

SELAH DEVOTIONAL — “Joy in the Desert”

Scripture Focus: Isaiah 35:1-10 • James 5:7-10 • Matthew 11:2-11

S — STOP

Pause for a moment. Put your phone face down. Sit still. Take a breath.

Think about your week so far.

Where has life felt *dry* lately?

- pressure from school
- tension with friends or family
- anxiety about the future
- feeling left out
- feeling tired of waiting for something to change
- feeling far from God

You don't need to explain it. Just notice it. That's your “desert.”

E — EXHALE

Take a slow breath out.

As you exhale, let go of this idea: “*Joy means I should feel happy all the time.*”

Joy in the Bible is not pretending things are fine. Joy is not forcing a smile. Joy is not ignoring pain.

Exhale the pressure to *fake it*. Let God meet you where you actually are.

L — LOOK

Look at what God says about deserts.

Isaiah says the desert will **rejoice and bloom** when God shows up. Not after it stops being a desert. But *in* the desert.

James says to be patient like a farmer, trusting that growth is happening even when you can't see it yet.

John the Baptist, who loved God and obeyed Him, ended up in prison. He even wondered if Jesus was really the one. And Jesus didn't shame him. Jesus pointed him to the *signs* that God was still at work.

Look for this truth:

Joy doesn't come from escaping hard things. Joy comes from knowing Jesus is present in them.

Where might God already be at work in your desert, even in a small way?

A — ASK

Ask God honest questions. You might pray something like:

“God, where are You right now in my life? Where are You working even if I don't see big changes yet? Help me notice the signs of Your Kingdom breaking in.”

Then ask yourself quietly:

- What am I waiting for right now?
- Where do I feel impatient, frustrated, or tired of trusting God?
- Have I been grumbling more than trusting lately?
- What would it look like to strengthen my heart instead of trying to fix everything?

God can handle honest questions. John the Baptist asked them too.

H — HEAR

Sit quietly for a moment. Listen. Notice what rises in your heart.

Maybe a thought like:

- “I'm with you.”
- “Don't give up.”
- “Be patient.”
- “You're not forgotten.”
- “Growth is happening.”

Joy often begins as a whisper, not a shout.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Joy doesn't mean the desert disappears. Joy means:

- God is still near

- the story isn't over
- growth is happening beneath the surface
- the King is present

Even now. Even here. Even in the desert.