



Let's Go Higher DEVOTIONALS

SERMON: "RECKONING OF MY FAITH"

MINISTER ANTONIO BARKLEY

Day 1: When God Feels Distant

Devotional: Have you ever felt like you're swimming in the ocean of life, only to look up and realize the shore seems impossibly far away? Many of us have experienced seasons where God feels distant, where our prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling, and our faith feels inadequate for the storms we're facing. This spiritual drifting doesn't happen overnight. It's gradual, like a swimmer who gets caught in an undercurrent without realizing it. Maybe your prayer time has become sporadic, or you've been too busy to open your Bible. Perhaps worldly concerns have slowly taken priority over spiritual ones. Before you know it, you're feeling spiritually adrift. But here's the beautiful truth: feeling God's absence doesn't mean He has actually abandoned you. Sometimes, when we can't sense His presence, it's because He's preparing us for something greater. Job understood this deeply when he searched for God in every direction but couldn't find Him. Yet Job held onto a powerful conviction—that God knew his path and was refining him like precious gold. Your current season of feeling distant from God isn't a sign of His displeasure or abandonment. It might be the very place where He's doing His most important work in your life. Even when you can't trace His hand, He's orchestrating every moment, every breath, every step you take.

Bible Verse: 'Though I go to the east, I do not find him; though I go to the west, I do not perceive him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.' - Job 23:8-10

Reflection Question: What areas of your spiritual life have you allowed to drift, and how might God be using this season of feeling distant to draw you closer to Him?

Prayer: Lord, even when I can't feel Your presence, help me trust that You are still at work in my life. Give me the faith to believe that You know my path and are refining me for Your purposes. Draw me back to the shore of Your love. Amen.



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Day 2: Refined in the Furnace

Devotional: Gold doesn't become precious without fire. The most beautiful jewelry starts as raw ore, hidden in rock, requiring intense heat to separate the valuable from the worthless. In the same way, God uses the furnaces of our lives not to destroy us, but to refine us. When we're in the middle of difficult circumstances—whether it's a health crisis, relationship struggles, financial pressure, or emotional pain—it's natural to wonder why God would allow such heat in our lives. We might even question if we've done something wrong to deserve this trial. But what if these very circumstances are God's refining process? Isaiah reminds us that God has chosen us in the furnace of affliction. Notice it doesn't say He chose us before the furnace or after the furnace, but in it. This means our trials aren't accidents or punishments—they're appointments. God is using everything that has afflicted you for His glory and your good. The refining process isn't comfortable, but it's necessary. Just as a goldsmith knows exactly how much heat to apply and for how long, God knows precisely what you need and how much you can handle. He's not trying to break you; He's trying to make you into something beautiful and valuable. Sometimes overcoming doesn't mean you're out of the furnace. Sometimes overcoming means that even while you're in the furnace, you still trust God.

Bible Verse: 'See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.' - Isaiah 48:10

Reflection Question: How has God used past difficulties to refine and strengthen your character, and what might He be developing in you through your current challenges?

Prayer: Father, help me see my trials as Your refining fire rather than punishment. Give me strength to trust You in the furnace and faith to believe You're making me into something beautiful. May I emerge as gold. Amen.



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Day 3: The Discipline of Discipleship

Devotional: Athletes don't become champions by accident. They follow rigorous training schedules, maintain strict diets, and practice their skills daily. Their success comes from discipline—consistent, intentional actions that build strength and skill over time. The same principle applies to our spiritual lives. The word 'disciple' comes from the root word 'discipline.' This isn't about legalistic rule-following, but about developing spiritual practices that keep us connected to God and growing in faith. Just as physical muscles atrophy without exercise, our spiritual muscles weaken without regular use. Spiritual disciplines include quality prayer time, regular Scripture study, being careful about what we focus our minds on, and making intentional choices about our companions. These aren't burdensome requirements but life-giving practices that anchor us when storms come. When we neglect these disciplines, we become vulnerable to spiritual drifting. We lose our spiritual strength and find ourselves unprepared for life's challenges. But when we maintain these practices consistently, we build spiritual resilience that helps us stand firm when the world tries to push us around. Think of spiritual disciplines as your spiritual immune system. Just as a healthy immune system protects your body from disease, healthy spiritual practices protect your soul from discouragement, doubt, and despair. They keep you grounded in God's truth and connected to His presence. The goal isn't perfection but consistency. Small, daily choices to seek God add up to significant spiritual strength over time.

Bible Verse: 'These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.' - 1 Peter 1:7

Reflection Question: Which spiritual disciplines do you need to strengthen or reestablish in your life to prevent spiritual drifting and build resilience for future challenges?

Prayer: Lord, help me develop consistent spiritual disciplines that will keep me anchored in You. Give me the motivation to prioritize prayer, Scripture, and other practices that strengthen my faith. Make me a disciplined disciple. Amen.



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Day 4: Spiritual Intensive Care

Devotional: Sometimes our faith experiences trauma that requires intensive care. Just as a patient in the ICU needs constant monitoring, life support, and specialized treatment, there are seasons when our spiritual lives need extra attention and care to survive. Maybe you've been through a devastating loss, a betrayal that shook your trust, or a series of disappointments that left your faith hanging by a thread. Perhaps you're in that intensive care unit right now, wondering if your faith will make it through this crisis. Here's what's beautiful about spiritual intensive care: God becomes your constant monitor. He watches over every breath, every heartbeat of your faith. He provides exactly what you need to keep going, even when you feel too weak to pray or too hurt to hope. His presence becomes your life support system. The recovery process isn't quick or easy. There are setbacks, moments when you wonder if you'll ever feel whole again. But something remarkable happens to those who emerge from spiritual intensive care—they discover they can praise harder and worship deeper than ever before. Their experience with God's faithfulness in their darkest hour gives them a testimony that can't be shaken. You can't have a testimony without a test. Your current struggle isn't the end of your story; it's preparing you for a testimony that will encourage others who face similar battles. God is using this intensive care season to develop in you a faith that's unshakeable and a praise that's unstoppable.

Bible Verse: 'Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.' - James 1:12

Reflection Question: How has God shown His faithfulness during your most difficult seasons, and how can you use that experience to encourage others who are currently in their own spiritual intensive care?

Prayer: God, thank You for being my constant monitor during seasons of spiritual intensive care. Help me trust Your healing process and emerge with a stronger faith and deeper praise. Use my testimony to encourage others. Amen.



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Day 5: Don't Go Down

Devotional: Life has a way of throwing punches that can knock the wind out of us. Sometimes the blows come one after another—financial setbacks, health scares, relationship problems, career disappointments. In those moments, everything in us wants to give up, to go down, to wave the white flag of surrender. But God has a different message for you today: Don't go down. No matter what the blow is, no matter how fierce the attack, you have the power through Christ to remain standing. This isn't about denying the pain or pretending everything is fine. It's about choosing to praise God even when your circumstances suggest you should despair. Here's a powerful truth: if you're complaining more about your situation than you're praising God, you're giving more victory to what you're going through than to the One who can bring you through. Praise shifts the atmosphere around you and the attitude within you. It's impossible to be depressed when your praise fills the air. When you begin to praise, God begins to pay attention to your situation, and your mind begins to shift from your problems to God's glory. Praise doesn't change your circumstances immediately, but it changes you in the midst of your circumstances. It reminds you that your current chapter isn't your final chapter. Your momentary troubles are achieving for you an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. Every breath you breathe, God is orchestrating. Every step you take, He has allowed. Even when you can't understand His plan, you can trust His heart. So don't go down—stand up, speak up, and praise up.

Bible Verse: 'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.' - 2 Corinthians 4:17

Reflection Question: In what areas of your life do you need to shift from complaining to praising, and how might this change in perspective transform your experience of current challenges?

Prayer: Lord, help me choose praise over complaint, hope over despair. When life tries to knock me down, give me strength to stand firm in You. Let my praise shift the atmosphere and my perspective. I won't go down. Amen.