

“I Want to Believe but...Goosebump God”

Psalm 88:13-14

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This is the last of our sermon series on “I Want to Believe, but...” Notes and ideas used with permission from Pastor Craig Groeschel and life.church.

I want to believe God, but...I don't feel Him. Why Lord do you reject me? Why do you hide your face from me? How do we believe in a God we don't audibly hear and we don't feel?

Have you ever been with someone reading the Bible and you don't understand it? They read the same passage and wow---they say this is powerful...they get goosebumps. Now I'm not talking about the children's books series Goosebumps, but that feeling where something so moves you your hair on your arm kinds of stands on end (**image**). Oooh----goosebumps.

Ever heard someone pray and sounds as if they are just having a holy conversation with God and then when you pray—crickets...nothing.

You may be asking “Why do others feel God and I don't?” Why are others getting goosebumps and I'm not?

Ever been in worship and singing and see people with eyes closed in adoration of experiencing God, some even have hands raised, and can tell they are spiritually moved. You hear the same song...nuthin... no goosebumps for you! Why? Where is God? Why do others feel God sometimes and you don't?

No matter what worship service you attend all these could be applied. By the way in 2017 on November 5, that is 11-05 at 11:05 we began a third worship service. This was done after much prayer, working with a team, and receiving feedback. Thank you for your willingness in this last year to be supportive as the times of service were tweaked a little bit. We tried to make sure that music heart language was spoken as we remember that worship is about God not us! Well, today is the 1-year anniversary of the 11:05 Modern Worship Experience. I wish someone would ask me, “How's it going?” XXXX We have received new members during this service had baptisms, and since we began a year ago we are averaging 147 people in worship a Sunday!!! Special thanks to Mark Deen, our Worship and Arts team and especially Mr. Chris. Mr. Chris Steurnagel who leads worship and the praise team at the 11:05. May we continue in all of our services to be intergenerational and strive to reach more and more people for Jesus. Amen??? XXXXX

If I were to ask you to raise your hand if you have ever felt God's presence my guess is many would raise their hands. However, if you have not felt his presence at certain times does that mean that He is not there? Or can you know God is there without the “goosebumps.”

Now I know that Sarah loves me. I know that she's there for me. We have a strange and wonderful relationship. I'm strange and she's wonderful. We have celebrated 36 years of marriage.

There are times when I see her...I pause and say to myself and even perhaps to others... "That's my wife! I'm proud of her. I'm hers and she's mine." And I kind of get goosebumps if you will.

And...then there are other times...not so much. Oh, it doesn't mean she's not there for me, doesn't mean I don't love her---in fact there is a calm assurance in knowing that she is simply there in my presence. I don't have to 'feel' married. I *know* I'm married and she is the love of my life---even when there are no goosebumps. (I hope that communicated well, if not I need to get flowers and have dinner out!)

Now if you don't always feel goosebumps and God's presence you are not alone. David said, **"Psalm 88:13-14 New International Version (NIV) <sup>13</sup> But I cry to you for help, LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you. <sup>14</sup> Why, LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?"**

Oh God, I want to hear from you, yet you are silent. It is as if my prayers are going only as high as the ceiling. It seems like a wall is blocking me from you. I need your presence. I don't feel you.

And yet that same David who made these statements in Psalm 88 also wrote one of the most powerful passages of scripture in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

**Psalm 23:4 New International Version (NIV)<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the darkest valley (*the valley of the shadow of death*) I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

In that darkest valley...the valley of the shadow of death David reminds us of the fact that **YOU ARE WITH ME.**

Today on this All Saints Day we have remembered 43 PHUMC members that have gone to be with the Lord from October of last year through September of this year. Many others that we have known, even family members or also not physically present with us this year.

In many of those services the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm was read. In times of sorrow, grief, pain and hurt we are reminded that God is with you. However, in your loved ones passing there may have been times during their illness or the suddenness of their death where you too felt like David in his verses in Psalm 88 that God was hiding His face from you. And yet some would say, "I don't know how I could have made it through without knowing that God was there with me. I felt His presence."

Some may have even asked, "God, where are you?" You are in good company. I want to remind you that when Jesus was on the cross and in His pain and suffering He felt alone. In fact, He cried out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Where are you?" Yes, Jesus in His humanity has felt the emotions that God was not listening and Jesus too felt alone.

Sometimes I think we over sensationalize. We want God to give us the BIG miracle. To really show Himself. We want to hear that audible voice. We want a clear sign from Him.

In High School I was beginning to sense a call from God into full time ministry. I had dear ladies, chronologically gifted ladies if you know what I mean...who would pinch my face and say, "David, you ought to go into the ministry." By the way this was back in the '70's when some ladies at the Beauty Shop used a blue rinse...and well, it turned their hair blue. Anybody remember the Blue Haired ladies (from the 1930's through mid '70's.) So, I was in high school and had chronologically gifted blue haired ladies pinching the cheeks of my face. Scary. I said, "God just show me a sign. Write a sign in the sky that you have called me to full time ministry." Well, God didn't do it that way.

More about that next week. Next week we begin a 3-week sermon series entitled "Called." **(image)** Called to Live Lives of Meaning and Purpose. Called By God. Called To---to follow God. Called As---called as we are. We will be discovering no matter your age or situation or circumstance. Retired or not...all are called. After that sermon series---it's Advent.... It's Christmas time. I LOVE Christmas!!!!

C.S. Lewis died in 1963. He was best known for the Children's series Chronicles of Narnia **(image)**. Aslan and children Lucy, Edmond, Susan and Peter. Highly recommend these books that is a wonderful analogy of Jesus and Christianity. There were even some movies of Narnia. Lewis wrote the Chronicles of Narnia in the 1950's. Around the same time, he wrote a classic called Mere Christianity. But I want us to think beyond Chronicles of Narnia about this great Christian author C. S. Lewis **(image)**.

Lewis struggled profoundly with despair after the death of his wife, Helen Joy, in 1960, after only three years of marriage. In 1961 he wrote the book, A Grief Observed. In that he says this and I quote: "... Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be — or so it feels — welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once. And that seeming was as strong as this. What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?"

Wow. Where is God? God doesn't always reveal Himself audibly or with a sigh or with goosebumps.

**(image) If you always felt the presence of God you wouldn't need faith.**

And yet we want to over sentimentalize it. We want major goosebumps to know that God is there. However, sometimes it is just a quiet assurance where you know God loves you. And you know God is there.

**2 Corinthians 5:7 New King James Version (NKJV) <sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight.**

Oh, sometimes as we walk by faith there are no goosebumps. Sometimes no signs. Sometimes there is just silence.

**(image) Just because God is silent doesn't mean God is absent.**

Beloved, He is always with you. In good times and bad. In pain and grief. You may be lonely, but you are never really alone.

**Deuteronomy 31:8 New International Version (NIV)<sup>8</sup> The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."**

Oh, to have reminders of that. Friends I want to suggest we have reminders every day that God is with us. **(Image of sunrise/sunset)** Someone has said that every sunrise is a message of God and every sunset His signature. Oh, to be reminded at sunset that the God who created the sun and put in place is with us at the end of the day and at sunrise to realize a new day and to realize that yes...God is with us in this day...no matter what the day holds.

We must be careful about trusting feelings. Know the fact that God will never...NEVER...leave you.

Some may remember Bill Bright and Campus Crusade with Christ. His little pamphlet 4 Spiritual Laws became a landmark in sharing the good news.

1. God loves you.
2. All have sinned.
3. Christ died for you.
4. Place your faith in Jesus. Receive Him as your savior.

I remembered at the end of that little pamphlet was a picture of a train. **(image)** A train of Fact, Faith and Feeling. Fact is the engine. Feeling is the caboose. Faith centers the fact and feelings. Bright says, "The train will run with or without the caboose. You can't pull the train by the caboose. We can't depend simply and only on feelings or emotions. Place your faith in God and the fact of what His word says."

What does His word say....

It is a fact that God is crazy about you.

It is a fact that He sent His son to die for you.

It is a fact that whoever, whoever believes in Him shall be saved and live eternally.

It is a fact that you can be saved, forgiven, transformed, and new.

It is a fact that He sent the Holy Spirit to be with you comfort you and guide you.

It is a fact that God will never ever leave you

It in His word...it is fact.