

A Renewed Life in Jesus

Leaving the faith, leaving the Church, walking away from a calling (whatever we might call it) is like entering a spiritual Winter. There is still life, but our heart is colder. The longer we are away, the tougher it typically is for the Truth of the Word to find good ground (Matthew 13:18-23). I know this because I walked away for 10 years. But God invited me to return, and I accepted.

This Bible study has the purpose of reestablishing you in the Body of Christ. Keep in mind that going through God's Word and becoming aware of your own mistakes and weaknesses is not intended to shame you. God loves us enough to correct us (Proverbs 3:11-13).

First, we will look at the spiritual factors that led you to leave, through the perspective of what is called "The Parable of the Sower" in Matthew 13. Next, you will be given the tools to prepare your heart to stay rooted in God. Finally, remember that God loves you. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. Do not give up, or think that it is too late. Part of the end-time revival will include prodigals returning. You are now a part of that!

-Take a moment to pray and ask God to reestablish you through His Word, in Jesus' Name.-

Where Did I Go Wrong?

- The way side – *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side* (Matthew 13:19). When we walked away from Bible-based, anointed preaching and teaching, several things happened:
 - Our faith decreased - *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17).
 - The flesh asserted itself against God – *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be* (Romans 8:5-7).
 - We started leaving the Church before we really left – *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, his like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetting what manner of man he was* (James 1:22-24).
 - Our hearts moved away from God - *Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men* (Isaiah 29:13).
 - What else happened to you? How did your spiritual life change?

- The stony places – *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended* (Matthew 13:20-21). Maybe our foundation in God wasn't as solid as we thought, and we built on sand or gravel instead of on one Rock. Maybe we trusted in our own walk with Him, rather than truly walking with Jesus. Did we allow offenses from people (who are not perfect), to draw us away from God (who is perfect)?
 - The foundation must be sure, and uncorrupted - *Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.* (Luke 6:47-49).
 - Face the fact that our wisdom isn't good enough – *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil* (Proverbs 3:7).
 - Our understanding also wasn't good enough – *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding* (Proverbs 3:5).
 - We can only live through Jesus – *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned* (John 15:5-6).
 - What offended me?

- The thorns – *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful* (Matthew 13:22). Many of us were sincere in wanting to serve the Lord, but became impatient, were overwhelmed by stress or fatigue, or fell prey to the enticements of the world. Or, we were just too busy. But we did lose sight of God's purpose for us somehow. We left our First Love. The following passages of scripture are examples of how this may have happened for us. Maybe we allowed ourselves to be overwhelmed in our service, or compared ourselves to those who seemed to “have it all”. Maybe we confused the blessing of God with thinking we had to work hard to gain riches. Or maybe we just allowed fear to cripple us.
 - *Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was*

cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:38-42).

- *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass (Psalm 37:7).*
 - *Labor not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven (Proverbs 23:4-5)*
 - *And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased (Matthew 14:28-32).*
 - What got in the way for me? Where did my time go?
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So what now?

- As the Lord Jesus first saved your soul, He wants to again! Let God help you prepare your heart to be good ground (Matthew 13:23).
 - *For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns (Jeremiah 4:3).* Fallow ground can mean one of two things. 1) The ground of our faith was unused, never prepared for the planted seeds of faith, or 2) We once had some good ground but allowed it to become hardened, and weeds were allowed to grow. We sowed seeds in the world, instead of in God and His Kingdom. So humble yourself to the Lord, and allow Him to help you prepare your heart for Him again.
 - *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you (Hosea 10:12).* Regardless of how far we have fallen, we can seek God’s mercy again. Turn to Him with all of your heart. He will rain righteousness upon you, because His Word promises that He will!
 - *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded (James 4:8).* Be singularly focused on

Jesus. Bring yourself to Him, and hold nothing back from the One who knows you best. He created you for Himself!

- *But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty* (Matthew 13:23).
- Do you believe in the power of the Word of God? What is the state of your heart right now, today?

- Go to church regularly.
 - *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching* (Hebrews 10:25). Do NOT try to rebuild your walk with God on your own. Allow others to help you. We can be lifted in our spirits and strengthened at church, during worship service, through anointed preaching of the Truth of God’s Holy Word, and when others pray for us. Do not worry about your own strength, or compare yourself to others. Focus on worshipping Jesus, because He alone is worthy! And He is the Healer!
 - *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation* (Hebrews 13:7).
 - *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you* (Hebrews 13:17).
 - What thoughts am I noticing, that are trying to convince me not to go to church?

- Now, rebuke those thoughts and reject them, in the name of Jesus!
- Defend yourself spiritually, with His strength.
 - *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand* (Ephesians 6:10-13).

- Put on the whole armor daily, nightly, as often as needed.
 - *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:14-17).*

- Approach God many times daily.
 - *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works (Hebrews 10:22-24).*

- Don't just fight carnality; conquer it and crucify it.
 - *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).*

- Weed out your mind.
 - *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).*
 - Which thoughts are not helping me? Which ones are against me knowing God?

- Beware of worldly people who flirt with you, or try to pull you away from church.
 - *For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them (Proverbs 5:3-6).*
 - *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords (Psalm 55:21).*
 - *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. (Proverbs 31:30).*

- Fast.
 - *Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil (Joel 2:12-13).*
 - Be sure to fast in a healthy way. There are some good resources online and in book form about fasting. Talk to your pastor or a spiritually-grounded Christian who has fasted successfully before. Make sure that someone will pray for you and check in on you while you fast.

- Lay aside the heaviness. Remember that the yoke of the Lord is easy, and His burden is light. So if you feel heaviness regularly, start praising and worshipping Jesus. He is Almighty , and He is worthy. Also, face the fact that you will be tempted with the same things that drew you astray last time. But God is able to deliver you out of temptation.
 - *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).*
 - On a scale from 0-10 (“0” meaning no weight at all), how “weighed down” do you feel spiritually? What thoughts or duties are weighing me down?

 - What tempts me?

- Stir up the Holy Spirit in you.
 - *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:6-7).*
 - Invite the Lord to stir up His power to help you lay aside the weights listed above. Ask God to give you a sound mind, so that you do not enter into temptation (Matthew 26:41, Luke 22:40).

- Look toward Heaven.
 - *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:2-4).*

- Practice what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.
 - *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:16-22).*

God loves you. Let Him keep you

- Let's face it: God is stronger than we are. He is wiser. He knows everything. Why not trust in Him, instead of in our own strength, wisdom, and knowledge?
 - *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with what such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Hebrews 13:5-6).*
 - *But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:3-5).*
 - *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Hebrews 13:20-21).*
 - *. . . And lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:20).*

Your spiritual Winter is ending. Let God thaw your heart with His Holy fire. Humble yourself before Him. Make this a real relationship with Jesus in every aspect of your life. Be honest with Him about everything! Do not hide anything from Him, and frequently ask Him to show you what you need to submit to Him.

Finally, do not give up. God is for you, and He will send you the leaders and friends you need to rebuild your life in God. You will probably stumble, and fall at times. But God can use those failures to make you stronger, if you repent and abide in Him. Stay in His Word daily, and be a doer of His Word. Trust Him. Love Him with all of your heart.

This is a process, and it can be frightening. But God does not give us the spirit of fear. Keep in mind that it is either our own fear of completely submitting ourselves to God, or the enemy is trying to give us fear. Either way, God's perfect love does cast out fear (1 John 4:18).

Embrace the renewal of your life in God. It is Springtime, so cultivate the ground of your heart with faith. Trust in Jesus, and start growing!

Note: All scriptures were taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.