

God Seems Mean... When God Seems Silent!

When preaching a sermon, I start off with prayer and ask for The Holy Spirit's guidance for truth and direction with the message. Without fail, I am immediately flooded with thoughts and ideas and the message kind of falls into place.

Well...That was until this week's sermon. When I started to come up with a final message for our sermon series "When God Seems Mean", I began praying and asking The Lord for guidance and inspiration to speak into my heart His truth for His Glory. And for days...Nothing!

No voice from heaven saying "Here Steve...speak on this."

All I heard was silence.

And I became frustrated and found myself getting a little angry with God wondering, "What am I going to do? Why are you not speaking to me Lord? I'm trying my best and you're not helping me. You're not there." And do you know what happened?

I realized...That **WAS** the message.

And... not only was that my message...But was my title as well.

God Seems Mean...When God Seems Silent!

Tell me...Have any of you been in dire need of God's direction in your life or with a series of problems that you're going through? Or a decision in your life that you **NEED** to know where to turn? And all you hear...is nothing.

No voice, No feeling in your gut.

Just the voice of a silent savior.

If you haven't realized it, we all have been there. Some of you may be going through it right now. It's frustrating and quite frankly...seems like the opposite of a God who is personally involved in our lives.

In fact, I remember reading a written prayer not too long ago from someone who I deeply respect who was also going through a period of silence.

It reads...

"As for myself, Father, I have nothing to say for the darkness is so dark, the pain is so

painful. Sometimes the grip of pain is so great that I can hear my own voice call out – My God, help me!

When I help my Sisters draw very close to Jesus – when I teach them to love Him with a deep, devoted, personal love, I long to be able to do the same. . . . I see them love God – come so close to Him – grow daily so much like Him – and I, Father, am just alone, empty, excluded, just not wanted.”

This was written by Mother Teresa .

And like mother Teresa, we see this same pain in the Bible.

Abraham, the father of our faith, spent 13 years without any communication from God .

We see David over and over cry out to God in his psalms:

O God, do not keep silence; do not hold thy peace or be still (Ps 83:1).

Why dost thou hide thy face? (Ps 44:25)

Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” (Ps 115:2).

We can even read in both Exodus as well as Numbers, that the Israelites, God's chosen people, who were led out of their captivity from Egypt, who escaped through the Red Sea which God Himself parted, **wound up stuck in the middle of a desert thirsty and wandering around blindly for years.**

Is this us as well?

Are we stuck wandering around life's desert?

That dry and arid place where we long for guidance and life sustaining water.

God seems mean because He seems silent by keeping us there.

But I would like to ask...that maybe...just maybe ...God has a greater purpose for staying silent during times in our lives when we want to hear from Him. **Maybe, God's Silence is louder than we think!**

So I'd like us to turn to **Numbers 20**

1 In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin,

2 Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. 3 They quarreled with Moses and said, “If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! 4 Why did you bring the Lord's community into this

wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? 5 Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!”

6 Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. 7 The Lord said to Moses, 8 “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. **Speak to that rock** before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.”

9 So Moses took the staff from the Lord’s presence, just as he commanded him. 10 He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, **“Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?”** 11 Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

12 But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, **you** will not bring this community into the land I give them.

What was God doing here? First, He allowed the Israelite's to thirst so long that they are starting to freak out and blame Moses. So Moses freaks out and both He and Arron fall face down begging the Lord for help.

What does God tell them to do?

SPEAK TO A ROCK?

A ROCK!

I don't know how many of you ever tried speaking to a rock but I have to tell you, a rock is not too loquacious to say the least. Trust me ...I have tried.

Back in the 70s there was a fad that lasted about a year. It was pet rocks.



This fad was one of the first to show how someone can get rich overnight from basically selling something stupid.

But people liked it because it was funny and...They found themselves talking to this thing. And the psychology of that is interesting because people tend to speak more truthfully to things that don't talk back.

But as we all know, rocks are rocks.

Right?

So why is God asking them to speak to one?

I have to ask you...Who else is called a rock in the Bible?

Jesus.

Romans 9:33 As it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Ok...what about the water? Who gives us living water? Jesus again!

The rock (who is Jesus) said this in **John 4:14**;

But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

You see this was all symbolic of Jesus Christ. As many of you may know...There were two times in the Bible where Moses was commanded to confront a rock to gain this life saving water.

40 years before Moses was commanded by God in **Exodus 17:6**

I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. **Strike** the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.

God told Moses to strike the rock the first time and the second time in Numbers he said talk to the rock. Why? Because it represented God's plan for salvation. Jesus.

Jesus the rock, was struck, beaten and ultimately crucified for the remission of sin.



He gave his life saving water for all to drink.

So Moses struck the rock representing Jesus being struck down some 1400 years later. In Numbers, God said to speak to the rock because this is how we receive the life saving water.

We confess with our mouth...Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead.

You see that weird, mean thing that God put Moses and the Israelite's through was for our benefit. So we can sit back thousands of years later and say, "Wow...Look how amazing God put all this together. How the Bible is all connected. How powerful is its message of salvation."

God had a lot to say...In His Silence.

Even the act that followed shows us the message of salvation.

I mean look at how God handled the disobedience of Moses and the complaining of the Israelite's. Did God say "No. You messed up now. Forget it."

NO!

God still gave them the living water despite their failures

Because he's not mean. God demonstrated to us that while we were still sinners, He shows mercy and grace.

The reasons for silence

What I have learned through all of this... is that God always has reasons for His silence. One of them is this.

#1 He wants us to speak to Him.

The Israelites didn't speak to God or to Moses about their concerns. They spoke AT God.

There is a huge difference between 'speaking to' someone and 'speaking at' them. When we speak at people there is no connection. No dialog.

They simply grumbled and complained and lashed out just venting emotions. God doesn't just want our emotions...He wants us.

He wants our thoughts. Our minds. Our questions. He wants us to speak to the rock because we are engaged with Him personally. Even salvation requires it.

When I accepted Jesus Christ to be my savior it wasn't God just badgering me with long lectures about how rotten I was. then saying "*fine... you're forgiven now.*"

No.... He says **you** speak. "Confess with **your** lips. Speak to the rock."

God, through His silence, forces us to go to the place where we are not just taking it in, but are laying it out!

Our hearts are pouring out.

This is an issue with Christians in our world today who come to church, take it all in, absorbing it like a sponge and yet, we don't share those things or our faith, or take time to speak truth into a fallen world. No, what we do is take the easy way by engaging people on Facebook with our little debates on things we disagree with.

That's not speaking to someone, it's speaking at them

The truth is... **Even a sponge needs to be emptied in order to be useful.**



God wants us to speak to Him and speak for Him. To empty ourselves. And then listen to His small voice to get refilled again.

Being honest with God in prayer, being real with others takes practice and

discipline.

Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;

God is a refuge for us.

This is why God is sometimes silent. Not because He is mean. Because our true selves come out during this time. Just like that pet rock.

Why does God keep silent?

#2 To get our attention

His silence is like an alarm that rings when we are trapped in a pattern of sin.

We read in **Deuteronomy 31:16-18**;

Behold, these people will rise and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them ... And I will surely hide my face in that day on account of all the evil they have done, because they have turned to other gods.

Dez' thought -

“GOD may be ignoring a certain request because WE haven't done what He asked us to do. Like with Tristan, if he wants to play with his iPad he has to brush his teeth, or take a bath, or get dressed, or something he doesn't really want to do to get to something he wants to do. If he doesn't do what I've asked then he doesn't get what he really wants. And then the crying and whining comes. The complaining. I have to ignore all of that and not give in. **Sometimes God ignores us just the same until we have done what He has asked.**

#3 God wants to be pursued. He wants our minds, our bodies, our desire to seek him.

Jeremiah 29:13

13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Deuteronomy 4:29

29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Proverbs 8:17

17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.

Story of Desiree

So we must understand that yes, we all go through moments in life where God seems silent as we are wandering around in life's desert, thirsty, frightened and alone.

But God didn't abandon us. Remember... **Even Jesus who was the faithful servant, with whom God was Greatly pleased cried out on the cross the words of the psalmist...My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?**

God was there. He was just silent so that the meaning of the message would be heard. Not the words.

God's silence speaks to us deeply as it causes us to reflect and to seek Him. He is a rock, His words are set in stone.

But like a rock , Jesus becomes a stumbling stone in our lives getting us to think and reflect on where we stand with God.

If you are here today and you have never responded to that still small voice calling you to Jesus I'd like to give you the opportunity right here and right now.