

**WALKING WITH
GOD WHEN
HE SEEMS
ABSENT.**

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God is with us. This sounds like an easy phrase. If you ask any Christian, young and old what Emmanuel means, they will tell you that it means that God is with us. Yet this very concept of God being with us is one that most of us have struggled with at one point or another. There has probably been a moment in your life, or you may be going through it now, where the resounding question in your heart and mind is, “Where is God?”

Some of us do believe that there is a God, and that He is a present God. We believe He is with others; we believe He is with us as a collective, but we struggle to walk in the truth that He is with us personally. In high school we used to see large groups of girls who were friends hanging out together and doing things together. Most often than not, you would find that within those groups, there are individuals who were not close and could not spend time together alone. Some of us feel that way about God. We have a WhatsApp group with God as the admin and we are all part of it, but we aren't confident in the fact that we can have personal experiences with God Himself.

There is another group of us who believe that God is with us, but not in all aspects of our lives. God is there with me when I need provision, but He does

not seem interested in the abusive relationship I am in or my mental health or my dysfunctional family.

I want to get personal with this concept and look at our journey on earth with God's presence in our lives. I believe that God can and does speak to the church corporately, but for now He wants to speak to you as an individual. He will reach you at your place of need as you read this.

Let us start by establishing the fact that God is with you always. That is the truth. God created man to fellowship with man and even after man sinned, He had a way of reconciling man with Himself. When Jesus left the earth, the Holy Spirit, who is God, came down to dwell in those who believe. That is how serious God is about Him walking with you. He says in His Word that He will never leave you nor forsake you, He says I will be with you in the fire and in the waters. He says do not be afraid because I am with you. He is with us. He does not lie.

There are various reasons as to why we may feel that God is not there with us, but we will not go deep into them. It could be the fact that we are growing up spiritually and God is allowing us to be strengthened through some challenges or it could be sin in our lives. It can be many things. What I want to establish now is that even if it seems like He is not there, we need to believe that He is and we need to learn to

walk with God even in those times and we will learn how to walk with God when it seems like He is not there.

Our minds need to be renewed by the Word of God to address some of the challenges we face in our personal walk with God. God will help us to walk in the confidence that He is with us, regardless of what we feel, see or are going through.

What you know and what you believe about God influences how you react to things.

If you are travelling with a friend who is a mechanic, and your car breaks down but you are not aware that your friend is a mechanic, your first response will not be ask your friend to check what could be wrong with the car; instead you might want to call a tow truck while you are sitting with someone who can fix a car. What you knew or did not know about the person you are with, influenced how you reacted to that situation. What you know about a person, is dependent on the relationship you have with them. We will talk about relationship later but for now I want us to focus on the fact that our acknowledgement of the presence of God in our lives influences how we walk with Him, and how we in turn journey through life.

Let us look at a battle that was taking place in Sokor between the Israelites and the Philistines. This is found in 1 Samuel 17. The Bible says that Goliath stood before the Israelites every day for forty days and hurled insults at them, challenging them to come and fight him. In every one of those days, the Israelites, including their King, Saul, ran for their lives. They were terrified. One day, David, a young boy, came to check on his brothers and heard what Goliath was saying. Goliath did not change his speech on the day David came around, he said the very same thing he had been saying for 40 days and yet David reacted differently compared to the rest of the Israelite army. Two groups of people, who had God amongst them, react differently. God was with Israel just as He was with David, yet the army could not face Goliath. The problem is that Goliath did not want to face them as a WhatsApp group, Goliath asked for ONE man. They believed God was with Israel, but they were not convinced of His presence in their personal lives and that is why none of them were confident enough to face Goliath. David walked with God alone and He saw his hand in the field where there was only him and God. He tells Saul that the Lord will deliver me. His confidence was in the presence of God in his life.

When he goes to Saul, Saul tells him, “May God be with you.” This shows that Saul had the confidence

that the presence of God in one's life is the victory they need, but he did not believe it for himself.

When David faces Goliath, he says to him that he comes with a sword and a spear but he, David, comes in the Name of the Lord, the God of the armies of Israel. He also says that he will defeat Goliath that it may be known that there is a God in Israel. The presence of God in our lives is a sure thing. What you know and believe about God will carry you through the seasons wherein you do not feel His presence.

It does not matter what you are going through in life or where you are in life - what matters is that God is with you.

Let us go to Canaan in the Bible where the Bible documents the life of a young man called Joseph. Not only did Joseph have a dream, but he was able to interpret it and that got him into a lot of trouble with his brothers. He is thrown into a pit, then listens out as his life is being discussed in front of him by the same people God said he is going to lord over. He is then sold as a slave in Potiphar's household in Egypt. The Bible repeats this phrase three time in Genesis 39 – God was with Joseph.

For thirteen years Joseph lived a life that was the exact opposite to what God had promised him. He

was a slave then a prisoner. I believe that he was aware of God's presence in his life that is why when Potiphar's wife made advances on him, he said that he will not sin against God. His reason for not sinning was not because he was afraid of what Potiphar might do to him. He was in a country that did not worship God, but he knew that His God was with him. He was thrown in prison, and even there he served with his gift. He did not say to the men who needed their dreams to be interpreted, "I also had a dream and look at me now." He did not hold back. He knew that God was with him and the bible says he prospered as a slave and in prison. Had Joseph not faithfully served those prisoners in jail, he would not have been remembered when the time of his came.

Some of us feel stuck and lost in our careers, ministries, marriages etc. and we know that God has promised us something better, however, it seems as though we are living further away from what God promised. We feel that God has forgotten us. We are waiting for that perfect that when His promises manifest into something tangible in our lives in order to believe that He is indeed with us. God is with us even in those times. He may have not told us what we will go through between the time He made a promise to us and the time we see things happening, but He promised to never leave us.

Many times – when we say God is not with us, we are actually saying we do not see His actions in our lives. Jesus gets into a boat with his disciples. A storm rises and Jesus is asleep. He was in the boat, but he was not doing anything. The disciples asked him if he did not care about them simply because he was not doing anything. I mean, these guys walked with Jesus every day. Many of us today read about the disciples and think we could do better than them, yet we do not think that we may be worse. We walk with the Holy Spirit every day, yet we can go the whole day without talking to Him, because we think He is not with us simply because we do not see Him.

The children of Israel in Jeremiah 29 were not false prophets started to fabricate utterances claiming it was God. God was with them. He had spoken that He will deliver them after an appointed time. He had good plans for them. He told them to flourish in that time. It did not matter where they were, God wanted them to flourish because of His presence in their lives.

It will not always be easy – but we should always know that God is right by our side.

With everything that has been said before, you might feel like this message is saying that you will always be confident, you will always want to flourish and you will always be pumped up even though things are not

going well and it seems like God is far away from you. No, it will not always be easy to walk with God even though He feels absent.

The same David who faced Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, came back into Ziklag with his men in chapter 30 to find it burnt down with their wives and children gone. He was not facing Goliath – he was facing pain, he was facing loss, he was facing defeat. We will not always win the battles even though we are victorious in Christ, but we will win the war. The Bible says they wept until they had no more strength in them to weep. On top of that, the men wanted to stone David as if they didn't capture his family as well.

David did not rise and say, “pain I come to you in the name of the God.” He wept! At times you go through things that hit you so bad you. In 2018 when our baby girl passed on during delivery after I was in labour for about 28 hours, the pain that hit my soul is one that I would not wish on anyone. Some of us have lost our spouses, parents, the businesses we have worked hard for and have experienced pain and it was not because you were not prayerful or were living in sin- no. In fact, I remember the day I went into labour, on my way to the hospital I felt a great urge to pray in the spirit and I was playing a song that spoke about God's hand being upon us. But it still happened.

The Bible tells us that David, strengthened himself in the Lord. Even though he went through pain, he still knew that God was with him and he strengthened himself in Him. He knew that God is close to the broken hearted. Like Jeremiah, he must have cried, "Heal me, and I will be healed." He knew God and walked with God. He had the confidence that God cares. Because of God presence in our lives, we do not mourn as those who do not know God, as those without hope. GOD IS OUR ADVANTAGE

It all starts with a relationship – know and believe Him.

Most of the examples that I gave are of people who lived in the Old Testament. There are many others: Moses said, "We will not go if Your presence is not with us.", Enock walked with God, etc. We are living in a dispensation that is different and better to theirs and the Bible says their lives were documented as examples for us. There is grace to help each and everyone one of us to walk with God. Just as there was grace available for you to be born again, there is grace to help you in your walk with God.

We must be intentional. All these people who walked with God and were confident about His presence in their lives had a relationship with God and had faith in God. Hebrews 11 says that it is impossible to please God without faith because those who come

to Him should believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

You need to believe. But what do you believe? You believe what you know. Paul says, “Oh that I may know Him...” How do you know? By seeking. Most of us see other people walking with God and see the finger of God upon their lives and desire that, but we aren’t willing to seek GOD. We need to put the effort into it. Someone might ask, “but don’t we receive salvation by grace?” Yes, we have received salvation by grace, but no one gets intimate with another by osmosis. God will reward you with Himself when you seek Him. You will also get to learn His character and it will help you to know that even when you do not feel or see Him in your life, that He is with you.

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