

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

Hiding places?

God is yearning for fellowship with his people as a father for his children. Just as in Eden he calls to us "Where are you - I want to meet with you?" Where are we? So often hiding, just like our ancestors. "Sorry Lord I am too busy with my work, I just have to stay longer at the office tonight, I have no time for you." "I wish I could have time with you but I have to look after the children and get food for my husband, maybe I can get a quiet moment tomorrow!" "There is a really good series on TV I have watch the next episode." Some of us have more spiritual reasons "I am really too busy in the church at the moment to find time to be alone with you Lord." "Bible study is so fascinating I never get time left to just listen to the Lord" - that's one of mine! Sometimes even our prayers can be so full of burdens for our families or ourselves that we do not have time to listen to what is on God's heart.

What if He is not there?

Most of us have read the story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42. There Jesus made it absolutely clear that there is nothing more important than sitting at his feet and listening to him. Why is it so hard for many Christians, me included, to give time for the important thing. Is it that we are afraid to confront the silence that comes when we cease all our activities and just come before the Lord to listen? We know how to come before him and talk. But to listen - that's hard. Sometimes if I do try to be quiet in front of the Lord I feel I am stupid. There am I sitting alone in my room, I can't see, hear, touch, taste or smell God. Maybe he isn't there? It's more easy to forget this question when I am filling the time with prayers or Bible study or talking to others. But when I am just in silence alone, sometimes the question comes.

God has the right to be God!

I went through a period of several months four years ago when nothing at all seemed to happen when I came before the Lord. But in that silence I got a very encouraging thought - I was giving God the chance to be God! If I could be sure that every time I came before the Lord he would talk to me, then I might wonder who was in control. But if he is sometimes silent, then I learn the delightfully humbling lesson of waiting on him to speak. He is God. He speaks if and when he wants. He is silent when he chooses. My responsibility is simply to come before him in the place of listening and give him the possibility to speak, if he chooses. But I cannot make him speak. Of course if I always rush around and never take time to listen, then I am missing out on God's best for me. He may still speak. When we lay alone in a hospital bed or stand at the grave of a beloved one or sign on at the unemployment office, then maybe we hear his voice. But this is surely not the only time and circumstance in which our loving Father wants to speak to his children. He wants an intimate love relationship with us. He is calling us to him so that he can tell us he loves us. Isn't that natural for a father?

The Father's call today

There has been controversy, as always happens, about the meaning of the renewal that has been going on for the past couple of years. Some focus on laughter, others on jerking, some shake their heads in disapproval. But the message I am hearing through many sources: books, testimonies, the internet, my own experience, is that God is saying to his church today, to his tired, dried up, busy, program orientated "Marthas", I love you, come aside and rest awhile, let me carry your burdens, learn of me, receive my healing. For some who hear this message in their hearts there is such relief that they just cry and cry. Others just laugh and laugh. No matter, we are all different from each other, we respond in different ways. How is not important. What is important is that we come to know the love of God poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Receiving

It seems that the key to this happening is that we humble ourselves, and take time to be silent before the Lord, maybe asking others to lay hands on us and pray for us, maybe being just alone. I find that both are helpful. Having others pray for us is often the key that opens the door of our tightly locked hearts, being silent before the Lord alone and waiting to receive from him helps to keep the newly opened door, open. We are not just talking about a one-off experience but a new life style of listening to Jesus and receiving his love and life.

The yearning heart

Do you hear this call in your hearts as you read this? If you don't then this is not the time for you. The Lord has other things for you at present, don't worry and don't blame yourself, God knows what we each need. But don't condemn those who do feel the call. If you are one of those and you do feel a yearning in your heart for more of God's love, please respond. Your beloved one is calling you, he wants you to know the sweetness of his love. Don't waste this time of inner longing, it may pass by and you will find it is not so easy to feel it again. So open your heart and wait and listen. If your Father speaks words of love to you or hugs you in his arms, receive it with joy. If he is silent, be glad for he has the right to be silent because he is God. But don't give up because one day he will speak again when he has made you ready to hear and your heart will leap with great joy at the voice of your beloved who you have not heard for so long.

One thing is necessary

Jesus said to Martha "One thing is necessary, Mary has chosen the good thing." Will you choose it? Tell your Father you want intimacy with him, then let him lead you into it in the unique way he has chosen just for you.

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