

TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE IS DULL AND DRY

1. Are my expectations unrealistic? In the life of King David, as recorded in the Old Testament, we tend to overlook the times that he didn't sense the presence of God. Yet the historical accounts of his life, as well as his songs, indicate that David experienced times of doubt and spiritual coldness. The touchstone of David's life is not primarily that he always walked in the full enjoyment of God's presence, but that even in dry times he trusted in God.

2. Is there any sin I need to confess to God and turn from? Half-burled sin does great harm. It tamps down the soil of our lives, making it hard and impenetrable as an ancient path, so that God's words to us, His advances, and the prompting of His Spirit cannot pierce its surface. Hypocrisy devastates our spiritual lives, so periodically we need to examine our lives to see if they match our spiritual talk. (Ps. 139:23-24)

3. Am I engaged in practices that dull my spiritual sensitivity? Susanna Wesley told her children that anything that dulled their desire for God was sin for them. Hebrews 12:2, *"Let us through off everything that hinders...and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."* Luke 8:14 warns us that "life's worries, riches, and pleasure" choke God's word in our lives. Stress, anxiety, preoccupation, time pressures, distorted values, and poor choices can strangle our life in Christ.

4. Am I consistent in spiritual disciplines? Spiritual discipline does not gain Christ's love or favor. Rather, the benefit lies in helping us focus on the grace and nearness of God and on His love and commitment to us. This means making a deliberate choice to spend time with Him, because what is real, true, and supremely important is invisible and never pressing.

5. What conditions surrounded my best times with the Lord? Revelation 2:5 gives the prescription for regaining first love: *"Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first."* Jeremiah 2:2 The purest expression of first love is being unmitigated with joy in being near Him, regardless of the circumstances in your life.

6. Have I fallen into a spiritual rut? George McDonald said, "Nothing is so deadening to the divine as a habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things." Do you attend church? You should. But perhaps you need to rethink *why* you do. Do you read the Bible and pray? Maybe you need to examine your motivations to see if you've lost sight of the true goal of these activities.

7. Is poor health or fatigue a factor? Elijah was depressed. God didn't chide Elijah for his despondency. Don't assume that spiritual dryness is a spiritual problem. Fatigue, chemical imbalance, or illness can impair your judgment.

8. Am I praying for God's blessing on my life and enlisting the prayers of others? Ask God to make His presence real to you. His Word is rich and alive, and His ways clear. Ask God to give you a responsive heart. Ask others to pray that God would sustain you and draw you into the warmth of His presence again.

9. What person or group might stimulate my life in Christ? Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work...A cord of three strands is not easily broken."* The life of Christ must express itself in us both individually and corporately. Sometimes even a brief encounter with someone who is alive in Christ can fan a diminished flame.

10. Have I asked what God is trying to teach me? Have you considered that nothing may be wrong, but that everything may be right? God led Jesus into the desert for forty days of testing. Moses spent forty years in desert obscurity as part of God's training program. Etc. When we find ourselves in the arid land, let us look to Him with confidence to show us if our need is to confess and forsake some sin, to rethink our motivations, to recover something of first love, or to merely relax in the assurance that even in this disconcerting dryness is part of His hand or training and blessing.