

What do we do when God seems to be silent?

John 11:25-44

How do you feel when God doesn't immediately answer your cries for help?

I went through a time when it seemed God was silent. I had been praying over many days, and I sensed that heaven was shut up. I didn't understand. Some followers asked if I had sin in my life, and gave me a "sin checklist" to work through. I prayed through the sin checklist, and as far as I could tell, I was OK. I could not understand God's silence.

Mary and Martha encountered a similar experience in John 11. When Jesus heard that Lazarus, Mary and Martha's brother, was ill, He didn't rush to heal him. Instead, Jesus remained where He was for two more days (John 11:6). And before Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus died. To Mary and Martha, Jesus' silence could have been interpreted as neglect.

In the midst of problems and challenges, what are we to do? Do we choose to complain or be depressed, or do we anticipate and expect what is next?

1. Examine yourself

Begin by asking yourself, "Is there any unconfessed sin in my life?" Do I have wrong motives? Is there anything or anyone I love more than God? If God reveals any sin to your heart, quickly ask for His forgiveness. There's no shame in repentance. This act of faith pleases God and restores our fellowship with Him. Make sure nothing is blocking you from being able to hear God's voice (Psalm 66:18). This requires looking deeper than the obvious. The more confessed and purer we are, the closer we are to God.

2. Ask God

Notice in John 11:37 that the Jews were asking the question among themselves "Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" We must realize that silence is God's choice. God has no obligation to answer you or inform you of His plan. Colossians 1:16 says "For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him."

Accepting God's sovereignty also means actively trusting God, realizing He is in control. Even if you don't hear an audible word from Him, remember to dig into God's Word — His written word is there to communicate to us—to find out what He has to say about our problems or questions we're asking. As you read the Bible, even though God may not seem to speak to you, the Holy Spirit will reveal what He wills for you.

Two Possible Reasons:

One of the possible reasons for God's silence can be intimacy. When you are completely comfortable with a person, it is possible to sit in a room together and not utter a word. In love, silence can be a sign of intimacy.

Silence can be a sign of God's trust. In Jesus' silence, we -- along with Mary and Martha -- are drawn into a new closeness and understanding of God's power.

"When you cannot hear God," says Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost For His Highest*, "you will find that He has trusted you in the most intimate way possible: with absolute silence, not a silence of despair, but one of pleasure, because He saw that you could withstand an even bigger revelation."

A second possible reason for God's silence is His desire to reveal something great, something you never knew about God before. "His silence is the sign that He is bringing you into an even more wonderful understanding of Himself." Chambers wrote in *My Utmost for His Highest*

Four days after he died, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, showing His power. Just because God seems silent doesn't mean you should doubt Him or stop praying. Instead, it's an invitation to press forward and seek Him even more diligently. The psalmists modeled crying out to God. David said, "Oh my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest" (Psalm 22:2). In His silence, we must also continually cry out to God, asking Him to answer. God may seem silent, but God answers prayers. God is in control and has been all along. He heard our cries for help. In trust, He waited for the perfect time to speak. May we be reminded - God answers prayer.