessness and unity with other believers two keys to knowing and doing God’s will?
How does it feel to be a member of God’s household?
How can I make myself a better dwelling for God’s Holy Spirit?*

It’s a little intimidating to think of ourselves as part of God’s own household, right there with the apostles and all the prophets, isn’t it? It’s hard to think of ourselves in the same league as, say, Paul or John, or Jeremiah or Isaiah. But that is exactly the truth: As Christians, we are all on the same “playing field,” with none of us in a higher position than the other. And we are all united in one mission: to share God’s love and the Good News of His Son, Jesus Christ. Individually we are each a dwelling, a temple, holding God Himself in the form of the Holy Spirit. And collectively we join together as members of one body, working to build God’s Kingdom here on Earth.



Respond

Ask for Change: *Lord, help me learn to act selflessly, not with my own good in mind, but for the good of my neighbors, with the ultimate goal of furthering your Kingdom on Earth.*

Consider What’s Real: Consider what The Message version says about the unified body of the Christian church: “No matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a part of... You are Christ’s body—that’s who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your ‘part’ mean anything” (1 Corinthians 12:19 and 27). Jesus expects our faith to go beyond a one-to-one relationship with Him and into the realm of our community. He didn’t intend for our faith to be entirely individualistic, but communal in nature, impacting our neighbors in our own cities and towns, our own nation and beyond.

Additional Verses to Consider: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Ephesians 4:15-16