

SEASONS

Just as nature cycles through its four seasons that are sometimes pleasant and sometimes harsh, we also tend to experience various seasons within our souls. These include seasons of contentment and joy, doubt, darkness and the like. The more difficult seasons can create disappointments when your expectations clash with reality.

Listed below are some common disappointments experienced on the field and some thoughts for finding encouragement in the midst of them.

COMMON DISAPPOINTMENTS:

- A realisation that what you hoped you could do or would be allowed to do doesn't line up with the reality of your situation. (E.g. You may be a gifted teacher, but you can't seem to get the language down. Or you may have grand ideas for the ministry, but they don't fit within the parameters you have been given to work with.)
- A feeling of being forgotten and left alone, as the support and encouragement you were promised back home isn't happening.
- A sense of vulnerability that comes from the keen awareness of the losses involved with leaving behind the life you knew (and that life is going on without you).
- A period of disillusionment when all that you KNOW God to be and have experienced in the past doesn't seem to coincide with how He is working (or seemingly not working) in your current circumstances.

ENCOURAGEMENT

- Recognise that everyone goes through seasons and that God in His sovereignty brought you here.
- Distinguish between your **feelings** and **truth** (particularly in relation to who God is and His love for you). Cling to the truth, in spite of how you may be feeling.
- Remember your story (how God brought you here and that He is at work in your life).
- Think about His faithfulness to you in the past.
- Take time to do the things that are "life-giving" for you.
- Remember your identity in Christ. Focus on that. Rest in that. Ask God to speak truth to you in spite of how you may be feeling.
- Talk to someone. Don't be afraid or ashamed to talk to a counsellor (see Resources page for AIM CARE contact info).

IDEAS FOR SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT

It's also important during those times to continue to feed your soul with good spiritual practices. Why not try out some of the ideas below?

- Do a study on the various spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, meditation, Scripture memory, fasting, worship, solitude and silence, to name a few). Which ones do you practice

regularly? Commit to adding one new spiritual discipline to the ones you are already practicing and keep track of the changes you notice.

- Check out one of the following online Bible study resources or other similar sites
www.wordlive.org
www.Biblestudyguide.org
- Read one book or article related to any of the spiritual disciplines.
- Listen to sermons/ podcasts from your home church and favourite preachers/teachers. Consider asking for suggestions and trying out some different ones.
- Think about what your day of rest will look like now that you are in your new setting. You may have to think creatively in order to find a time/ place for this. Guard it, as “breathing in” is essential for your spiritual health.
- If you don’t already memorise Scripture, begin a system of Bible memory. Here is one website you can look at:
[Bible memorization smorgasbord](#)
- Keep a journal for reflection and prayer. Keep a list of answered prayers that you can refer to when you feel discouraged.
- Do a study on spiritual warfare, recognizing that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood...” Identify where the enemy is trying to thwart God’s purposes in your life. What are you doing (or going to start doing) to prevent the devil getting a foothold in those areas?