

WHEN LIFE STINKS

WEEK 3: GOD IS STILL WITH YOU

There are times when God's presence feels obvious—and times when it doesn't.

Last week, we left Joseph in prison after being falsely accused. Genesis 39 made one thing clear even in that dark place:

The LORD was with Joseph.

But Joseph's circumstances didn't immediately improve. In fact, years would pass before he walked out of that prison.

This week, we'll look at what it means to keep walking with God when He is present—even when we may not feel or see that He is.

LET'S GET STARTED

1. Who is someone whose presence makes a situation better just because they're there? What is it about them?

VIEW

Watch the Week 3 video together.

VIDEO NOTES

DISCUSS

READ ALOUD

While Joseph is still in prison, Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker are placed in his care. One morning Joseph notices something is wrong.

Genesis 40:1-8 NLT

Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. ²Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, ³and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. ⁴They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them. ⁵While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. ⁶When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. ⁷"Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them. ⁸And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean." "Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

2. What do Joseph's words and actions in these verses reveal about him?

3. Joseph's own situation is still unresolved. Why is it significant that he continues to point others toward God? Who in your life have you seen do this?

READ ALOUD

GENESIS 40:20-23; 41:1 NLT

²⁰Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned^[a] his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. ²¹He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. ²²But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. ²³Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought. ¹Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River.

4. What details in these verses help you understand what this season of Joseph's life was like? How might those circumstances have made God feel distant?

READ ALOUD

Two full years later, Pharaoh has dreams no one can interpret. The cupbearer finally remembers Joseph, and Joseph is brought from prison to stand before Pharaoh.

GENESIS 41:14–16 NLT

¹⁴Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. ¹⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it.”

¹⁶“It is beyond my power to do this,” Joseph replied. “But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease.”

5. Compare Joseph’s words in Genesis 40:8 with his response in Genesis 41:16. What has remained consistent in Joseph through all those years?

LOOK CLOSER

READ ALOUD

David describes walking through a dark and dangerous valley.

PSALM 23:4 NLT

Even when I walk
 through the darkest valley
I will not be afraid,
 for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
 protect and comfort me.

6. What is the reason David gives for not being overcome by fear? How might God’s presence change the way we walk through a hard season, even when the hard thing itself hasn’t changed?

READ ALOUD

God is speaking to His people, Israel. As you read, fill in both sides of the chart using only what you find in the passage.

ISAIAH 43:1–2 NLT

But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you.

O Israel, the one who formed you says,

“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.

I have called you by name; you are mine.

2

When you go through deep waters,

I will be with you.

When you go through rivers of difficulty,

you will not drown.

When you walk through the fire of oppression,

you will not be burned up;

the flames will not consume you.

What Is True About God

**What Will God’s People
Experience**

7. What stands out to you when you put those two lists side by side?

8. Look again at verse 2. What does God promise to do—and what does He not promise—as His people pass through the waters, rivers, and fire?

LOOK TO JESUS

READ ALOUD —Matthew begins and ends his account of Jesus' life with two important statements about God's presence.

MATTHEW 1:23 NLT

"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

MATTHEW 28:18–20 NLT

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

9. Compare Matthew 1:23 with Matthew 28:20. What connection do you see between who Jesus is and what He promises His followers?

READ ALOUD

Jesus is preparing His disciples for the time when He will no longer be physically present with them. They are about to face confusion, fear, and loss.

JOHN 14:15–18 NLT

¹⁵ "If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. ¹⁸ No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.

10. What does Jesus promise His followers in these verses? What does this teach us about how God is present with His people today?

11. When God feels distant, how can the truth of Jesus' presence and the Holy Spirit give us something firmer to stand on than our feelings?

APPLY IT

God's presence doesn't depend on whether we can see or feel Him. This week, think about one place where you need to keep walking with Jesus even when He feels far away.

A place where God is difficult to see right now is...

A truth from today's Scriptures I need to hold onto is...

One way I can keep walking with Jesus this week is...

PRAY

Take a few minutes to pray together as a group.