

## “The Sound of God’s Silence!”

Review: Did you **memorize** Jeremiah 31.3 – can you say it?

“If it’s so easy, why is it so hard?” – nature of God, fallen nature, Satan, culture, homeostasis, faulty core beliefs, confused expectations, etc.

Simple steps for developing a life of prayer

1. **Choose to believe** God’s truth claims – don’t rely on your senses for truth.
2. By God’s grace **choose to commit** to:
  - a. A certain time of day for prayer
  - b. A certain amount of time for prayer
  - c. Praying for a hunger for God (Matt 5.6; Ps 42.1-2)
3. **Journal** to God (hand out tablets)
  - a. Be honest about your soul struggles
  - b. Keep track of Scriptures that help you
  - c. Try to discover what helps you most
  - d. Look for God’s footprints throughout your day
4. **Support** one another through prayer (Eph 6.18)

**How did it work for you? What helped? What hindered? Make adjustments as needed!**

- A. Promise to memorize: **Isaiah 41.10**...God is with me!
- B. Almost all the prayer masters recount a “dark night of the soul”
  1. If I suffer a time of spiritual dryness, should I stop praying?
  2. If I stop, how will I know when my season of prayer comes alive again?
  3. Have you known someone who seemed to have a meaningful life of prayer? What helped them?
  4. Do I really believe that God is sitting on the edge of His throne anxiously waiting to communicate with me?
- C. Check list (from *Prayer: Does it make any difference*, by Philip Yancey)
  1. Have I caused the blockage: deliberate sin, callous inattention – then clear the channel through confession
  2. Examine motives: am I seeking a misty feeling (God come to me on my terms)

“Seek God, not happiness – this is the fundamental rule of all meditation. If you seek God alone, you will gain happiness: that is its promise.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Remember, my season of prayer may be dry, but God is still alive all day, living both in and around me – look for Him. “God is not really silent, we are deaf” – Teresa of Avila
  3. Have I been primarily pursuing results, rather than companionship

with God?

Paul prayer for thorn removal, God said, “No, because I want you to rely on Me.” Paul immediately made an adjustment. Why? Because he valued close dependency on God more than physical health.

Wow!

4. Faulty core beliefs – learned in my childhood – may be the culprit.

Lies we have learned about ourselves, or God in our childhood can still haunt us as adults. (see 2 Corinthians 10.5 – we bring every thought into captivity to Christ).

  - A. **Recognize** the lies B. **Argue** against them with the truth C. **Choose** to believe God. Eventually the truth claims of God will become stronger than the lies we learned. We replace the faulty core beliefs with the truth claims of God (Romans 12.2)

(If there are no clues on the checklist above, then move on...)

- D. Look upon silence as you look upon any other kind of suffering – realizing that asking “Why” does little good
  1. Ask: what can I **learn** from it? – the major New Testament passages on suffering focus on the productive value of suffering – look for the good it can produce (perseverance, character, hope, etc.)
  2. Ask God to use the spiritual dryness to prepare you for future **growth** (John 15.1-2). “Dryness makes the roots run deep.” – Henry Blackaby
  3. See the dry period as a time of **waiting** – anticipate what is coming – live with hope (in God) – live by faith (in God) – this is a time of growing deep with God. Learning to live by faith. (In the Gospels people approach Jesus 183 times with a question. He gave a direct answer only three times – the rest He answered with another question. God wants us to think, reason, and grow!
  4. It could be that what seems like abandonment, in reality, is a form of **empowerment!** (Example: Joni Erickson Tada)
  5. Lean on the faith of **others** – pray together, sing, exercise, read. Look back to where you last saw the light, and realize that this will pass.
- E. Remember, every relationship goes through rhythms, or seasons.

Feelings are God’s to give, faith is our to exercise. I may go through a period when I feel God is absent, but if God were truly “absent” everything in the universe would cease to exist. Look around: He is still in control!

I am simply going through a particular season in my journey. Refuse to judge reality based on current feelings!

- F. Pray and Ponder in your journal: 1 Kings 19.12...God often comes in a “gentle whisper” – do I listen carefully enough? Noise, busyness, and chaos often drown out God’s voice. Can I learn to listen? Why would God whisper to Elijah? Compare Mt Sinai/Horeb to Mt Carmel. What is God trying to teach Elijah? What can I learn from this story about God? About myself? About prayer?