

"Touching Heaven Prayer Series"

Part 5 – "How to Handle the Silence of God"

Sunday, January 15th, 2012 – Eastgate Community Church

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Intro:

Today, we will continue our sermon series entitled, "Touching Heaven" that follows our 40 day fast. Corporately we are Giving, Fasting and Praying during these 40 days!

So: What is intercession? Intercession is to stand in the gap. We've been doing this now since January 1st as we have been giving, fasting and praying. Today is day 15, we're close to half way done. In five days you'll be half way through this wonderful quest for more of God and asking for His Will to be done in your life.

So, are you hearing from God? Has your life been turned upside down? Are you impacted in ways that have blown you away? Or, quite possibly, has God been silent? The fact is, that's what often happens, we find that God is silent when we pray.

That's what we'll be looking at today:

HOW TO HANDLE THE SILENCE OF GOD

Psalms 28:1-2

"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. Hear the voice of m supplications when I cry to You. When I lift up m hands toward Your holy sanctuary."

I am not sure about all of you, but I know that there have been some times in my life where I have cried out to God ... asking Him for some kind of answer ... and NOTHING!

NO response! NO answer! Just absolutely NOTHING! SILENCE!!! I have, at times, felt so let down ... so hurt that I have prayed similar prayers to what David prayed in the verses we read!

I have cried, "God, where are you?"

I'll never forget when our daughter Cali died, the hopelessness my bride and I felt. We cried out to God only to be answered with silence. It was a horrible feeling, as if God had abandoned us for that brief moment. Why would something like this happen to us? How on earth could a good solid Christian couple, who loved God, called into ministry, pastors, have to go through something so horrible as this? It didn't make sense. My prayers to the Father seemed unanswered.

When my daughter died, I was crushed ... my faith was shaken ... I felt the SILENCE OF GOD!!!

I heard the deafening sound of THE SILENCE OF GOD again when my Aunt Annie passed away. Not only had I prayed, but thousands of others around the world were praying for her to be healed, only to hear back nothing. It was an overwhelming feeling of loss when she died. It felt as if our prayers weren't being heard by the Lord, for we heard nothing in return.

I asked God, "WHY?" And do you know what I heard ... "SILENCE."

And then again 4 years ago when I went into work at the church I pastored at for over 20 years to be greeted by the founder of the church and told I was fired, with no questions asked. I went to God immediately and thought He would give me quick answer, but it wasn't there. The first response back I wanted was an answer, and to receive nothing was heart wrenching, to say the least. For many people in our congregation this was the same, they heard nothing back, at first from God. But....God did show up and gave answers, but we had to wait! We had to handle the SILENCE of GOD.

I thank God that I have had prayers that where answered over the many years of serving God ... many of them have been HUGE answers!

I've seen miracles happen to many people. I've experienced many miracles on my own body. God's miraculous power has been manifest in so many ways it would take up more room on this paper and in this message for me to write!

However, alongside those immediate answered prayers are many other prayers which "didn't get past the ceiling."

QUESTION: DID ALL THE PRAYERS OF THE GODLY MEN IN THE BIBLE GET ANSWERED? ANSWER: NO.

- **Moses** begged God to let him lead his people into the Promised Land. Moses died on Nebo's peak, his request refused.
- **Paul** prayed three times for the removal of that "thorn in the flesh." Instead, he was compelled to make the best of it for the rest of his life ... God did not answer!
- Even **Jesus** himself in the garden cried out for release from the cross. Instead he had to suffer the pain of it.

Friends, there are going to be times in your devotional/prayer life where you hear God's voice, but there will also be times when you feel the SILENCE OF GOD!!! There will be times during these 40 days of fasting and prayer that you'll be hearing from God, and then there will be times of silence, when it seems that God isn't speaking at all.

And that is why I believe many of us really do not pray or even worship ... because all too often we sense the SILENCE OF GOD!!!

Someone once said, **“Non-Christians don’t pray, because they are afraid God will answer them. Christians don’t pray, because they are afraid God will not answer them.”**

I want to share with you some simple thoughts on...

HOW TO HANDLE THE SILENCE OF GOD

1. WHEN YOU CAN’T HEAR HIM... KNOW THAT HE IS ALWAYS LISTENING TO YOU

John 9:31

“He is ready to listen to those who worship Him and do His will.”

Psalm 34:15

“The Lord watches over those who do right; His ears are open to their cries for help.”

Psalm 66:19

“But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer!”

Have you ever wondered if God listens to your prayers? Have you sometimes felt like it’s a waste of time, that the heavens are closed to your petitions?

Illus: President FDR

When Franklin Roosevelt was President of the United States he often endured long receiving lines at the White House. He complained that no one really paid any attention to what was said. One day, during a reception, he decided to try an experiment. To each person who came down the line and shook his hand, he murmured, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." The guests responded with phrases like, "Marvelous! Keep up the good work. We are proud of you. God bless you, sir."

It was not till the end of the line, while greeting the ambassador from Bolivia, that his words were actually heard. Nonplussed, the ambassador leaned over and whispered, "I'm sure she had it coming."

Despite how you feel or what you might think, please be assured that God is listening. He may be SILENT, but He is always listening!!!

2. WHEN YOU CAN'T HEAR HIM...

DON'T ALWAYS BLAME YOURSELF FOR HIS SEEMING SILENCE

Friends, I have seen a lot of people beat themselves up ... feeling like God has rejected them because they do not hear the VOICE of God!

Look into the life of David ... the man "after God's very heart" ... he was always begging God to answer.

Psalm 4:1

"Answer me, O God."

Psalm 69:17

"Don't hide from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in deep trouble."

Psalm 13:1-3

"O Lord, how long will You forget me? Forever? How long will You look the other way? How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand? Turn and answer me, O Lord my God!"

David was a man after the heart of God, but he even felt the SILENCE OF GOD!

But it did not mean that David had abandoned the Lord ... it did not mean that David failed God!

When you feel the SILENCE OF GOD ... do not beat yourself up ... do not let the enemy lie to you and say that you are a wicked person ... "You are God's chosen person ... He loves you!"

Many people will begin to condemn themselves during this time. Some will think it's because of "sin" in their life that they are not hearing from God. Rejection can set in. Depression can set in. The thoughts that you have "let God down" sets in. The fact is, you can't let God down! You're not that powerful!

Don't let the enemy get into your head during these times. Remember who you are in Jesus Christ and rest in the fact that you ARE a child of the King! Don't beat yourself up any longer. Stop trying to figure out the perfect "equation" that you think will get you to God, and when you can't find it you feel like a failure. You're not a failure. You're not a sinner. You're not a loser. You're not a defeated foe when you don't hear God's voice. So, don't let the enemy or your flesh tell you that you are!

3. WHEN YOU CAN'T HEAR HIM...

NEVER FORGET THAT HIS ANSWER IS USUALLY FOUND IN HIS WRITTEN WORD

The Bible contains the answer to every area of your life ... it is the fix all to life's problems!

There are so many times in life that we crave the HYPER SUPERNATURAL RESPONSES to our prayers ... yes, they will come ... but most often God responds to us through His Word!

John 1:14 teaches us that...

"The Word became human, and lived here on earth among us."

That means ... that IN Jesus are the answers! And where is Jesus revealed? IN The Word! When it seems as though you are faced with THE SILENCE OF GOD ... read the Word and you may just discover THE ANSWER!

Hebrews 1:1-2

"Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, He has spoken to us through His Son."

God's Son is The Word (John 1:1) ... and if this is true, then God speaks to us through The Word!

4. WHEN YOU CAN'T HEAR HIM...

HOLD ON TO WHAT HE HAS ALREADY SAID

When I was 9 years old, I knew that God had "called" me into the full time vocational ministry. I remember hearing His voice, that impression in my heart, that God was speaking to me. I was in the basement of my bedroom, by myself and responded to that call of God. I heard His voice. He spoke to me. Though not out loud, but loud enough in my spirit that it was loud.

Through the years, I've always known that was what I was called to do. But at times, I would question God and ask for clarification, only to be answered at times by HIS SILENCE. It was during those times that I knew I could go back to the time at 9 years of age and rest in the fact that I was ordained by God to do what I was doing.

Over the years, I've wanted at times to get out of this whole "ministry" thing and be a normal person – but God would remind me of the past calling!

I am constantly reminded of this text when wishing God would speak to me:

Proverbs 3:5

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding”

You see, I could not understand in my own mind what was going on at times, but I HEARD GOD SHOUT TO ME IN HIS WORD!!!

I held on to that ... I was going to TRUST IN God no matter what ... No matter how tough life gets, I know that I can trust the same God now that I trusted at 9 years of age, back in 1969.

Friends, when God speaks to you, HOLD ON to it ... never forget the Word of God ... because there will be other times when you do not hear Him ... and in HIS SILENCE ... you must have something to HOLD ON TO!!!

5. WHEN YOU CAN'T HEAR HIM...

HANG IN THERE BECAUSE GOD HAS THE MASTER PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you.”

Psalms 102:17

“The Lord listens to the prayers of the destitute. He will not reject their pleas.”

Many times we are asking God for things that we were never meant to have ... things that are not a part of His perfect plan for our lives!

In those times, IN HIS SILENCE ... wait ... because God has a great plan!!!

Then there are times, when you are faced with a HUGE problem ... like last year when my father was diagnosed with cancer and the fear that gripped my heart. The report was not good – but God knew what He was doing. My father was healed and is now impacting more people than he did before. God knew what He was doing all along.

At times, at the begging, it felt as if God wasn't hearing our prayers. But He was!

The SILENCE OF GOD was interrupted by the WORD OF GOD!

Matthew 8:8

“Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed.”

What was God's plan for my dad's cancer? That many doctors and nurses would hear about Jesus Christ and know that there is a GOD THAT ANSWERS!!! That people all over the world and in their own community on the Yakama Indian Reservation would know that God is GOD OF ALL!

When you feel like God is SILENT ... wait ... He does have the right plan!!!

Conclusion:

There are going to be times when you are faced with the SILENCE OF GOD! Even during these 40 days of giving, fasting and praying, you may feel like God isn't hearing your prayers for there is nothing but silence in return.

Friends, hang in there ... hold on ... because God is there!!!

JUST BECAUSE GOD IS SILENT DOES NOT MEAN THAT HE DOES NOT LISTEN!!! And, He's listening and He does have the master plan in store for you!

Don't quit giving.

Don't quit fasting.

Don't quit praying.

You watch... you wait... you'll see!