

**Lesson 7**  
**A Prayer When God Is Silent**  
**Psalm 44**

**Purpose:** To discover that we need to pray, even when God is silent.

“Is not God silent about Stalingrad (the site of the deadliest battle in the Second World War)? What do we hear above and under its ruins? Do we not hear the roar of artillery, the tumult of the world and the cries of the dying? But where is the voice of God? When we think of God, is it not suddenly so quiet, so terribly quiet, in the witch’s kitchen of this hell, that one can hear a pin drop even though grenades are bursting around us? There is neither voice nor answer.” Helmut Thielicke, *The Silence of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1962)

We have not all lived through the atrocities of war. But, we all are vulnerable to the loss and trauma. The silence of God is perhaps one of life’s most frightening experiences. What do we do? How do we proceed when God is silent? Do we withdraw in fear? Do we give up all hope? That is certainly our temptation.

**Group Discussion:** Think of a time when a friend did not respond to letters or phone messages for a long time. What was your reaction to his or her silence?

**Personal Reflection.** Think of a time when you asked for God’s help and did not sense any help or response from God. Write two or three words on paper that describe some of what you thought or felt at that time.

**Note from the ESV Study Bible: Psalm 44.** This is a hymn for when the people of God as a whole have suffered some great calamity at the hands of their enemies and are seeking God’s help. The calamity is particularly painful, since God has chosen His people, given them a special place and favored them over their enemies in the past.

**Outline of Psalm 44**

- **44:1-8** We Have Heard What You Did In The Past.
- **44: 9-16** But Now You Have Rejected Us.
- **44:17-22** But We Have Not Forsaken You.
- **44:23-26** Therefore Come Now To Help Us

This psalm shows the way for us to pursue God even when He is silent. Read **Psalm 44**

**Discussion:**

1. What anguish do you hear in this psalm?
  - a. In this psalm, we hear the mental and emotional pain of a people that have been or at least appear to have been rejected by God. They are troubled because it seems as if God has forgotten them.

2. How does the writer contrast God in the past (**vv. 1-8**) with God in the present (**vv. 9-16**)?
  - a. The writer contrasts the victories and triumphs of the days of their fathers with the rejection and disgrace that they are currently experiencing.
3. What strikes you as you read the writer's description of God's care?
  - a. As you read this psalm, you can see how God is personally involved with His people as He cares for them. Look at all the use of the words *Thou, thine, thy, and thee* which has reference to God. The ESV Bible uses the words, *You and your*.
  - b. Let's look at **verse 3**.
4. What strikes you as you read the writer's description of God's silence?
  - a. The writer describes God's silence as if God is being cruel, actively punishing them by His lack of responsiveness. *This is not a doctrinal statement asserting that God is cruel.*
  - b. It is a statement from the heart (gut) about how he feels when God is not responsive to him, when he does not save or protects him.
5. The psalmist argues with God that the situation he and his people find themselves in is not fair. How does he express this (**vv. 17-22**)?
  - a. He expresses the unfairness of the of the situation by noting:
    - i. They hadn't forgotten God.
    - ii. They hadn't dealt falsely in God's covenant.
    - iii. Their hearts are not turned back.
    - iv. Their steps hadn't declined from God's way.
  - b. The psalmist noted that for God's sake, they were killed all the day long and counted as sheep for the slaughter.
6. What is the significance of this plea for fairness and justice?
  - a. This plea for fairness and justice is significant because even though God is silent, the people still believe that they can seek God for answers and relief. It also gives the impression that they have searched themselves to see if they had done anything wrong or deserving of the silence.
7. The psalmist summarizes his accusations against God in **verse 23 and 24**. What does he accuse God of?
  - a. He accuses God of being asleep and hiding His face from the writer or the congregation. He also makes an accusation that God has forgotten their affliction and oppression.
8. What would it be like for you talk to God in this way?

9. In the final phrase of the psalm, the writer appeals to God's unfailing love. This is a dramatic contrast to the accusations he has just made. How can these be reconciled?
  - a. The whole psalm is actually an appeal to God's love. It is because of God's love that God will not want his people to experience his silence as harshness. It is because of his love that he will eventually respond to their need.
10. Think of a time when it seemed God was silent. How did your experience at that time compare with the experiences described in this psalm?
11. Think of a time when you experienced God's unfailing love. How would you describe that experience?
12. What encouragement does this psalm offer you for times when God seems silent?
13. What might help you hang on to your faith when God seems silent?
  - a. When it comes to times when God seems silent, know that you are not alone or the only one that feels that way. Many people struggle with this from time to time, including many of God's most faithful. If we are able to talk about our experience with other believers, and ask for their support, understanding and prayers, we will not be so alone in these times. Be sure to pray for each other. This can help us to hold on to our faith when God seems silent.

**Prayer:** Spend some time talking to God about your need to know his presence with you in difficult times.

### **Now or Later**

Often it is helpful in difficult times to remember times when we could see God's love and care for us. Consider starting a journal devoted to such moments: write about several events from the past when you were aware of God's care for you, and keep the journal handy to continue adding to it.