

5 Insightful Questions for When God Seems Silent

Sometimes you pray and God seems very close. Other times, you feel as though you're trying to talk to a brick wall. Your head believes God hears your prayers, but in real life it's sometimes hard to hold on to that in your heart. What do you do when God seems silent?

You don't say the same things or communicate exactly the same way each time with your spouse or best friend. Just so, communication with God is something that grows over time. Although God never changes, you and I change. How we experience prayer during different seasons of life and of our Christian experience is likely to change. God's nature is always the same, but how He interacts with us is unique to our personality and circumstances. So expect to keep learning about prayer throughout your life on earth.

There are some things we know about prayer that will help in your communication with God. When God seems silent, ask yourself these questions.

1. Are you listening?

Imagine trying to develop a friendship or romantic relationship where all you did was talk. Such one-sided conversations wouldn't get you very far. Communication in a relationship involves both sharing yourself *and* listening. While God wants us to come to Him with everything that troubles us, that's only the first half of communication.

If you're in trouble, yes, pray! (James 5:13-14) Tell Him what you need. But also learn to reach out to God at other times. And learn to stay in His presence long enough to hear what He may wish to say to you. The bigger the problem, the more you may need to seek silence in His presence. (Ps. 46:10). Pour

out your heart before Him, and don't rush off. Stick around and get quiet. What He communicates to you may be different than you expect. Be certain you are not just waiting for Him to do what you want, but are truly listening for His voice.

2. Are you praying with your legs?

Frederick Douglas is credited with saying, "I prayed for 20 years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs." Sometimes, often, we become important in the answer to our own prayers. You may need to change something in your lifestyle, change your thinking, access some human help God has ordained and so on.

When you bring your problem before God, don't stop with asking Him to fix it. Spend more time asking Him to show you His perspective on the problem, and to clarify any steps He would have you take in dealing with the situation. When He tells you something, however small, do it. Take that step. And you'll hear Him more clearly next time He speaks.

3. Are you refusing to obey?

Not one of us follows Jesus perfectly. But we are told some things that block our ability to receive God's answers to our prayers, things like cherishing sin in our hearts (Ps. 66:18, Isa. 59:2), perpetrating violence (Isa. 1:15, Mic. 3:1-4), persistently refusing to listen to God (Zech. 7:12-13), not living lovingly with our spouse (especially to husbands, 1 Pet. 3:7), or asking exclusively for your own selfish pleasure (James 4:3).

When the Holy Spirit puts His finger on something in your life and says, "Here, let Me have this", listen to Him. You won't be perfect before you get to heaven, but you don't have to continue in the same miserable sinful condition you were when Jesus found you. Having a clean heart allows you to hear God's voice and allows Him to work on your behalf more directly. Not clean in the "perfect" sense, but clean in the "washed and

forgiven and submitted to Jesus" sense.

4. Are you choosing faith?

Faith is not some ethereal "thing" that some people have and others don't. It's not some inner juice you work up by trying harder. Faith is first a gift from God, and then it's a choice. If you're reading this, God has given you a measure of faith. How are you choosing to develop that faith? Faith grows by deciding to give God a chance, going through something with Him, and seeing that He comes through for you.

When something tough comes along you again have to choose faith or no faith. Asking questions is normal: God is well able to handle your questions, your doubts and even your crisis of faith. But at some point, it comes down to your choice. It's not blind; it's based on your relationship with Jesus up to this point. The more your relationship grows, and the more you know of how He has been faithful to others who have chosen faith, the more you will be able to continue to choose faith as well.

5. Are you growing up?

If you have a young child, you know how upset they can become when you don't immediately give them what they want, or when you're out of sight for a time. In even a somewhat functioning family, the more children grow, the more they come to believe Mom and Dad will come back even if they can't see them, and that they desire good things for them.

Our military sends our best troops behind enemy lines, where their ability to communicate with headquarters may be disrupted. Our government trusts them to act in accordance with their training and to accomplish their mission even if things get difficult and dangerous, or they lose contact with their leaders for a time.

God has not promised that you will get everything you

desire—not here and now, anyway. As you mature in your relationship with God, there may be times when you can't hear Him in the way you're used to. Will you still trust that He is there, and that He is for your good? Can He still trust you to do the mission He has sent you on?

Prayer Takes Investment

Prayer is not connecting with a heavenly vending machine. Take the time to get to know Jesus, and your prayer life will grow as part of that relationship.

Your Turn: What do you do when God seems silent? Do any of these five questions give you any insight on where you need to go next? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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