



How Can I Connect with God *When He Feels Distant?*

When You Are Suffering and God Feels Distant

But when life falls apart, I find it almost impossible to rejoice. Or draw near to God. Instead, I wonder why God is allowing yet another trial into my life. I even doubt God's love for me.

I'm tempted to distance myself from God and hold him at arms-length. Otherwise, I wouldn't know what to say.

Then I realized that Scripture never mandates that we constantly be upbeat. **God wants us to come to Him in truth. And so the Bible doesn't whitewash the raw emotions of its writers who often cry out to God in anguish, fear and frustration when life ceases to make sense.** People like Jeremiah and Job, like Habakkuk and David have all poured out their honest feelings of sadness and disappointment to God.

Jeremiah protests to God,

"Why is my pain unceasing, and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?"

JER 15: 18

Job complains,

"I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul... then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that I would choose strangling and death rather than my bones. I loathe my life."

JOB 7:11, 14-16

Habakkuk mourns,

"Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you, 'violence!' And you will not save?"

HAB 1:2

David **laments** throughout the Psalms, modelling authenticity with God. In Psalm 13:1-2 he **cries**,

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I can take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?”

From Psalm 22:1-2,

“My God my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night but I find no rest.”

The Bible is shockingly honest.

And because of that, I can be honest as well. I can both complain and cry, knowing that God can handle anything I say. The Lord wants me to talk to Him, pour out my heart and my thoughts unedited because He knows them already.

This conversation is different than grumbling about Him as the children of Israel did to Moses and to each other. I am talking directly to Him. Telling Him my doubts. Asking Him to help me see.

These saints I quoted all talked directly to God, which was the first step to healing. They named their disappointments and voiced their struggles before Him. They needed to know that God understood them. And that they could be truthful with Him. With no pretense or platitudes. Just raw honesty, acknowledging their pain before God.

*This process was essential to navigate their grief.
And it is for me as well.*

When I don't acknowledge my pain, my lips may say one thing but my heart says another. I start to wall off my heart so I can conjure up joy. But those walls make me numb to real emotion, unable to experience either pleasure or pain. My life flat lines as I start existing without really living.

Part of really living is being willing to face sadness.

Not wallowing in my pain, refusing to be comforted, but honestly and openly telling God where I am and asking Him to show me truth. Letting Him, the God of all comfort, comfort me. Letting Him, the God of hope, fill me with hope. And letting Him, the man of sorrows acquainted with grief, bear my sorrows for me.

Pouring out my heart to God changes me.

Like my biblical companions, David, Habakkuk, Job and Jeremiah, I can experience true joy only after I have acknowledged my sorrow. And when I do, I find myself in a deeper place with the Lord, who helps me reframe my disappointments and pain.

David ultimately says in those very Psalms,

*“I will sing to the Lord because
He has dealt bountifully with me”*

PS 13:6

*“The afflicted shall eat and be
satisfied; those who seek him
shall praise the Lord!”*

PS 22:26

Job admits after his encounter with God,

*“I know that you can do all
things, and that no purpose of
yours can be thwarted.”*

JOB 42:2

Habakkuk acknowledges that his hope is in God alone as he declares,

*“Though the fig tree should
not blossom nor fruit be on
the trees... yet I will rejoice
in the Lord; I will take joy
in the God of my salvation.”*

HAB 3: 17, 18

And Jeremiah sees that trusting our unfailing God changes us as he affirms,

*“Blessed is the man who
trusts in the Lord, whose
trust is the Lord.”*

JER 17:7

The truth that emerges from our lips after we lament with the Lord is God-infused. We learn to trust God even when we cannot understand our heartaches.

I have seen this demonstrated in my own life again and again. It is most evident in my journals, where I unashamedly express my deepest feelings to God. The joyful praises with prayers of thanksgiving. The bitter disappointments mixed with anger and doubt. I have asked God why He doesn't love me and I have heard Him whisper through Scripture that He has loved me with an everlasting love.

As I write and pray, I sense His movement in my life. He comforts me. He fills me with hope. He bears my sorrows. He draws near to me.

**It's okay to lament. It's biblical.
And when I have the courage to do
so, I encounter the Lord Himself.**