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1. How many of you can admit that you need to return to God?

RETURNING TO GOD

Christians can experience times when they lose their intimacy with God. Even the most zealous Christians can find that their love for God has cooled if they are not careful. The drift away from the Lord can be so subtle that you fail to recognize the loss until it has become severe.

2. How do you know whether you are in right relationship with God or you have departed?

- The Scriptures describe some ways you can know whether you are in a right relationship with the Lord or if you have departed.

3. The Scriptures below are some evidence that you have departed from the intimacy of your fellowship with God. Read the Scriptures then write the Scripture reference beside the corresponding evidence listed below. Some may have more than one reference.

(John 15:10–11) If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

(Deuteronomy 28:25) The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth.

(Deuteronomy 30:17) But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them,

(Amos 8:11–12) The days are coming," declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. ¹² People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.

(John 15:4–5) Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

_____ a. You no longer hear from God.

_____ b. You lose your joy.

_____ c. You do not produce spiritual fruit.

_____ d. You no longer have victory in your life.

4. Using these evidence of lost intimacy with the Lord, what can you conclude about your closeness to the Lord today?

- ☐ a. I may have begun to drift away.
- ☐ b. Thank the Lord, my closeness to God is growing deeper.
- ☐ c. I'm farther away than I thought.
- ☐ d. Other:

5. How does this loss of intimacy happen? Three parables of Jesus in Luke 15 illustrate how. In one parable a sheep is lost ([vv. 3-7](#)). Sheep typically get lost from the shepherd when they turn aside to distractions. In the second parable a valuable coin is lost ([vv. 8-10](#)). Valuables are lost through carelessness. No one means to lose something precious. But by not taking precautions, we can misplace even the most valuable possessions. In the third parable a son is lost ([vv. 11-32](#)). In this story the prodigal son deliberately chose to leave to indulge in a wasteful lifestyle that dishonored his father.

6. Match the way the loss occurred on the right with the parable on the left. Write a letter beside each number.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ___ 1. Lost sheep | a. Turning aside to distractions. |
| ___ 2. Lost coin | b. Intentional choice |
| ___ 3. Lost son | c. God's will is best. |

- In similar ways, you can lose your intimate fellowship with God. Like a sheep (a), you can focus on the world and the things of the world, on pleasures and activities, or on other people and relationships. You lose your focus on the Lord, and before long you drift far away. Like the carelessness that lost a valuable coin (c), you may fail to guard your heart and mind. When temptations come, your ability to resist is weak. Then sin robs you of your

intimacy by breaking fellowship with your Lord. Or like the prodigal son (b), you may intentionally resist the father's will through disobedience and the pursuit of sinful behaviors and activities.

- Whenever you depart from God to any degree, He disciplines you in increasing measure until you return to Him. God loves you as His child and, as your heavenly Father, will correct you until you turn from your rebellion (**Heb. 12:5-11**). He will continue to bring discipline until it reaches a point of crisis at which you must make a serious choice. You cry out to God in your distress.
- Scripture promises that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (**1 John 1:9**). You confess your sin when you agree with God about the awful nature of your wrong. Confession and repentance go together. When you repent, you turn away from your sin and return to God. When your fellowship with God is broken because of sin, agree with Him about your condition and turn from it. Return to God, and He will forgive you and reestablish your fellowship with Him. This responding to God's discipline that results in restoration of life and vitality with the Lord is called revival. Another important Scripture that describes revival is (**2 Chronicles 7:13-14**).

7. Read (**2 Chronicles 7:13-14**).

(**2 Chronicles 7:13–14**) “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

8. When God brings judgment on His people, what four things should they do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

9. What three things does God promise to do when His people return to Him? Underline them in the text.

God's remedy for restored fellowship with Him involves humility, prayer, seeking His face (seeking the experience of His presence), and repentance (turning from sin). He promises to hear, forgive sin, and heal the land. When we return to God (and not merely to religious activity), He returns to us in a fresh, close relationship and begins once again to fulfill His purposes for us (**Zech. 1:3; 2 Chron. 15:2**). Revival means the life of God returns to our soul. This can happen to an individual, a church, a denomination, or a nation.

(ZECHARIAH 1:3) “ ‘Return to me’—this is the declaration of the Lord of Armies—and I will return to you,’ says the Lord of Armies.”

(2 CHRONICLES 15:2) The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you.”

- If you find that your heart is not as enthusiastic and devoted to God as it once was, take a moment and pray. Confess your sin and return to Him now so you can experience His presence returning to your life. If you have not departed from God, pray about your commitment to remain steadfast and true to Him.
- Confessing and returning to the Lord are good, but prevention is even better. Scripture gives much helpful counsel for keeping your heart from departing from the Lord.

10. As you read the following counsel, underline a key word or phrase in each that will help you properly focus on your intimacy with God.

1. **(Proverbs 4:23)** cautions, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” . Guard your heart. Our hearts are desperately wicked and, if left unchecked and unguarded, will be quickly drawn away from God **(Jer. 17:9)**. Be careful what you allow into your mind and your heart!

(JEREMIAH 17:9) “The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable.”

2. **(Proverbs 11:14)** advises, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety”. Surround yourself with godly counselors who will encourage you and warn you if they see your heart beginning to shift.

3. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” **(Matt. 22:37)**. Make every effort to love God with all your being. Loving God is a choice you make. Keep your heart, mind, and soul in a constant posture of love for God.

4. Jesus also said, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock” **(Matt. 7:24)**. Adopt a lifestyle of obedience. Make it your habit to immediately obey anything God says. Obedience brings you into fresh experiences of God working in and through you. Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” **(John 14:23)**.

You may have identified other words, but here are my summaries: (1) guard your heart, (2) godly counselors, (3) love God, and (4) obey or obedience.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Return to God, and He will forgive you and reestablish your fellowship with Him.

- Revival means the life of God returns to our soul.
- Confessing and returning to the Lord are good, but prevention is even better.