

# Finding God: When He hides His face

## INTRO

This message is more about **PRAYER & FAITH** than anything else. It is closely linked to **SUFFERING**. This is a huge topic!

Here are some Questions we might face:

*Where is God in the pain?*

*Why me Lord?*

*Is God really there?*

*Does He care about me or has He forgotten me?*

*What have I done wrong?*

This message may also **not seem very relevant** to some of you as you do not struggle with this.

WELL DONE! **My Life – I've struggled when God has gone silent – "What's wrong?"**

## 1. WHERE IS GOD?

**I think a lot of us if we are honest cannot understand why God goes silent at times.**

POEM – That poem for some maybe too real and too honest.

WHY does God not answer clearly in some times of trouble?

WHY doesn't He just say in an audible voice, "*Don't worry, here I am*".

C.S. Lewis wrote after his wife's death:

*"Meanwhile where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, if you turn to Him then with praise, you will be welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that... silence. You may aswell turn away."*

Maybe C.S. Lewis was just weak, that's not Biblical you say!

- Job - **Job 13:24** "*Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?*"
- David - **Psalms 13:1-2** "*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*"  
5 other times in the Psalms David says – "*do not hide Your face from me!*"
- Habakkuk - **Habakkuk 1:2** "*O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?*"

**The simple fact is that God is invisible therefore we WILL experience times of doubt especially when times are hard.**

## 2. WHAT HAPPENS IF OR WHEN WE DOUBT?

**Mark 9:23-24** says "*And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"*"

Doubt is normal especially when God seems to have disappeared.

We pretend as if we never doubt. Maybe you don't! Or maybe you limit God to a safe distance.  
*If I don't pray for miracles or pray for the lost then I will never be disappointed.*

- Philip Yancey writes “*Doubt always co-exists with faith, for in the presence of certainty who would need faith at all?*”
- Martin Luther the 16<sup>th</sup> Century reformist once said:  
“*For more than a week, Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation and blasphemy against God*”.

Doubt is normal it’s what we do with it that is important.

### FILM CLIP “Signs” 0:39 – (0:41) 0:44

Doubt can lead to:

FEAR – *If God isn’t listening then I’m alone*

ANGER – *How can God leave me at a time like this!*

CONFUSION – *Why are others so happy with God and I’m not?*

GUILT – *What have I done to upset God?*

DEFEAT – *God’s not there!*

Satan takes advantage of these as we see in **1Peter 5:8** “*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*”.

**Doubt is normal but if we are not careful it leads to faithlessness.**

**BUT doubt can also make us stronger.**

John Ortberg wrote in ‘*The Life You’ve Always Wanted*’, “*The character of the faith that allows us to be transformed by suffering and darkness is not doubt-free certainty; rather, it is tenacious obedience*”.

### 3. WHY DOES GOD DRAW BACK?

When we are young Christians God is very real, He’s new and exciting, He’s everywhere!

We rely a lot on feelings, we feel “forgiven”, happy, “close to God”. **My Life**

- **We cannot live on feelings alone. Therefore God draws back at times and feelings change to make us stronger. WHY?**
- So that we trust on the truth of His Word not what we FEEL! WHY?
- Because bad things WILL happen! Feelings WILL change BUT God’s Word remains true.

**Freedom in Christ** – This course deals with “freedom”. How to be free in Christ. One of it’s main points is: “*Faith is simply believing what is already true. Find out what is already true; choose to believe it whether it feels true or not, and your Christian life will be transformed*”.

Imagine your mum or dad who always carried you as a child, you’d never learn to walk!  
Imagine God telling Satan that he cannot test Job because his faith might fail. A Rabbi once said “*Faith like Job’s cannot be shaken because it is the result of having been shaken*”.

### 4. CONCLUSION

What’s the answer then when God has gone silent?

**The REAL answer is that GOD NEVER HIDES HIS FACE, It only SEEMS that way.**

Yes, Sin separates us from God but remember “*Christ died for us while we were still enemies*”.  
God never takes His love from us although we may not hear Him say it anymore.

The TRUTH is: We must choose to believe that:

**John 3:16** *“God so loved the World”*

**Psalms 139** *“we are fearfully and wonderfully made”*

**Hebrews 13:5** *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

**Jeremiah 31:20** *“Is Israel my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD“*

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

**Romans 8:28-29** *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...”*

**Zephaniah 3:17** *“The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”*

Illustration: God Loves You Sunday or Monday whether you feel it or not– *Get someone up.*  
**God’s love is like – it will always say the same thing whenever you come back to it! It’s your perception that changes!**

Even in the worst cases when we cry out to God and He seems distant, be like Peter:

*“When many of Jesus’ disciples heard it, they said, “This is hard teaching; who can listen to it?”*

*“So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,” (John 6:60,67,68)*

Peter years later writes:

**1 Peter 4:12-13** *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”*

David despite crying out for God would always finish in praise:

**Psalms 13:5-6** *“But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

**It’s not whether we fear, doubt or get angry but that we trust ultimately in God regardless.**

Philip Yancey writes *“My friends in recovery groups live by the indispensable slogan, “One day at a time”. The historian of Alcoholics Anonymous titled his work **Not-God** because, he said, the most important hurdle an addicted person must surmount is to acknowledge deep in the soul that he or she is not God...The alcoholic must recognise his or her own helplessness and fall back in the arms of the Higher Power. “First of all we had to quit playing God”, concluded the founders of AA. Next, we must in faith allow God himself to “play God” in our lives which involves daily, even moment-by-moment surrender”.*

- **LEARN TO TAKE EACH DAY AT A TIME**
- **HAVE FAITH IN GOD’S LOVE & HIS WORD**
- **BE OBEDIENT TO THEM REGARDLESS OF FEELINGS**

## **5. FINISH**

God has been speaking to us as a church for a while now:

- God is here
- The ministries and roles are there for you all
- Everything is ready
- We ALL have gifts which some aren't using
- All you need to do as individuals is step out in FAITH

## **PRAYER**

- If God seems to be hiding His face – come out for prayer
- To take the next step in faith and see how God wants to use you