

July 1, 2018

When God Seems Distant

**READ:** Romans 8:38a (Common English Bible)

*“I’m convinced that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

**REFLECT:**

Tommy Lasorda, former manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, tells about an experience he had in church. One Sunday he was in Cincinnati for a ball game against the Reds. That morning he went to early morning Mass and happened to see the Red’s manger there. They were old friends and sat beside each other during Mass. Afterward, the Red’s manager said, “Tommy, I’ll see you at the ballpark. I’m going to hang around a little.” Lasorda said that when he reached the door, he glanced back over his shoulder. He noticed that his friend was praying at the altar and lighting a candle. He said, “I thought about that for a few moments. Then, since we needed a win very badly, I doubled back and blew out his candle.”<sup>i</sup> Though misguided, what a powerful demonstration of faith in God’s presence and activity!

Countless people today long for that deep confidence in God’s presence and activity in their lives. God seems distant to them. They plod through each day, fearful, anxious, and burdened with uncertainty. Some may remember once having a close relationship with God but that was a long time ago. Prayers seem to never rise higher than the ceiling – and that is when we even feel like praying! The good news is that this is not an uncommon experience in the Christian faith. Just as people can grow apart in relationships with one another, so we can drift away from God. As Thomas Tewell once said to me, the difference is that in human relationships, both parties contribute to the distance. But, in a relationship with God, the reality is that we drift away from God. God never drifts away from us.

In those moments when God seems distant, what are we to do? Perhaps an experience I had this past week will help. My daughter, Rachael, is in Norway – a studio photographer for the Holland America Cruise Lines. It’s not uncommon for Rachael to work twelve and fourteen hour days. Wi-Fi is limited and with her long hours it is difficult to “connect” with her by telephone or by other means in real time. Just this week, Rachael reached-out to me via Facebook Messenger. She said that for a limited time she was available to receive a phone call from me and that she really would like me to call. Immediately, I moved something that was already on my calendar to another time and placed the call. Do you see what happened? Suddenly, my greatest desire was to speak with my daughter. To do so, I had to make the time.

We reconnect with God the same way. We move beyond our desire to be close with God and carve-out time from our busy lives to simply be still in God’s presence. We open the Bible and read expectantly, asking God to speak powerfully through the words that we read on the page. We learn from our reading more about God, about God’s good desires for us, and we learn what God requires of us. We spend time together with God. And we listen; we listen deeply in the silence following our reading to the hunches, the promptings, and the direction we sense from God. As we respond positively, the distance we once felt from God begins to close.

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<sup>i</sup> William R. Bouknight, *The Authoritative Word: Preaching Truth In A Skeptical Age*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001) 30.

