



EXCHANGING LIFE PUBLISHING

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## When God Is Not Speaking

By Larry Bennett

*"And yet it is true that this God who desires to give Himself to you, will often conceal Himself from you - from you, the very one who seeks Him." (Guyon)<sup>1</sup>*

If you have been a "God-seeker" very long, you have likely experienced the above statement on at least a few occasions. Why does God, who loves us so intensely, seem to close a deaf ear to our prayers, especially in time of great need? There are at least three reasons.

**First, God wants us to be continually pursuing Him.** If you are the typical Christian, then like me, you have a tendency to get spiritually lazy when things are going great. We may have our daily devotions and shoot up a few prayers during the day, but we lack passion in our pursuit of Him. We may not say it, but we sometimes live like it: "God, I am OK now, but I will be sure to get really serious about prayer if I hit a snag I can't fix. You will be the first one I call on."

Every committed follower of Jesus is quick to call upon the Lord when things begin to get out of control, as it should be. However, God's higher desire for us is to pursue Him even when times are good. God created us for fellowship with Him. It is the instinctive nature of a child of God to pursue a deeper and richer fellowship with the Father. So when we sense those times when God seems to turn a deaf ear to our prayers, it is a sign that we need to examine our passion of pursuit.

**Secondly, it is a test of our faith.** Do you *really* believe, even when you can't "feel" His presence? As a faithful follower of Jesus, our faith is continually tested in numerous ways. The deeper our walk, the greater the test. It's like the old story about the man who was chased by a bear. In his attempt to outrun the bear, he ran over the cliff and on the way down, latched onto a limb. While hanging there in midair (hundreds of feet from the valley floor), he called out to God for help. God said, "Do you trust Me?" The man quickly declared, "Yes, I believe and fully trust You." Then God said, "Let go of the limb."

Sometimes trusting God when we don't see a logical way out is like the above story. We must trust God and be willing to let go of the limb. We must trust Him because of who He is and because of His proven faithfulness in the past. Each time we come to one of those moments and we trust God even though our emotions are all over the place, our faith is increased. How does our faith increase? Because in the end, God gives us what we really **need**—even though it may not be what we prayed for. Faith must be tested in order to grow and have real value. Now you may better understand what Paul said concerning his weakness and suffering, "*I thank God for various temptations*" (2 Cor. 12:10 and many more examples in the Pauline epistles). He knew that trouble and suffering produces faith-building endurance.

**Thirdly, during times of dryness we learn something about ourselves.** When I present at conferences, there is a point in my seminar when I ask the audience, "Who is the person that gives you the greatest problem in your life?" A few may answer the "devil," some may say it is

their spouse. But the overwhelming majority of people answer, "It's me." When we turn toward pursuing God during times of spiritual dryness, we begin to see ourselves as we really are. We quickly realize how our whole world is revolving around ourselves. We see our unforgiveness, our quickness to set someone straight, our self-protection, and all those things that point to a lack of brokenness.

I vividly remember military boot camp as if it were yesterday. The best way to describe it was that they took all my rights away. I couldn't go and come as I pleased. I couldn't talk unless spoken to. I had to go to bed and get up when they said, even when it meant getting up in the middle of the night for a two hour march around the parade field. I had to march in the rain and crawl through the mud with my rifle under barbed wire with machine gunfire buzzing above my head. It wasn't fair; why was I treated so badly and subjected to such dangerous circumstances? If I had known it was going to be like this, I wouldn't have joined. And to top it off, they wouldn't let me do things my way.

It wasn't until the end of boot camp that I realized their overall purpose. They were breaking us down so they could make productive soldiers out of us. They were breaking down my self-sufficient, undisciplined will. Their goal was to make me a good soldier, one who followed orders without question and was ready for conflict in a moment's notice. Wow, what a proud moment when our team came together as a unit. We were proud to be soldiers, ready to serve wherever Uncle Sam sent us.

In a similar manner, that's what God is doing in our lives. He allows us to experience trouble we can't escape, people we love whom we can't fix, and failures and disappointments we think we don't deserve. In addition to all of that, there are bouts of loneliness and despair...all because He wants to break our stubborn self-will. He wants us to give up on our self-sufficiency and fully cast ourselves on Him and Him alone. Life in the Lord's army is paradoxical. To receive, you must first give. To save your life, you must first lose it. But the rewards are heavenly; there is rest for the soul, inner peace, and daily fellowship with the Creator of the universe.

Next time you feel God has withdrawn from you, remember the three reasons: (1) God is testing your faith; (2) He is exposing your self-sufficiency; and (3) it is His cue for you to readjust your priorities and pursue Him like never before. Gaze on Him and be transformed.

*"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17, NASB).*

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Permission obtained from writer to republish *When God Is Not Speaking*. Editorial changes approved by author.

<sup>1</sup> Madame Jeanne Guyon. *"Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ."* Chapter: Periods of Dryness. (Jacksonville, FL: SeedSowers Christian Books Publishing House), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1981.

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