

Have You Learned to Wait on God?

Mary sat in the hospital room where the doctors tried to determine what was wrong with her son. She wondered why her friend wasn't by her side. Days later she was still there as the diagnosis was made and treatment begun ... but I was still absent.

Other friends and family members came and went, some asking her where I was. She didn't know how to respond. My absence was a mystery to her at a time when she needed the support my friendship promised. She began to think that I didn't care.

She was wrong, of course. My heart ached for the worry and suffering she was going through over the welfare of her son. I was with her in spirit, sending her notes in the mail, trying to call on the phone and, of course, praying constantly. I just couldn't get away for the extended period it would take to drive to a distant hospital and back. I had obligations that went beyond the bounds of our friendship that kept me from her side, and it broke my heart to think that she didn't understand.

Perhaps the exact same scenario is what prompted Jesus' tears at the sight of His friend Lazarus' tomb. It wasn't grief over his death because Jesus knew that Lazarus' departure from this life was just a temporary situation. But He, too, had a friend named Mary who didn't understand His absence at a time when she needed Him by her side. Maybe it was heartbreak over Mary's and Martha's feelings of His supposed failed friendship that caused His grief. He hadn't come when they expected Him, and their brother had died as a result.

They didn't understand that He had a calling on His life that went beyond their friendship, a submission and obedience to

duty greater than the love they shared. His absence was actually a greater expression of love for them than His presence would have been, a concept that they would eventually come to understand. But He wept over their current disappointment in Him and their misunderstanding of His mission among them.

Mary's resentment was apparent when she remained in her house despite learning that Jesus had finally come to town. Only Martha ran to meet and greet Him.

Most of us can understand Mary's feelings. Haven't we all lived through circumstances in which we thought the Lord had failed us? We've had heartfelt prayers that seemed to go unanswered and summons for His presence to which there seemed to be no response.

Hopes and dreams ... perhaps even people ... have died as a result. And so we sometimes react as Mary did when His name is mentioned. We stay where we are, and thus we miss the words of comfort that He would say to us in response.

Sometimes it takes the Marthas in our lives to get us over the miles of misunderstanding and resentment that separate us from our Lord. Marthas come in various shapes, sizes and physical forms. Once when I had given up on God, I heard Martha's voice in that of a Christian artist who sang in essence the words Martha said to Mary, "The Teacher is close at hand and is asking for you" (John 11:28, AMP).

My reaction was the same as Mary's upon hearing those words. I "sprang up quickly and went to Him" (v. 29). As I lay sobbing at His feet in the spirit, I came to the same place spiritually that she had. I decided to trust Him even when I didn't understand His methods or the purposes behind them.

Many times since that night I have waited in vain for God to move in a situation or have heard only silence when I longed to hear Him speak. But I've learned to wait on Him without

doubting His affection for me, confident that His seeming negligence will ultimately result in the confirmation of His unfailing love.

“‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’” (Is. 55:8-9, NIV).

Prayer Power for the Week of October 27, 2014

This week thank God that no matter what you go through, His love never fails. Thank Him for the gift of faith to believe that all things are possible and work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Thank Him that His promises are sure. Pray for President Obama, Congress and the Supreme Court as they make decisions affecting our generation, our nation's future and the entire world. Continue to lift up the persecuted Christians around the world, especially in the Middle East. Remember Israel and pray that our government would seek God and His wisdom on how to deal with terrorism in our nation and the world. Cry out for revival, the spread of the gospel, and more laborers for the Lord's harvest (Rom 8:28; Mark 9:23; Luke 18:27).