

Shepherd's Staff

February 2026

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m



How to Thaw a Cold Heart

Source: <https://www.glennamarshall.com/2017/02/16/thaw-cold-heart/>

Author: Glenna Marshall

We call it the "February Funks" in our house.

Lagging between holidays, this short month feels long and cold. Spring is tantalizingly close, but we're constricted by the temperatures that still keep us inside. The lack of activity and sunlight, the draggy feelings that often come after major holiday seasons—these can make us feel despondent internally. The heart feels cold and reluctant to engage in anything other than miserable wool-gathering.

Usually we bring this despondency with us to church and to our time in the Word, if we can even overcome the *ennui* that prevents us from getting out of bed in the morning. Emotions are fickle. Though they have their place, I put entirely too much of my decision making at the disposal of my feelings, which usually results in some poor uses of time and the kind of internal reflection that doesn't do anybody one bit of good. I shouldn't let my floundering emotions prescribe how my faith breathes and expands.

As a February Funk veteran, I've been thinking about how best to get through these doldrums that bleed into the spiritual life and make everything seem drab and dismal. Sometimes you just need a list, you know? Something to jot down and cross off so you can see some semblance of movement in the right direction, and sometimes just *a* direction. I'm going to make this real easy for you and give you some steps to help you work out some of those loathsome, internal blues you might be feeling this winter. If you're finding yourself apathetic when it comes to faith, growth, and affection for the Lord, try working through these suggestions. The list isn't an equation for renewed spiritual fervor, but the process might be helpful in shifting your perspective.

1) Wake up early and read the Bible, whether you want to or not.



Feelings aren't trustworthy. Ignore the ones telling you it's pointless to read the Bible in your current mood. You won't regret setting the pace for your thoughts by making them line up with Scripture as soon as you wake up. Placing your attention on Christ will help you renew your mind, conforming those rascally, petulant thoughts into something that

honors Jesus rather than something that feeds your restlessness. Time spent immersing your mind in Scripture is not wasted time.

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in

Jesus Christ. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

2) Pray with a list.

You're tackling your wandering, apathetic thoughts and feelings, so straighten them out by not allowing your mind to wander to unsafe, unhelpful places. Write down the things you need to pray for on a daily and weekly basis, being sure to include personal confession, the names of those you desire to see believe in Christ, those who are ill, and those who are suffering for the gospel. Praying through your list will help you verbalize your inner turmoil to the Father while also urging you to move on to others who need your intercession. In purposefully praying through your list, you're taking your eyes off your own situation and putting the plight of others in view. Regard your intercession as needful work because it absolutely is.



3) Practice gratitude.

You don't have to start a flowery gratitude journal unless you just want to, but make a point to thank the Lord for each expression of grace you see. His provision comes at just the right time? Stop and thank Him. A friend texted some needed encouragement? Be thankful and express your thanks. Look for the ways God is continually good to you. If you can't think of anything, sit down and write down the details surrounding your salvation when you first believed the gospel. God has continued to bless you since then, but even if He never did again—that would be enough. Still struggling? Start with Psalm 1 and write down every statement about God's good character until your heart begins to thaw.



“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

4) Have conversations with humans. Specifically, other Christians.

Look, I don't know about you, but my first line of defense when I'm feeling raw around the edges or dull to all things spiritual is to hunker down at home and turn off my phone. It's not a healthy response to edge people out of your life when you're prone to discouragement. The Body needs all its parts, and we need to pull each other out of the quagmire of doubts, despairs, and loss of focus. I know it's hard to be authentic when you want to crawl in bed with a bag of Cheetos and an endless stream of oblivion brought to you by Netflix, but insulation can be dangerous to your future faith. It becomes too easy to make a habit of hiding. Take a deep breath and ask someone to help you bear your burden. We weren't meant to live our Christians lives in isolation. Sharing our struggle should be our default when we're in the midst of spiritual doldrums. Accountability is built into the structure of the Church, and this is for our edification and our safety. In her article at *Desiring God*, Trillia Newbell writes:

“Ultimately accountability can be a means in which God draws us, through the friendship and fellowship of others, to himself. Self-sufficiency says we don't need anyone, but humility shouts for help from those God has placed in our lives. This habit of sharing and praying with others will inevitably teach us how to cast our cares on the only One who can fully bear their weight and who loves us with an unfailing love.”



Stop pretending to be self-sufficient. Only God can boast of that quality.

5) Serve someone else.

Like prayer, looking for ways to serve others removes *self* from the focal point, and if I've learned anything from cold-hearted seasons, too much self-focus is almost always the problem. I'm an analyzer, a journaler, a melancholy, wordy processor who falls squarely within INFJ descriptives (Intuitive, iNtuitive, Feeling, Judging...see? My hobbies are self-analysis and moping), so I'm nearly always guilty of spiritually unhealthy introspection. When I'm frustrated by my circumstances or when I'm struggling to feel at all, I need to knock my problems off their self-aggrandizing pedestal and look to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4). Pride cripples and enslaves, but the sacrificial love of Christ can free us from self-worship.



When all is said and done, there is still one more step to encouraging warmth in a cold heart. Well, maybe two.

6) Cry out to the Lord. Often.

He understands human emotion. He created us to have them, and He lived 33 years without being enslaved to them. He is relatable and near. Cry out to Him to soften your heart, recognizing that even if you do everything on your end, you're still at His kind mercy for the ice to melt. Remind yourself that He is known for His faithful love, and that He is teaching you perseverance while you seek Him when your heart feels cold.



And lastly:

7) Repeat steps 1-6.

Study, pray, talk, be thankful, serve, and cry out until the Lord brings springtime to your soul. He is faithful.







2/1 Andrew Haan
2/2 John Hanna
2/7 Pat Prier
2/8 Mackenzie Allspach
2/10 Marlyn Allspach
2/17 Sharon Cordes

Love Word Search

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Find the hidden words.



K	Y	D	S	N	G	E	G	I	P	B	E	E	E	H
U	P	A	E	M	L	G	A	A	V	E	A	B	O	N
W	R	T	V	Q	F	P	R	R	J	A	T	P	W	E
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Q	T	K	X	B	W	R	E	V	E	N	Y	Y	C	N

Is **PATIENT**

Is **KIND**

Is Not **JEALOUS**

Does Not **BRAG**

Is Not **ARROGANT**

Does Not Act **UNBECOMINGLY**

Does Not Seek Its **OWN**

Is Not **PROVOKED**

Does Not Take Into Account A
Wrong **SUFFERED**

Does Not Rejoice In
UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

REJOICES With The Truth

BEARS All Things

BELIEVES All Things

HOPES All Things

ENDURES All Things