

Lifelines

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November 14, 2025

Topic: Life Experiences birth Life Stories

When Silence Is God's Answer

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Have you ever prayed to God, asking Him to do something for you? Perhaps to heal a loved one, or provide you with a good job? And all you felt was silence?

As a youngster I received Jesus into my life to forgive me my sins, and from that point on, I knew that God was in my life and that if I died I would join Him in Heaven. But I knew very little beyond that.

But in my second year of college, I began to seek more than that. My church's college group brought me a new awareness that Jesus also desired an ongoing relationship with me. In those early days, God desired to show me that He was real and was involved in my daily life. Jesus came to give us a new quality of life, an abundantly overflowing life (John 10:10). I prayed, i.e. talked with God in my thoughts, all through each day. And to build my confidence in God, He answered most prayers as I verbalized them, or thought them. I even prayed for things like a parking space to open up in the university parking lot! Time and time again, as I was driving in looking for a parking spot near my class, a car would be pulling out as I was pulling in. It was amazing.

Then I entered a period of time when I would pray, and there would be silence, and no parking spots. God was teaching me that He is Lord, not me; that He is not just my spiritual bell hop or room-service. Today He always answers my prayers; just not always immediately, nor in the way I expect.

When we pray, and the answer to our prayers is God's silence, we need to ask Him to reveal to us what He is doing in that situation. We have just such an example in John 11:5-7 (NIV), which says: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days, and then He said to His disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

Lazarus was sick, and Jesus could have healed Him. But He chose to stay put for two days. Why would Jesus not respond to the sisters' expectation for Jesus to come immediately and heal Lazarus? Why was silence the answer to Mary's and Martha's request?

Our human reaction is often to accuse God of not caring! Or wonder if He was on vacation, or if we did something that caused Him to not respond to our prayers. Jesus' disciples probably were asking the same questions in their minds. In John 11:14-15 Jesus tells the disciples that Lazarus is dead, and they were now going to go awaken Lazarus from the sleep of death. Jesus said that He was glad that He was not there when Lazarus died, because in the death of Lazarus God was doing something much larger than they could comprehend, much larger than merely healing a sickness. Lazarus' death was to become a definitive proclamation of what Jesus' life's purpose was. Jesus came not just to keep us from getting sick and dying; He came that we might experience eternal, death-defying life now, and also resurrection upon our dying.

Jesus answered the prayers of preserving the life of Lazarus, but not merely his physical life was to be preserved, but his whole life, soul, spirit, and body were to be raised from the dead to validate for us that by putting our faith in Jesus we receive eternal life, and indeed will never perish (John 3:16).

So the next time the answer to a prayer is God's silence, don't lose heart. Don't be tempted to say it is because God doesn't love you. He does love you, and is preparing an answer that would go far beyond that one thing we ask. When God is silent in responding to our prayers, maybe we are to rethink what we are praying for, or be willing to wait for the whole answer.

We can be assured that He is already in the process of answering it before we verbalized it. In the meantime we can continue moving forward, and soon we will discover the plans that He has for us, something so great it hasn't even entered our consciousness yet!

Hang on, and don't settle for second-best. Wait for the best! God is at work, and even in the silence, we encounter spiritually. Keep trusting and praying.

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