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Export date: Fri Oct 30 3:11:14 2026 / +0000 GMT

Christian Perspectives: How does Spirit break through into your life?

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?The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.? Psalm 23:1-3

Yesterday, I spoke with someone who said he felt ?abandoned by God.?

Life has been extremely difficult for this person over the past several years.

He has felt challenged in his relationships, his career and as a parent.

Every day is an uphill battle to do all that needs to be done simply to survive.

He is a person of strong faith: his lifelong relationship with the sacred has been nurtured in organized religious communities and in personal spiritual practices. But still doubt creeps in.

He wonders, ?Where is the ?good shepherd,' the reassuring presence that has led me into ?green pastures' and ?beside still waters' in the past??

He is in an emotional ?valley of the shadow of death? and he wants to ?fear no evil? but what he feels is dead air and loneliness and fear.

Sometimes people talk about ?finding their way back to God? as if God is a discreet entity to be found in a particular location.

This phrase doesn't work well with my understanding of God as the ground of all being, ever present, and expressed in everything that is.

If everything is sacred ground, how does one bridge the gap ? that sense of separation from God?

Doubt, whether of God's existence or presence with us, is part of human life.

When we deny doubt, clinging to statements of belief or practices that provide only the comfort of the familiar, we become more alienated from the Spirit that is Truth, Love, Wisdom, and Real Life!

We need to go deeper into our own doubt to know ourselves and that Spirit.

Religion persists because the Spirit of Holiness breaks through into our awareness sometimes.

It may be a ?be still and know? moment as we get out into this spring sunshine or smell damp earth or listen to the calls of migrating or returned birds.

New life in any form can connect us with the Source of all life.

Occasionally, we have the experience of being addressed directly: a thought intrudes that seems to come from a wise other who is inside us as well as beyond us. Words from scripture or written by a person who has dared to try to communicate their deep experience may open us up to our own deep centre.

Can we develop a greater receptivity to God's presence?

My friend who is feeling abandoned may need to focus for a time on the externals of his life to create more order and less stress before he will be able to find contemplative space within. A spiritual mentor wrote that he had always expected that being seriously ill would increase his awareness of God.

Instead, he discovered that being ill took all his energy and attention.

But then, perhaps there is no more effective way to receive God's presence than by entering into silent focused prayer or mindfulness or meditation.

The basics of mindfulness meditation are being taught everywhere right now.

This is encouraging.

When we focus on our breath; allow all the preoccupations, pressures, random repetitive thought patterns to simply float away as we return to breath awareness; then we may finally experience the present moment; and, it is in that moment that God lives.

In the sacred present moment we may find green pastures, still waters and restored souls.