
WHAT IF GOD IS SILENT?

ADMITTING THE SILENCE OF GOD

- ❖ *When was a time I prayed and did not receive a response from God?*

- ❖ *What things would I like God to speak about now but have no answer to?*

- ❖ *Did Jesus ever experience the silence of God?*
Matthew 27:46 — “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

- ❖ *Who else in the Bible experienced the silence of God?*

- ❖ *Who ultimately decides if God speaks, us or God? Can we make God speak?*

- ❖ *Is there a purpose we can find in the silence of God?*
 1. God's silence teaches us to _____
 2. God's silence teaches us to _____
 3. God's silence teaches us to _____
 4. God's silence teaches us to _____
 5. God's silence teaches us to _____

Hearing God's Voice

GOD'S SILENCE TEACHES US TO MOURN

- ❖ *Why is it so hard for us when God is silent?*
- ❖ *Is it appropriate to be sad when God is silent? Why or why not?*
- ❖ *Can I relate to the Psalms below which mourn the silence of God?*

Psalm 13	“How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (Psalm 13:1)
Psalm 22	“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.” (Psalm 22:1-2).
Psalm 28	To You I will cry, O LORD my Rock: Do not be silent to me, Lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. (Psalm 28:1).
Psalm 35	This You have seen, O LORD; Do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me. (Psalm 35:22)
Psalm 42	I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" (Psalm 42:9)
Psalm 89	How long, LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire? (Psalm 89:46)
Psalm 143	Answer me speedily, O LORD; My spirit fails! Do not hide Your face from me, Lest I be like those who go down into the pit. (Psalm 143:7)

- ❖ *Have I ever cried when God was silent and found that it helped?*

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

- ❖ *Is there a song, poem, or Psalm that has helped me mourn the silence of God?*

In the silence, we can mourn the real gap that exists between us and God

Hearing God's Voice

GOD'S SILENCE TEACHES US TO YEARN

❖ *Is it a good thing for me to want to hear God's voice in the silence?*

Matthew 5:4 ,6-8

- Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
 - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
 - Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
 - Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- ❖ *Are there blessings when I yearn for God? What are they?*

❖ *Do I yearn for God's voice more in the silence or when He speaks?*

❖ *Can the silence of God increase my desire for God?*

The silence of God can cause me to yearn for His presence even more.

Hearing God's Voice

GOD'S SILENCE TEACHES US TO PRAY

❖ *Have I ever given up praying when God was silent?*

Have I turned to other things for answers?

❖ *Have I ever continued to pray even when God was silent?*

Have I ever had a "one-sided" conversation with God?

❖ *Consider David's prayer when God was silent:*

Psalm 13:1-6 — **1** How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? **2** How long will I store up anxious concerns within me, agony in my mind every day? How long will my enemy dominate me? **3** Consider me and answer, LORD my God. Restore brightness to my eyes; otherwise, I will sleep in death. **4** My enemy will say, "I have triumphed over him," and my foes will rejoice because I am shaken. **5** But I have trusted in your faithful love; my heart will rejoice in your deliverance. **6** I will sing to the LORD because he has treated me generously.

❖ *Does the silence of God mean He cannot hear my prayers?*

❖ *Have I ever grown in trust by "praying through the silence"?*

God's silence can teach me to pray more fervently

Hearing God's Voice

GOD'S SILENCE TEACHES US TO TRUST

❖ *Do I believe God can answer me, even when I find Him silent?*

❖ *Do I believe God cares about my needs, even when I find Him silent?*

❖ *Do I agree with the following statements?*

- I can pursue God in the absence of instruction
- I can praise God in the absence of blessing
- I can worship God in the absence of feeling His presence

❖ *Have I pushed through the silence of God to trust Him anyway?*

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16).

❖ *Does trusting mean I have to understand what is going on?*

Romans 8:26–27 — 26 In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The silence of God can increase my dependence on Him

GOD'S SILENCE TEACHES US TO ENDURE

❖ *Is it promised that God will answer my prayers soon or even in this lifetime?*

Revelation 6:10–11 — 10 They cried out with a loud voice: “Lord, the one who is holy and true, how long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?” **11** So they were each given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little while longer until the number would be completed of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters, who were going to be killed just as they had been.

❖ *Will any righteous prayer go unanswered?*

Revelation 8:1–5 — 1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. **2** Then I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God; seven trumpets were given to them. **3** Another angel, with a golden incense burner, came and stood at the altar. He was given a large amount of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar in front of the throne. **4** The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up in the presence of God from the angel's hand. **5** The angel took the incense burner, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Revelation 21:5 — 5 Then the one seated on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new.” He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.”

2 Corinthians 1:20 — 20 For every one of God's promises is “Yes” in him. Therefore, through him we also say “Amen” to the glory of God.

The silence of the heavens is but half an hour long, but the voice of God, that will thunder throughout eternity! Let us endure through the silence of God until we hear His voice!

IS THERE INTERFERENCE?

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes God is silent. However, there can also be sin issues in our lives that cause interference in our prayers. In this lesson we will broadly categorize them in two ways:

1. **Our relationship with God:** There are several things that can distract us from our prayer life with God. We may want to hear from Him but the sin in our life can interfere with hearing that message.
2. **Our relationships with others:** When our relationships with others are bad, it affects our relationship with God! The first command is to love God but the 2nd is like it: love your neighbor. We cannot hate our brother and say we love God!

1 John 4:20 — 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Hearing God's Voice

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Being busy distracts from prayer

Psalm 46:10–11 — 10 “Stop striving, and *know that I am God*, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.” **11** The LORD of Armies is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah

- ❖ *It is possible to become so busy trying to make something happen we forget there is a God who can do all things! **Am I too busy striving to hear God?***

Being self-centered distracts from prayer

James 4:2–3 — 2 You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. **3** *You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives*, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

- ❖ *We can become so focused on what we want we become unable to seek and find what God wants. **Am I asking amiss?***

Turning away from scripture distracts from prayer

Proverbs 28:9 — 9 Anyone who turns his ear away from hearing the law— *even his prayer is detestable*.

- ❖ *There is little point in talking to someone who doesn't want to listen! **Have I rejected the words God has already spoken to me?***

Hearing God's Voice

Unconfessed sin distracts from prayer

Psalm 66:17–19 — **17** I cried out to him with my mouth, and praise was on my tongue. **18** If I had been aware of malice in my heart, *the Lord would not have listened.* **19** However, God has listened; he has paid attention to the sound of my prayer.

- ❖ *Is there an elephant in the room? A relationship cannot move forward if there are issues yet to be aired out! **Do I have any?***

Doubting God's love distracts from prayer

James 1:6–8 — **6** But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. **7** *That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord,* **8** being double-minded and unstable in all his ways.

- ❖ *God's goal isn't to give us what we want. His greater desire is for us to trust Him alone and know we are fully loved by Him. We cannot have that relationship in doubt: the grace comes through faith. **Do I doubt God's love for me?***

Hearing God's Voice

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Lack of compassion

Isaiah 58:4-7 — **4** You fast with contention and strife to strike viciously with your fist. *You cannot fast as you do today, hoping to make your voice heard on high.* **5** Will the fast I choose be like this: A day for a person to deny himself, to bow his head like a reed, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the LORD? **6** Isn't this the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke? **7** Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and not to ignore your own flesh and blood?

- ❖ *Why would we expect God to free us and provide for us when we burden others and fail to love them? He doesn't! **Have I failed to show the same compassion to others I desire from God?***

Lack of Patience

1 Peter 3:7 — **7** Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, *so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

- ❖ *When we fail to truly hear others, why should we expect God to hear us? He doesn't! **Have I been impatient and unsympathetic towards others?***

Lack of forgiveness

Mark 11:25 — **25** And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, *so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.*

- ❖ *When we fail to forgive others, why should we expect God to forgive us? **Is there someone I have not forgiven?***

LEARNING TO LISTEN

OUTLINE

Choosing to Listen

We must have open ears to hear WHATEVER God has to say.

- If we are closed to His message, we will never hear Him.

Where to Listen

Outside of prayer, there are three major sources of God's voice:

- Scripture (Inspired by God, moved by the Spirit, concerning Christ)
- People (Oftentimes Christians, although God spoke by Balaam and his donkey!)
- Circumstance (Pain, nature, and miracles)

Hearing Aids

Our ability to listen is improved by

- Spending time with the Shepherd
- Having a prayer warrior behind you
- Practicing listening improves listening

Hearing God's Voice

CHOOSING TO HEAR

Those with Selective Hearing Are Lost ...

Matthew 13:14–15 — **14** Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: You will listen and listen, but never understand; you will look and look, but never perceive. **15** For this people's heart has grown callous; their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn back— and I would heal them.

- ❖ *Do I have selective hearing? Is there a message of God I am not open to hearing?*

The Lost Cannot Hear ...

John 8:43–44 — **43** Why don't you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to my word. **44** You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.

- ❖ *Am I God's? Do I belong to Him?*

Salvation Begins with Hearing ...

Romans 10:17 — **17** So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

- ❖ *Am I willing to trustingly hear WHATEVER God has to say to me?*

Hearing God's Voice

WE HEAR GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE BECAUSE ...

... its content is inspired by God

2 Timothy 3:16 – 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,

- ❖ *Do I listen to what God wants to say to me in all four of these uses of scripture?*

... its intent is moved by the Spirit

2 Peter 1:20–21 – 20 Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation, **21** because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ *Do I listen for God's intent in scripture, not just "the facts"?*

... its events concern Christ

Luke 24:27 – 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

- ❖ *Do I meet the person Jesus as I listen to the words of scripture?*

Hearing God's Voice

WE HEAR GOD THROUGH THE CHURCH BECAUSE ...

Leadership is given by Christ

Ephesians 4:11–12 — **11** And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **12** equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

- ❖ *Am I open to the leadership in church? Would I be willing to listen to a Balaam?*

Fellowship is filled with Christ's voice

Colossians 3:16 — **16** Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

- ❖ *Do I listen to the words of fellow believers as though Christ may speak through them?*

Discipleship is filled with Christ's presence

Matthew 18:19 — **19** Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

- ❖ *Do I work with others to hear God's voice by praying together and working through disagreements together?*

Hearing God's Voice

WE HEAR GOD THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS ...

Painful Signs

John 9:3 — 3 “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him.

Job 42:5 — 5 I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you.

Hebrews 12:7 — 7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?

- ❖ *Am I open to a painful experience if I might hear God through it?*

Natural Signs:

Psalms 19:1–2 — 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. **2** Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge.

Romans 1:20 — 20 For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

- ❖ *Do I spend time away from technology and human construct to listen to the Artist through His art (His creation)?*

Miraculous Signs:

Judges 6:36–38 — 36 Then Gideon said to God, “If you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you said, **37** I will put a wool fleece here on the threshing floor. If dew is only on the fleece, and all the ground is dry, I will know that you will deliver Israel by my strength, as you said.” **38** And that is what happened. When he got up early in the morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung dew out of it, filling a bowl with water.

Mark 8:12 — 12 Sighing deeply in his spirit, he said, “Why does this generation demand a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.”

- ❖ *When I ask God for confirmation, am I willing to obey?*

Hearing God's Voice

HEARING AIDS

Spending Time With the Shepherd Improves Hearing

John 10:27 — 27 My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me.

- ❖ *Do I habitually pray, read scripture, and go to church?*

Having a Backup Team Improves Hearing

Ephesians 1:15–18 — 15 This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, **16** I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. **17** I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. **18** I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

- ❖ *Do I have someone who prays for me to hear God's voice?*

Practicing Listening Improves Listening

Romans 1:17 — 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

CAN I DISTINGUISH VOICES?

LITMUS TESTS

BIBLE: Confirmation by scripture

- 2 Timothy 3:16 ESV - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
- Hebrews 6:18 ESV - so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

CHURCH: Confirmation by another prophet

- 1 Corinthians 14:31-32 ESV - For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

CIRCUMSTANCES: Confirmation by signs

- Judges 6:39-40 ESV - Then Gideon said to God, "Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

Hearing God's Voice

THE TRUSTING EAR KNOWS

John 10:1-42 "My sheep hear my voice"

1-2: As above, we must recognize what is not of Christ's voice

- 1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3-5: The sheep know His voice.

- 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his **voice**; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his **voice**. 5 "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the **voice** of strangers."

6: Those who don't know the voice don't understand when they hear it

- 6 Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

7-8: Sheep don't hear the thieves

- 7 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 "All who [ever] came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

9-13: The Shepherd earns the trust of the sheep through sacrificial love

- 9 "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have [it] more abundantly. 11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 "But a hireling, [he who is] not the shepherd, one who does not own

Hearing God's Voice

the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 "The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

14-15: Know Him because He is good

- 14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My [sheep], and am known by My own. 15 "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16: Hearing the True Shepherd leads to unity with other Christians

- 16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My **voice**; and there will be one flock [and] one shepherd.

17-18: Further teaching on sacrificial love of the Shepherd

- 17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

19-21: The Shepherd's voice divides those who are His from those who are not

- 19 Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. 20 And many of them said, "He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?" 21 Others said, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

27: The Shepherd's voice motivates obedience

- 27 "My sheep hear My **voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me.