

Big Idea: Distance from God is a feeling, not a fact.

Primary Scripture: Psalm 139:7-12

Supporting Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:6; James 4:8

CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

- Imagine that you're on your phone doing something. A FaceTime call, streaming a show, scrolling through videos.
 - Then, the signal just... drops. No warning.
- And here's the thing... you don't always know where the problem is.
 - Is it your phone? Is it the network? Did something change on their end?
- All you know is that the connection you had a second ago is gone, and you're not sure how to get it back.
- Since phones, phone signal, and Wi-Fi are such a crucial part of our lives, most of us have had this kind of experience.
- But have you ever experienced a *signal drop* in your relationship with God?
 - Maybe you prayed about something that really mattered to you, and it felt like your words hit the ceiling and bounced back.
 - Maybe you used to feel close to God, like, really close, but now that feeling has faded, and you can't figure out what changed.
 - Maybe you're going through a season where you know God is real, but He just feels... distant. Like He's somewhere out there, but not right here.
- And the longer the silence goes, the easier it is to start wondering: Did I do something wrong? Is God ignoring me? Did He move on? Am I just not spiritual enough to feel what other people seem to feel?

[**Teacher note:** Use this opportunity to share about a time when God felt far away. If you don't have a personal example, feel free to use this story by prefacing it with, "I know someone who..."]

- I went through a season like this a few years ago.
 - I slowly stopped feeling connected to God. Church felt routine. Prayer felt like talking to the ceiling. Reading the Bible felt like reading a textbook instead of a letter from someone who loved me.

- I remember thinking, “Where did God go?”
- I eventually realized, and it changed everything: God hadn’t moved. He was still close. The connection was just harder for me to catch in that season.
- Last week, we kicked off our series called ***Ask Me Anything*** by asking the question, “Is God even real?”
 - We talked about how creation itself points to a Creator who wants to be known.
- This week, we’re taking it a step further. Because even if we believe God is real, there may be times when He doesn’t feel close.
 - The question becomes: *Why does God feel far away?* And more importantly, *what can we do about it?*

SCRIPTURE (What does God’s Word say?)

- Today’s passage comes from Psalm 139 and was written by David (the same David we looked at last week).
- In this psalm, David wrestles with the idea of God’s presence in a way that feels incredibly personal.
- David spent years running from a king who wanted to kill him.
- He experienced deep failure. He knew what it felt like to be in dark places.

⁷ I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! ⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. ⁹ If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. ¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night— ¹² but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you. (Psalm 139:7-12 – NLT)

- David goes through every extreme he can think of, and in every single scenario, his conclusion is the same: **God is there.**
- David knows that God’s presence doesn’t depend on *his* feelings.
- David has written other psalms about feeling far from God. He knows what that’s like.
- Here he’s recognizing God’s presence in every situation.
- This is a psalm about *reality versus feelings*.

- Feelings change all the time. You can feel totally confident about a friendship one day and completely insecure the next, without anything actually changing.
- David is reminding himself, and us, that God's closeness isn't something we have to earn or feel. It's something that already exists, whether we feel it or not.

INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)

1. God is always here, even if it doesn't feel like it.

- God doesn't show up one day and disappear the next. But we definitely do.
 - Our attention fades in and out. Our feelings shift. Our spiritual habits fall off.
 - God doesn't move.
- Think about it like the sun.
 - On a cloudy day, the sky is gray, everything feels darker, and if you didn't know better, you might think the sun had disappeared.
 - Is it gone? Of course not. It's still shining above the clouds, just as bright as ever.
 - You just can't see it because something is in the way.
- God's presence works the same way.
 - When He feels distant, it's not because He packed up and left.
 - It's often because something, busyness, distraction, sin, pain, anxiety, or just the constant noise of daily life, has clouded our ability to notice Him.
 - The distance we feel is real as a feeling, but it's not reality. God hasn't moved an inch.
- Have you ever been in a loud, crowded room and someone was trying to talk to you?
 - They might have been standing right next to you, but you couldn't hear a word they said because of all the noise.
 - That doesn't mean they weren't talking. It means the environment made it difficult to hear.
 - Sometimes the noise of our lives, our schedules, our stress, our screens, makes it really difficult to hear from God.
 - But He hasn't stopped speaking.

- That means the problem isn't that God has abandoned you. It means there's something we can do about it.
- We can't control whether God shows up, He's already there. But we can adjust our ability to notice Him.

2. God isn't afraid of the dark.

- Let's look again at what David writes in verses 11 and 12.

¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night— ¹² but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you. (Psalm 139:11-12 – NLT)

- David is saying that even the things we try to hide in, our shame, our confusion, our worst moments, the things we've never told anyone, none of it creates distance between us and God.
 - God sees through all of it.

¹⁰ Even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. (Psalm 139:10 – NLT)

- God's response to our darkness is showing up in the exact places where we think He'd never want to be.
- That means you can come to Him in the mess, in the doubt, in the confusion. He's already there waiting for you.

⁶ So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you. (Deuteronomy 31:6 – NLT)

- "He will neither fail you nor abandon you."
- That's not a suggestion. It's not a "hopefully." It's a promise that has held true for thousands of years.

3. Closeness with God is an invitation, not just a feeling.

- If God is always near but we don't always feel it, then closeness with God must be about more than just emotions.
 - It's about action, about intentionally turning toward God, even when He feels far away.

⁸ Come close to God, and God will come close to you. (James 4:8 – NLT)

- This is one of the most encouraging verses in the entire Bible because it tells us that closeness with God isn't reserved for super-spiritual people, for people who spend hours each day in prayer, or even for pastors.
- It's available to anyone who's willing to take a step... even a small one... even a shaky one.
- Even if you feel like you're doing it wrong, just one step toward God, and He promises to meet you there.
- You don't have to feel spiritual to take a step toward God. You just have to take the step.
- The feelings often follow the actions, not the other way around.

ACTION (How could we live this out?)

1. Start your day with an honest conversation with God.

- Before you check your phone, before you open social media, before you scroll through anything, say one honest thing to God.
 - It could be, "God, I'm tired." It could be, "I don't feel close to You right now, but I want to." It could be, "Thank You for today." It could even be, "I'm not sure what to say, but I'm here."
- That's it. One sentence. Every morning. For one week.
- You'd be amazed at how even that small step can shift your awareness of God's presence over time.

2. Identify what's blocking the signal.

- This week, take some time to think about what might be blocking your view of God.
 - Is it busyness, running from school to practice to homework to social media without a single quiet moment? Is it a habit you know isn't healthy? Is it spending so much time on your phone that you never have a moment of silence?
 - Maybe it's comparison, scrolling through other people's lives and feeling like you'll never measure up. Maybe it's guilt over something in your past that makes you feel disqualified from being close to God.

- Once you identify it, say to God, “I think this is getting in the way, and I need Your help.”
- That kind of honesty is exactly what James is talking about when he says to “come close to God.”

3. Memorize Psalm 139:7-10.

- Write verses 7 through 10 on a note card, screenshot them on your phone, or tape them to your bathroom mirror.
 - Read them every day this week.
- When the silence feels loud, and God feels distant, let David’s words remind you of what’s actually true: ***You can never escape God’s presence.***
- Distance from God is a feeling, not a fact. God hasn’t moved. He hasn’t left. And He’s not going to. The question isn’t whether God is close, it’s whether we’re willing to notice.