

40 loaves

Breaking Bread with Our
Father Each Day



Daily Readings
to Renew a
Hungry Spirit

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Why does God seem silent in my life?

I recently read an article by a theologian who insisted that God does not speak. She thought the whole idea was ridiculous, since God has no vocal cords. “For crying out loud,” I said with smug contempt. “Of course he doesn’t have a larynx!”

But then I set the article on my lap and realized that God often seems silent in my life. He suddenly seemed like an imaginary friend whom I talk to but who never answers. *Sure*, I said to myself. *I write about him, talk to him, wait on him...but nothing seems to come the other way. He doesn't show me his face; I don't feel his touch; I don't hear his voice.*

So I looked out my window and wondered if the theologian was right after all. I asked myself if God really is silent—or does it just seem like he is?

We know that God “speaking” in our lives is a metaphor for seeing evidence of him and experiencing his presence. When we say he seems silent, we probably mean that we don’t *experience* him.

And that's a shame for us, for that sense of abandonment can lead to unhealthy doubt, distance, and sometimes disbelief.

And why not? It's not easy for sane people to speak with someone who doesn't talk back.

So what's really going on? Is God really silent?

The Bible is packed with references to God speaking to his prophets and through his creation. "Let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar... Let the field exult... Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy" (Psalm 96:11–12). But the psalmist also said this: "Oh that My [God's] people would *listen* to Me" (81:13).

Hmm. It occurs to me that my sense of not experiencing God may not be about God at all. It may be about me.

I may need to rethink my idea of listening.

A friend of mine in Scotland angrily waited on Jesus for a response to her suffering. Finally, as she put it, "He asked me to tell him about the beauty of the day. I choked out a bit about the poppies and then went right back to the rage.

"He gently accepted the poppies and then asked me a bit more about the beauty of the day... I sighed and did just that until gradually my strongest awareness was of his love."

As I think of her story, I realize that God is *not* silent, but rather he offers his voice in ways I too often neglect. It just may be that if I listen differently, he's there waiting for me to experience him in:

- creation
- the Bible
- being Jesus to others
- impressions of the Spirit

- others themselves
- silence

Ironically, silence can be one of the greatest means of experiencing God. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10, NIV) is an invitation for us to hear God in the quiet places. For in stillness, the noise of the world gives way.

And when the world is set aside, God emerges.

But how do we know when we are hearing (experiencing) God? It’s a good question. So much around us is just images and chatter.

How do we listen for God?

God is love. We listen for God by listening for love.

And love waits for us to notice her in beauty and in wisdom, in Word and words, in song and deed...beyond us and from the Spirit within us. So why not begin to open our awareness to the *experience* of love that permeates all that is? For when we experience love, we have heard the voice of God.

And by this we will know that God is not silent in our lives at all.



Food for Thought

What am I listening *for*?

What am I listening *to*?

What do I expect to hear?

Are my ideas of experiencing God’s presence too limited?

Has God spoken to me in ways I haven’t noticed?

A PRAYER

*How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So you impart to human hearts
The blessings of your heaven.
No ears may hear your coming,
But in our world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive you still,
Dear Jesus, enter in.*

ADAPTED FROM "O LITTLE TOWN
OF BETHLEHEM," PHILLIPS BROOKS
(1835-1893)