

When God is silent

You can respond to the silence of God in two ways. One response is for you to go into depression, a sense of guilt, and self-condemnation. The other response is for you to have an expectation that God is about to bring you to a deeper knowledge of Himself. These responses are as different as night and day.—*Henry Blackaby*

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Perhaps it's not silence we're encountering while we seek God, but rather a pregnant pause—a prompting to engage in personal reflection so that the deepest of answers, the most profound of responses, can be given and received.—*James Emery White*

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“It came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.”⁴

Week after week, with unfaltering and steadfast spirit, Elijah watched the dwindling brook; often tempted to stagger through unbelief, but refusing to allow his circumstances to come between himself and God. Unbelief sees God through circumstances, as we sometimes see the sun shorn of his rays through smoky air, but faith puts God between itself and circumstances, and looks at them through Him. And so the dwindling brook became a silver thread; and the silver thread stood presently in pools at the foot of the largest boulders; and the pools shrank; the birds fled; the wild creatures of field and forest came no more to drink; the brook was dry. Only then to his patient and unwavering spirit, “the word of the Lord came, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath.”

Most of us would have gotten anxious and worn with planning long before that. We should have ceased our songs as soon as the streamlet caroled less musically over its rocky bed; and with harps swinging on the willows, we should have paced to and fro upon the withering grass, lost in pensive thought. And probably, long ere the brook was dry, we should have devised some plan, and asking God's blessing on it, would have started off elsewhere.

God often does extricate us, because His mercy endureth forever, but if we had only waited first to see the unfolding of His plans, we should never have found ourselves landed in such an inextricable labyrinth; and we should never have been compelled to retrace our steps with so many tears of shame. Wait, patiently wait!—*F. B. Meyer*

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I try to see the dry period as a time of waiting. After all, I gladly wait for loved ones when their planes are delayed, wait on hold for computer help lines, wait in line for a concert I want to attend. Waiting need not kill time; it uses time, in anticipation of something to come.

Sometimes I come to God out of sheer determination of will, which may seem inauthentic. When I do so, however, I need not put on a mask. God already knows the state of my soul. I

am not telling God anything new, but I am bearing witness to my love for God by praying even when I don't feel like it. I express my underlying faith simply by showing up.

When I am tempted to complain about God's lack of presence, I remind myself that God has much more reason to complain about my lack of presence. I reserve a few minutes a day for God, but how many times do I drown out or ignore the quiet voice that speaks to my conscience and my life? "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock," have become familiar words from Revelation, often stretched into an evangelistic message. But Jesus addressed those words to a church full of believers. How many times have I failed to hear the soft knock on the door and thus missed God's invitation?—*Philip Yancey*⁵

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Quite a few people seem to have trials and battles because they don't feel close to Jesus. They think, "I must not be close to the Lord, because I just don't feel close to Him!"

The Bible makes it very clear that we are to walk by faith, not sight. If we start trusting or relying too much on our feelings as an indicator of how well we're doing spiritually, we're going to be very unstable. We would be continually tossed to and fro by every wind of feeling that happens to come along.⁶ We'd never know how we were going to be doing tomorrow, as that would be determined by how we feel when we get up in the morning.

Regardless of how we may happen to feel, if we love the Lord and are walking by faith and obeying His Word, then we know that our relationship with the Lord is firm. And we certainly know that His love for us is unchangeable, unwavering. He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "Though the mountains should depart and the hills be removed, My kindness shall not depart from thee." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!"—*Maria Fontaine*

¹ Matthieu 15:23.

² Sophonie 3:17.

³ *Streams in the Desert, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1965).

⁴ 1 Rois 17:7.

⁵ *La prière fait-elle une différence ?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

⁶ Jacques 1:6.