

GNITN

#735

When God Is Silent

A Stop Sign

My wife and I live on a corner lot. And it is a corner that has a four-way stop which means that everyone has to stop. Or so you would think. For 17 years we are amazed at how few people actually come to a complete stop. It is so bad that we can tell by the sounds of the cars if they even tried to stop. We have it down to a science and just joke about it. We've also thought about sitting in our car with a hairdryer and maybe some aviator sunglasses and pointing it at people racing to the stop sign in the hopes of instilling even a twinge of conscience in them. That was until we were told that impersonating a police officer could put us in jail and not the violators of the stop sign. Yes, it is frustrating when we think of how many accidents could happen when drivers constantly ignore a simple, red-shaped sign, the universal symbol of stopping before proceeding. I know that there are people who really do care and do their level best not to be that person, the one who only obeys laws when they're being watched. However, I also know from years of experience that those people are few and far between. Fortunately many of us have a strong conscience. It's called our spouse.

That Voice

While not everyone has what is called an internal dialogue, the vast majority do. It's that seemingly constant banter inside our brains that talks with us. In an [article](#) from *brainzmagazine.com* we read this:

The human mind, a marvel of complexity, engages in a constant conversation with itself known as inner dialogue. Our minds are amazing storytelling machines able to conjure up a multiplex of stories about our future, our past, and even the very present moment. How you spin these stories is vital to your overall happiness with life – and also the level of your achievement. It is the workings of your inner dialogue that lead us to that “can or can’t” in the very famous Henry Ford quote: “If you think you can or if you think you can’t, either way, you are right.”

The article goes on to detail the various reasons that we need to listen or in some cases control that voice. It tells us this voice can be helpful in problem solving, emotional regulation, and self-reflection and identity formation. But not everyone seems to agree just how it got there or how it works, but this conversation in our minds is powerful, very powerful indeed. And for those who know the Bible, it needs to be controlled:

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. (Prov 4:23, NKJV)

I also like how another version puts it:

Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life. (Prov 4:23, TLB)

While some tell us that those thoughts wield great power, even the power to create in a god-like fashion, the Bible warns us to be very careful with them. Not all those voices want the best for you.

Take Charge

I like how an [article](#) from *gotquestions.org* frames this controlling our thoughts:

Taking control of our thoughts is essential...The "heart" includes the mind and all that proceeds from it. Someone said that every sin we commit, we commit twice, once in our thoughts and again when we act upon those thoughts. It is easier to rid our lives of sin if we attack it at this fundamental thought level rather than waiting for it to become rooted in our lives by our actions and then try to pull it out.

And the process of taking control of these thoughts is detailed as a military fight:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor 10:5, NIV)

I don't think I need to tell you this, but in the Greek the word for taking captive means making these thoughts "a captive" or "prisoner of war." You are literally capturing them so they can't do you any harm or more harm. And when you have them captured, you turn them over to your leader, Jesus. Unfortunately, not everyone knows this war strategy and rather than treating these arrogant obstacles to our health they entertain them like guests in their homes. They coddle them and want them to feel welcome in our minds. These voices are working under a façade of happiness with smiles of hope when they are really casing your mind so they can come back under the cover of darkness to steal, kill, and destroy you. But enough of those voices.

God Is Speaking

People who are depressed can testify that they feel alone and helpless and are besieged by thoughts of despair and hopelessness. They are a lot like the prophet Elijah who, after having one of the most triumphal moments in his ministry was found running for his life and cowering in fear in a cave not too much later. Here is a snippet of that moment:

When Ahab told Queen Jezebel what Elijah had done, and that he had slaughtered the prophets of Baal, 2 she sent this message to Elijah: "You killed my prophets, and now I swear by the gods that I am going to kill you by this time tomorrow night."

3 So Elijah fled for his life; he went to Beersheba, a city of Judah, and left his servant there. 4 Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day, and sat down under a broom bush and prayed that he might die.

"I've had enough," he told the Lord. "Take away my life. I've got to die sometime, and it might as well be now." (1 Kings 19:1-4, TLB)

This mighty man of God known for his miracles and powerful words was ready to pack it in. He thought he was the only voice for God and no one else was standing for God but him. However, none of that was true. As the narrative goes on, God did communicate with him and assured him that 7,000 others weren't bowing before Baal. And He then gave Elijah purpose once more.

Elijah's thoughts were only giving him one side of the story. God gave him the whole picture.

When God Is Silent

"The heavens above you will be as unyielding as bronze, and the earth beneath will be as iron. (Deut 28:23 TLB)

But what happens when we do know how to hear God's voice and are experts in hearing Him speak and He doesn't speak when we cry out to Him? There are times when it feels like your prayers are bouncing off a metal blockade. In the verse above, the reason was rebellion against

God. But there are times when even the most righteous of believers pray, and pray, and pray and all they get in return is deafening silence. One such man was Daniel:

Then he said, "Don't be frightened, Daniel, for your request has been heard in heaven and was answered the very first day you began to fast before the Lord and pray for understanding; that very day I was sent here to meet you. 13 But for twenty-one days the mighty Evil Spirit who overrules the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the top officers of the heavenly army, came to help me, so that I was able to break through these spirit rulers of Persia. 14 Now I am here to tell you what will happen to your people, the Jews, at the end times—for the fulfillment of this prophecy is many years away." (Dan 10:12-14, TLB)

Daniel had a vision and needed to know what it meant. He's asked God for the interpretation before and always got a response, but this time, for 21 days he heard nothing. He could have thought a myriad of things for those three weeks, things like God didn't care or he was not living holy enough to receive the answer. None of those or any other of Daniel's thoughts were true. No, it was simply a battle in the heavens being waged in the process of delivering what Daniel asked for. Let me just tell you, God is never silent. It may just seem like it from time to time.

His Thoughts

Your thoughts are of great worth to me, O God. How many there are! 18 If I could number them, there would be more than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You. (Ps 139:17-18, NLV)

God is always speaking and when it comes to us, He's thinking about us way more than we're thinking about Him. I could do the math for you but trust me on that. So if He is always thinking of us and therefore communicating to us, why are there times when we can't hear Him? Rather than go through a long explanation I'll just tell you that the many theories you can come up with won't necessarily help. It is true that sin could be clouding our minds, but in most cases, God sent the answer like He did for Daniel and there is a battle in the heavens to get it to you. We need to do what Daniel did and stay active in our spiritual disciplines until we hear His voice again. And we need to avoid doing what Elijah did which was get dejected, despondent, and depressed. If you were expecting an exhaustive commentary filled with scholarly exhortations, encouragements, or elucidation well, I could do that, but it's not rocket science or brain surgery, although mental discipline is involved. It's the proverbial kiss rule, Keep It Simple Saints. Yes, allow Holy Spirit to shine a light on areas of sin that need to be addressed, but also know that sometimes an answer could take more time to get to us. Like an obedient soldier, continue doing what you were last told until new orders arrive.