CASE FILE 05

START HERE

WHY CAN’T I FEEL GOD?

NAME _____ DATE _____

CASE SUMMARY

BIG QUESTION: If I have prayed, attended church, or tried following Jesus but never felt God, does that mean He is not real?

BIG IDEA: Our emotions matter, but they do not determine what is true. God has revealed Himself through creation, Scripture, and especially Jesus. We can seek Him honestly even when we do not experience the feelings we expected.

YOUR FOUR-DAY INVESTIGATION

DAY 1 / EXPECT
When God does not feel the way I imagined.

DAY 2 / EXAMINE
When my heart resists what God says.

DAY 3 / SEEK
Learning to approach God through Scripture and prayer.

DAY 4 / RESPOND
Seeking Him with my whole heart.

HOW TO USE THIS FILE

Read the passage for yourself. Work through the explanation. Answer the questions honestly, even if your answer is “I don’t know.” Each day includes a way to explain your faith and one practical step. This is not a test of whether you can produce a spiritual feeling.

FOLLOW JESUS

DAY 1 - WHEN GOD DOESN’T FEEL THE WAY I EXPECT

READ: Psalm 13:1–6; John 6:30

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: If I cannot feel God, is that evidence that He is absent?

CASE NOTE

A REAL FEELING IS NOT ALWAYS A COMPLETE PICTURE OF REALITY.

READ

Imagine standing in a worship service while everyone around you seems moved. Some people raise their hands; someone is crying; you feel… nothing. It can be tempting to conclude that everyone else has found something you missed. But before you make that conclusion, ask a different question: What did I expect God to feel like?

In Psalm 13, David asks how long God will forget him and hide His face. He does not pretend to be cheerful. His words show that a faithful person can experience fear, disappointment, and spiritual distance. Yet by the end of the psalm, David chooses to remember God’s steadfast love. The psalm does not say his circumstances instantly changed or that he suddenly felt an overwhelming emotion.

In John 6:30, a crowd asks Jesus for another sign. They had expectations about what convincing evidence should look like. Their question challenges us to examine whether we have decided in advance what God must do before we will trust Him. Scripture never promises that every prayer or worship service will feel dramatic.

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

A lack of a particular emotional experience cannot, by itself, settle whether Christianity is true. That question also involves what God has revealed and the historical claims about Jesus. Emotions can alert us to important questions, but they should not be treated as the only evidence.

FEELINGS ≠ FACTS

DAY 1 - WHEN GOD DOESN’T FEEL THE WAY I EXPECT

CONTINUED

THINK DEEPER

+ What experiences have shaped your expectations of how God should feel?
+ Why is David’s honesty in Psalm 13 different from giving up on God?
+ How might you distinguish “I do not feel God” from “God does not exist”?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Think of a moment when you expected a dramatic spiritual experience but did not have one. What conclusion did you draw? What other explanations might be possible?

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

A friend says, “Everyone at camp felt God except me, so I know He isn’t real.” How could you respond without dismissing their disappointment?

MY RESPONSE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write down one expectation you have about God. Search Scripture or ask a trusted leader whether God actually promises it.

PRAYER

Tell God honestly how you feel today. Ask Him to help you seek truth rather than compare your experience with someone else’s.

REMEMBER

My experience deserves honesty, but it does not determine all of reality.

KEEP ASKING

DAY 2 - WHEN MY HEART STOPS LISTENING

READ: Matthew 13:14–15; Psalm 139:23–24; 1 John 1:9

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: Could my own choices affect how I respond to God?

CASE NOTE

EXAMINE YOUR HEART WITHOUT ASSUMING EVERY DRY SEASON IS YOUR FAULT.

READ

Think about a notification you swipe away again and again. Eventually you may stop noticing it. Something similar can happen when we repeatedly ignore a truth we already know. We can grow used to excusing a lie, making fun of someone, holding onto bitterness, or refusing to apologize.

In Matthew 13, Jesus describes people who hear and see but do not truly understand. The issue is not a lack of sound reaching their ears; it is a heart unwilling to receive the message. A hardened heart is more than having a bad day or struggling with doubt. It describes resistance to what God is revealing.

That does not mean every person who feels spiritually numb is hiding sin. David and other faithful people also experienced distress and questions. Instead of accusing ourselves or others, Psalm 139:23–24 gives us a better response: invite God to search our hearts. And 1 John 1:9 reminds believers that confession is met by God’s faithfulness and forgiveness, not by a demand to become perfect first.

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

A serious search for truth requires intellectual honesty and moral honesty. We should be willing to examine our assumptions and our choices. Yet we must not use “you must have sin in your life” as a shortcut answer to someone’s honest doubts or pain.

SEARCH YOUR HEART

DAY 2 - WHEN MY HEART STOPS LISTENING

CONTINUED

THINK DEEPER

+ What is the difference between struggling with a question and refusing to consider an answer?
+ How can repeated choices make it easier to ignore what you know is right?
+ Why is confession a response to God’s grace rather than a way to earn His attention?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Is there a specific area where you have been making excuses instead of listening to what Scripture teaches? If nothing comes to mind, resist inventing guilt; simply ask God for an open heart.

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

Someone says, “If I don’t feel God, Christians will just tell me I’m sinning.” How would you explain the difference between honest self-examination and unfair blame?

MY RESPONSE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Pray through Psalm 139:23–24. Write down one concrete step of obedience or one honest question to bring to a leader.

PRAYER

Ask God to search your heart. If you recognize a wrong choice, confess it and take one practical step to make it right, including seeking help from a trusted adult when needed.

REMEMBER

A humble heart is willing to listen, repent, and receive grace.

RECEIVE GRACE

DAY 3 - SEEKING GOD WHEN NOTHING FEELS DIFFERENT

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 1:1–2; Luke 18:1–8

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: How can I seek God if I do not hear a voice or feel a response?

CASE NOTE

GOD HAS GIVEN US MORE THAN A FEELING TO GUIDE OUR FAITH.

READ

Imagine trying to know a friend but only speaking to them when you need a favor. Relationships grow through listening, honesty, and continued attention. Seeking God is not exactly like a human friendship, but the comparison helps us notice when we have reduced prayer to asking for an instant result.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 explains that Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, correction, and equipping believers. Hebrews 1:1–2 says that God has spoken decisively through His Son. That means we do not need to invent a message from God or wait for an audible voice before learning what He has made known. We begin with Jesus and the Scriptures that testify about Him.

Jesus also tells a parable in Luke 18 to teach His followers to pray and not give up. Persistent prayer does not control God or guarantee that our circumstances will change on our schedule. It is a way of continuing to bring our lives to Him in dependence and trust. Reading and praying are not buttons that trigger spiritual feelings; they are meaningful ways to respond to God.

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

Christian faith makes claims that can be considered, studied, and discussed. Scripture is not merely a record of people’s emotions; it communicates what Christians believe God has revealed. The historical testimony about Jesus deserves attention even on days when a person feels spiritually empty.

KEEP SEEKING

DAY 3 - SEEKING GOD WHEN NOTHING FEELS DIFFERENT

CONTINUED

THINK DEEPER

+ Why might we confuse “God did not answer how I expected” with “God did not hear me”?
+ What is the difference between studying Scripture to know God and reading only to finish a checklist?
+ How does Jesus’ teaching on persistent prayer challenge our expectations of instant results?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you pray, what do you usually ask for? What might change if you also made room for confession, gratitude, listening to Scripture, and honest questions?

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

A friend says, “I prayed for a week and nothing happened.” How could you explain persistent prayer without promising that God will give them the result they want?

MY RESPONSE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Try a ten-minute rhythm today: read Scripture, write one observation, pray honestly, and take one step of obedience.

PRAYER

Read John 15:1–11 slowly. Write one truth about Jesus, one instruction, and one question. Then pray about what you read for five uninterrupted minutes.

REMEMBER

Seeking God is a relationship of trust, not a formula for producing an emotion.

SEEK THE TRUTH

DAY 4 - SEEK HIM WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART

READ: Jeremiah 29:10–14; James 1:22–25; John 20:30–31

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: What does wholeheartedly seeking God look like after the feelings fade?

CASE NOTE

WHOLEHEARTED SEEKING IS MORE THAN WAITING FOR A MOMENT.

READ

It is possible to enjoy a church event, sing every song, and still avoid asking what Jesus wants to change in your life. It is also possible to feel very little and nevertheless take an honest step toward Him. The question is not simply “Did I feel something?” but “Am I responding to what God has revealed?”

Jeremiah 29:13 promises that those who seek God with their whole heart will find Him. In context, God was speaking to His people living in exile, promising restoration after a long season of displacement. This was not a promise of immediate emotional excitement. It was a call to turn to Him sincerely in the middle of a difficult waiting period.

James 1:22–25 warns against hearing God’s Word without putting it into practice. Wholehearted seeking involves our choices: honesty, repentance, forgiveness, service, and willingness to obey Jesus. John 20:30–31 explains that the written testimony about Jesus was given so readers might believe that He is the Messiah and have life in His name. The destination of this investigation is not an emotional high; it is Jesus Himself.

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

After five case files, the goal is not to claim that every question has been solved. It is to recognize that Christianity asks us to consider evidence, examine Scripture, and respond to Jesus. Doubts can be brought into that process honestly. Faith is not pretending to know what you do not know.



DAY 4 - SEEK HIM WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART

CONTINUED

THINK DEEPER

+ What does Jeremiah 29:13 mean in its original setting, and what does it teach us about sincerely turning to God?

+ Why does James say that hearing truth without acting on it is not enough?

+ How does John 20:30–31 connect the evidence for Jesus with a personal response to Him?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

After this apologetics series, what is one belief you understand more clearly, one question you still have, and one step toward Jesus you are willing to take?

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

Someone says, “I tried Christianity, but I never felt God, so I knew it was fake.” Give a compassionate response that distinguishes feelings from evidence and points toward Jesus.

MY RESPONSE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Pray Jeremiah 29:13 in its proper spirit: ask for an undivided heart, not a guaranteed sensation. Then follow through on your one practical step.

PRAYER

Choose one specific act of obedience in the next 24 hours. Share one unresolved question with a trusted Christian leader and ask them to investigate it with you.

REMEMBER

Do not give up on seeking God because you have not felt what you expected.

FOLLOW JESUS

FINAL DEVOTIONAL CHALLENGE

CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY NOT FEELING GOD DOES NOT SETTLE WHETHER HE IS REAL?

EXHIBIT A — EXPECTATIONS | PSALM 13:1–6

What does David teach us about feeling distant from God?

EXHIBIT B — HEART | MATTHEW 13:14–15

Why should we examine our hearts without blaming every dry season on sin?

EXHIBIT C — SEEKING | 2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17

What has God provided to help us know Him?

EXHIBIT D — RESPONSE | JEREMIAH 29:10–14

What does it mean to seek God wholeheartedly?

MY FINAL RESPONSE

A friend says: “I never felt God, so I know Christianity isn’t real.” Write a thoughtful, honest answer using at least two passages from this week.

CASE REVIEWED

MY NEXT STEP

One question I will keep investigating: _____

One step I will take toward Jesus: _____