

What to Do When You Are in a Spiritually Dormant Season

Winter is a dormant season. It's a time when trees become bare and most of the grass, plants and flowers die off. But winter is also a time of preparation—as roots and tree saps respond to soil and temperature changes to prepare for growth that comes in the spring.

In much the same way, you and I go through spiritually dormant seasons. These are the seasons when God seems silent, when our dreams and visions for the future seem lifeless. But although we may not see or feel anything exciting, it doesn't mean nothing is happening. A lot has to happen on the inside of us before we are ready to handle the future God has for us.

Just as winter prepares plants and trees for warmer weather, a spiritually dormant season is a time of preparation—when our inner character is developed and strengthened. Strong character is essential for withstanding storms that will come during seasons of growth and harvest. I find there are a lot of people who have the gifts and talents to take them somewhere exciting, but if they don't have strong, Christlike character, all the talent in the world won't keep them there.

God has something planned for you, and if you're not living in the fulfillment of His plan for you, then now is the season of preparation. Rest assured, you're not alone. We all go through times like this. The Bible tells us that even Jesus needed time to grow and increase in wisdom, stature and in years before He was ready to make a global impact through His three-year ministry (Luke 2:52).

Here are three insights I've learned that can help you make progress toward your goals, plans and visions during dormant seasons.

Examine your motives. When God first called me to teach His Word, I wasn't doing it just because I had a deep desire to help people. I wanted to *be somebody*. I had problems from my past and was unaware of how insecure I was. I didn't realize how much I got my sense of worth and value out of what I *did*. And because of it, my motives were way out of line with how God wanted me to be.

It seems that many people don't really know themselves and understand why they do what they do. Self-deception is easy to fall into, and one of the hardest things to face. But when we are willing to face the truth about ourselves and examine our motives, God will help us change for the better and get on track with His will for our lives.

Get out of your comfort zone. Before we can move forward into a new thing, we usually have to let go of something we've been doing awhile. God nudges us outside of our comfort zones toward unfamiliar experiences to encourage us to rely on Him. And all too often, we try to hang on to what is familiar before we have confidence that the new thing is right for us. We wrestle with ourselves, wondering if we *really* heard from God or if we can *really* trust Him.

If you keep one foot where you are while the other foot stretches toward someplace new, you will eventually lose your footing and fall over. God wants us to trust Him by doing what He wants us to do and going where He wants us to go. We must learn to let go of what we have *before* we take hold of something new, and learn to rely on God to meet all our needs.

Embrace discipline. The Bible tells us that "now no discipline seems to be joyful at the time, but grievous. Yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). Discipline isn't fun, but it is essential for our character development.

Self-discipline is a fruit of the Spirit that requires time to

develop properly. Self-discipline is developed when we do the right thing *consistently*, over and over again for a long time. It may include paying off debts, not over-spending, getting proper nutrition and exercise, changing the way you speak about yourself and others and spending quality time with God and in His Word every day. As you become disciplined in every area of your life, you will be better equipped to handle bigger responsibilities in the future.

God has amazing plans for your life! He wants you to fulfill your dreams and live a life of blessing, hope and promise. I hope you're encouraged today. You *will* get there—as long as you are willing to do your part and trust God to do His part. And the more you lean on and trust in Him through that process, the sooner you'll be ready for whatever He has prepared for you.

*For more on this topic, order Joyce's three-CD series **What Do You Want Out of Life?** You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, Enjoying Everyday Life, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting .*

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