

**Thoughts on**  
**“WHEN GOD IS SILENT”**

Extracts from various sources  
August – September 2004

*From: “Prayer” Finding the Heart's True Home.*  
*By Richard J. Foster*  
*Harper San Francisco, 1992.*

ISBN 0-06-062846-4

Pg. 7.

Our problem is that we assume prayer is something to master the way we master algebra or auto mechanics.

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--- God receives us just as we are and accepts our prayers just as they are.

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When we (generally) pray the real condition of our heart is revealed.

(The) most natural and simple way (we) learn to pray (is) by taking up the ordinary events of everyday life and giving them to God.

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There is no more plaintive or heartfelt prayer than the cry of Jesus: “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Math.27:46b)

Times of seeming desertion and absence and abandonment appear to be universal among those who have walked this path of faith before us.

God is hidden from us sometimes. We do everything we know. We pray, We serve. We worship. We live as faithfully as we can and still there is nothing.

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.... We are (in) a living relationship (with God) that begins and develops in mutual freedom.

God grants us perfect freedom because he desires creatures who really choose to be in relationship with him. Through (God's silence) we learn to give God the same freedom.

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Relationships of this kind (i.e. Perfect freedom & trust) can never be manipulated or forced.

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God (often) (purifies) our faith by threatening to destroy it. We are let (by silence and apparent absence) to a profound and holy mistrust of all superficial drives and human strivings.

Through our bareness of soul, God is producing detachment, humility, patience, and perseverance.

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(waiting) silent and (waiting) attentive and responsive; (teaches) us that trust precedes faith.

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Triumph (in) Christ (often comes) through suffering, not (by going) around it.

(Paul's statement) "We are more than conquerors" comes on the other side of hardship and distress and persecution...

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But here is the wonder: the suffering is not for nothing. God takes it and uses it for something beautiful...

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.... God, who knows all and sees all, will set all things straight (right) in the end.

***From: "When God Doesn't Make Sense."***

***By Dr. James Dobson.***

***Tyndale House Publishers, 1993.***

***ISBN 0-8423-8227-5.***

Pg. 5.

God's purpose (is sometimes) a mystery, and there it must (sometimes) remain.

Pg. 7.

There are simply times when things go awry for reasons that may never be understood.

Pg. 9.

... There will be times in every person's life when circumstances don't add up – when God doesn't appear to make sense.

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The word (is) expectations. They set us up for disillusionment. There is no greater distress in human experience than to build one's entire way of life on a certain theological understanding and then have it collapse at a time of unusual stress and pain.

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I (Dobson) am convinced that (these biblical examples of suffering) were provided to help us understand a critically important spiritual phenomenon. Apparently, most believers are permitted to go through emotional and spiritual valleys that are designed to test their faith---Why? Because faith ranks at the top of God's system of priorities. Without it (faith) He said, it is impossible to please Him. (Hebrews 11:6).

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The great danger for people (is) that Satan will use their pain to make them feel victimized by God.

(God) cares about you deeply. For a point of beginning He says, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

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.... Being a follower of Jesus Christ is no foolproof insurance policy against the storms of life.

Pg. 34.

.... Scripture warns us to "lean not on your own understanding". (Proverbs 3:5)

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...Trials and suffering are part of the human condition.

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Having a steadfast faith in God does not guarantee a happy carefree life.

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We must never forget that He, after all, is God.

He is not our servant – we are His.

...When we feel alone in God's waiting room – He simply says: "Trust Me".

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Three basic facts:

1. God is present and involved in our lives even when He seems deaf (or absent).

2. God's training is perfect, even when it appears catastrophically late.

...God's economy of time and energy is very different from ours.

3. Our view of God is too small (pg. 68)

...His power and wisdom cannot even be imagined by us mortals. (We must) accept these times when He defies human logic and sensibilities.

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Don't lean on your ability to understand. Don't turn loose of your faith. But do choose to trust Him, by the exercise of the will He has placed within you. The only other alternative is despair.

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Our faith (is to be) anchored not in signs and wonders but in the Sovereign God of the Universe.

He (God) will not:"perform" on cue to impress us.

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It's true that the Lord often does intervene dramatically in the lives of those in difficulty. But He will be the determiner of how He responds. No one has the right to make that decision for Him.

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Either we continue to believe in God's goodness – or we will descent into bitterness and anger for the suffering around us. There are no other alternatives. Inevitably, you see, we circle back to the necessity of faith.

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An individual in crisis will either grow stronger or become demoralized. Whether certain limits, of course, adversity can have a positive effect on people by helping to build character.

As strange as it seems, habitual well-being is not advantageous to a species. An existence without challenge takes its toll on virtually every living thing.

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Sooner or later our intellect will pose questions we cannot possibly answer. At that point, we would be wise to remember His words "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts that your thoughts". (Isaiah 55:9).

And our reply should be "Not my will, but yours be done". (Luke 22:42).

***From: "A Grief Observed.***

***By C.S. Lewis.***

***Harper, San Francisco, 1961.***

Pg. 17-18.

When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be – or so it feels – welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence.

(Later, Lewis came to this following experience)...

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When I lay these questions (about afterlife & eternal life) before God, I got no answer, but a rather special sort of "No". The locked door (pg 18). It is more like a silent gaze ---Like, "Peace child, you don't understand".

***From: Experiencing God  
By Blackaby & King  
Broadman & Holman Publishers.  
1994. ISBNB 0-80540-61396.***

Pg. 113. Spiritual Concentration.

Our problem is that we pray and then never relate anything that happens to our praying.

After your praying the greatest single thing you need to do is turn on your spiritual concentration. Begin to watch for what happens next.

Pg. 114. The Silences of God

(There are) lengthy (times) when God (is) silent.

The only thing (to do) (is) go back to God. I believe that the God who is in a love relationship with me will let me know what is going on in my life when and if I need to know.

(Do not) frantically go searching for an answer. God will let you know what He is doing in your life when and if you need to know.

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The silence of God means that He is ready to bring into my life a greater revelation of Himself that I have ever known.

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 a deeper knowledge of Himself.

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(Here is) how you can respond when circumstances are difficult or confusing:

- Settle in your mind that God has forever demonstrated His absolute love for you on the cross. That love will never change.
- Do not try to understand what God is like from the middle of your circumstances.
- Go to God and ask Him to help you see His perspective on your situation.
- Wait on the Holy Spirit.
- Adjust your life to God and what you see Him doing in your circumstances.
- Do all he tells you to do.
- Experience God working in and through you to accomplish His purposes.

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When things go wrong take a step back to the basics and examine what you believe God said to you. Take the following steps.

- (1) Clarify in your own words & thoughts what God said; try to separate out your own "additions and interpretations".
- (2) Keep focus on exactly what God said.
- (3) Let Him work out the details and in His timing.

Pg. 115 – More on God's Silence.

Sometimes God is silent as He prepares to bring you into a deeper understanding of Himself. Whenever silence comes, continue doing the last thing God told you and watch and wait for a fresh encounter with Him.

***From: "What the Bible Teaches".***

***By R.A. Torrey,  
Fleming H. Revell Company.  
Publishers 17<sup>th</sup> Edition.***

***Chapter XIV - Prayer.***

Pg. 408.

God will not hear the man who in his heart looks upon sin with any favor or allowances.

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Prayer is often unanswered because it is offered from a selfish purpose.

Prayer is unanswered because sin separates between the one who prays and the God to whom he prays.

So long as we hold onto sin or have any controversy with God, we cannot expect Him to heed our prayers.

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Prayer is unanswered when the one who prays takes idols into his heart.

Anything upon which we have set our heart, and would not give up for Christ's sake, is an idol and hinders prayer.

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