

When Heaven Is Silent

by Shane Idleman

When heaven is silent, it's essential to wait and listen to God, trust in His sovereignty, and understand that waiting time is not wasted time.

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Scripture: Psalm 28:1, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 64:12, Revelation 8:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith in Silence"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the challenging experience of silence from heaven during prayer, emphasizing that it can be a time of instruction, conviction, and character building. He encourages believers to remain faithful and not turn to other voices when God seems silent, as this silence can lead to deeper dependence on God and a stronger faith. Idleman highlights that God's timing is often different from ours, and that waiting can be a period of spiritual growth and preparation. He also reminds listeners that unrepentant sin can hinder their relationship with God, and that true faith is built through trust in God's sovereignty, even when answers are not immediately visible.

Transcript

We're picking back up in Revelation 8, so if you haven't been here, you might want to go back and listen to the messages. Something really stood out to me that I want to talk to you about because it's so important on this topic of when heaven is silent. Anyone been there in your prayer life? When it's silent, you don't know what course to take next, you don't know how to get through something.

Lord, why aren't you answering this prayer? Things don't seem to be changing, they actually seem to be getting worse. And so, we're gonna look at what to do when heaven is silent. So it's not really a expository message through the Revelation 8, I'll try to get to that next Sunday.

But I did want to stop here and just talk about this portion of Revelation 8. But the irony is, many commentators, it's funny, as I was studying commentators, I kind of realized this, or thought this in the past, but didn't want to really say much. But it seems to me like chapter eight should not start at chapter one, chapter eight should not start at verse one. I'm gonna put it up there.

It seems like it ends with chapter seven. But for some reason, when they divided the Bible into a chapter and verses about 1500, and 1500 or so, 500 years ago, they decided to put this one, eight, start chapter eight with this verse. But let's go back to what I talked about last time.

These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation. That was in Revelation seven. And so there seems to be not just tribulation that we all go through, but a season of great tribulation.

And the verbiage that Jesus uses, it makes it think, appear like it's gonna be a cataclysmic event for the whole earth. And over the past couple months, I've talked about different views out there that some think that this whole tribulation period was regarding AD 70 when Titus overcame Jerusalem. But we do see the language here seems to be more of something that is more global, or at least the scope is a lot more than just Jerusalem.

And so he's talking about these are the ones who came out of the great tribulation and they washed the robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore. The sun shall not strike them nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water.

And if you didn't hear the message I gave a few weeks ago on living fountains of water, make sure to make that a point and do that this week. Because that is so important. And I believe second only to salvation, and I really believe this, I've said this for years, second only to salvation, obviously that's the primary message, that's the main thrust of church.

I believe second is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. That deep work of the Holy Spirit, that drinking deeply of the waters of living water. And Jesus said if you drink of this water you will never thirst again.

And we sing that sometimes. For example, that let it rain song. Madeline was going back and forth into Spanish.

I don't know if you caught that. She's not speaking tongues, it's Spanish. I didn't know if anybody was gonna say anything.

But, and so, let it rain. And some people really understand what it means, but some people don't. Or when we say God rend the heavens, well come down, aren't you already here? I mean, and so a lot of times people get stuck on that concept of fountains of living water, or coming down and being among his people, or the filling of the Holy Spirit.

And I've talked about this a lot before, but it is important, I think, because especially on this topic, you, God is everywhere, we know that. But there's something profound that takes place when, I don't know exactly how you wanna define it, you know, when his manifest presence is somewhere in the atmosphere. It's just electric.

And it's terminology, right? John MacArthur can say manifestation, no big deal. Benny Hinn says it, no, my goodness. Right, it's that charismatic kind of manifestation presence of God.

And it's biblical, it's biblical where at certain times when God, you can feel his presence. They ever heard that term cut? You can cut it with the knife, the atmosphere of God. And when he begins to revive his people, and people are broken at the altar, that's what we're asking, because business as usual's not gonna cut it anymore, especially in our nation.

And so that's when we say, Lord, let it rain, let the fullness of your spirit come down into our hearts. Rend the heavens, rip them open. Yes, you're everywhere, but would you make your presence known here to your people? Convict us, encourage us, fill us.

It's a plea, it's a cry for more of God. Desperate for more of God. It's thoroughly biblical, but I know some people, depending on where they're at in their faith, sometimes get confused by, especially the topic of the Holy Spirit.

I've never seen such a divisive topic in the church as that of the Holy Spirit. And a lot of times, people who've experienced that power and the presence of the Spirit, and the filling of the Spirit, and the unction of the Spirit, they never wanna go back. They've seen people healed, they've seen legitimate prophetic words.

And hey, the Bible says it, I believe it. But then there's others who haven't. And so they're kind of, there's that going back and forth.

Right, like, no, you guys are just weird, you're out of control, it's emotionalism. But remember, you can be straight as a gun barrel theologically and just as empty. And so just wanting the more of the Spirit's power.

Paul even said that, pray being filled with the Holy Spirit. And so that's what I touched upon a few weeks ago. Living fountains of water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Praise God for that moment. And then this could still be in chapter seven, but again, it begins with chapter eight. When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about a half hour.

Now that's interesting. I looked at about eight different commentaries, and nobody seems to know exactly why heaven was silent. And you can see, right, if you just take that verse, I mean, we can speculate.

Hmm, maybe it was because of this, maybe it was because of that. But there was silence in heaven for about half of an hour. That's a long time.

And one of the commentaries, Ellicott said this, this proclaims to us a deep time of unbroken tranquility when the cries and groans of the earth and even the grateful doxologies of heaven are hushed into calm. Matthew Henry, he was about 350 years ago, his commentary. All was quiet in the church, for whenever the church on earth cries through oppression, that cry reaches up to heaven, or it is a silence of expectation.

It could be the seventh seal is being opened, here comes, maybe next week we'll obviously get into that, the prayers of the saints and different things, but then there's silence in heaven for about a half hour. And I don't know about you, but it's hard when heaven is silent, is it not? Isaiah 64, 12, Lord, will you restrain yourself at these things? Will you restrain yourself at these things? Oh Lord, will you keep silent and afflict us beyond measure? There's always that call, always that cry of wondering, Lord, what are you doing? Psalm 28, one, to you, oh Lord, I call, my rock. Do not be deaf to me, for if you are silent to me, I will become like those who go down to the pit.

What do you do when God is silent? Isn't that a very challenging spot to be? It's difficult when prayers aren't being heard, or God, are you even there, are you even watching, do you even care about me? What to do when God is silent? I will tell you this, don't turn to other voices when God is silent, because that's often when the competing voices are even louder. There's no such thing as an unmotivated person, just

those who listen to the wrong influence. Think that's the next screen.

Don't turn to other voices when God is silent. In the time of his distress, in the time of his distress, King, I pronounce his name, Ahaz, it appears, in the time of his distress, he became increasingly faithful to the Lord. Boy, that's an interesting scripture.

So in our distress, when things are difficult and heaven is silent, there's a tendency sometimes to what? Become unfaithful to the Lord. And it's not that we like, oh, forget God, I don't wanna live for you anymore, and you just, but there's an acting out of disobedience. Okay, I'm upset, God isn't doing this or that, or he's not hearing my prayers, I'm going through it, and so I turn for a season and become disobedient in my actions.

That's why it's so important to hold that line. Isn't that where faith is really tested? I mean, it's not too hard to walk with the Lord when prayers are being answered. Those financial doors are open.

Man, church, I just felt the presence of God all day. Well, hello, that's not difficult. It's in the distressed seasons of life that we are really challenged, challenged to our core.

So let's talk about this for a minute. What might God be doing when heaven is silent? Because I don't know about you, but I like some practical application. I wanna know how to get through the silent seasons.

And many have prayed, even, Lord, take this away. Anybody can relate? Lord, take this away, heaven is silent. What is going on? Now, I wish I could give you the exact answer, but sometimes we don't know because every situation is different.

What might God be doing when heaven is silent? Well, number one, be encouraged that he is possibly and no doubt instructing you, instructing you. Don't you listen better when the teacher calls out your name? Shane, listen up. Be still and know that I am God, Psalm 46.10. There's something in that stillness that we're allowed, we're not only allowed, but we can hear the still, small voice of God even better.

And that still, small voice comes from the story of Elisha when he was running and he got away from the queen and God said, God's voice was not in the wind that broke the rock in pieces and not in the fire, but his voice was in that still, small voice and learning to hear that still, small voice. So a lot of times when heaven is quiet, I'm probably gonna listen a little bit more. So during the season, God is instructing us and when we don't have marching orders or we don't know exactly what to do or things aren't working out like I thought, you're more apt hopefully to sit and wait upon the Lord to be still.

And then as weeks go by, how many of you can look back and say, boy, I learned so much? You didn't learn anything, God was silent. What do you mean you learned things? Well, we learned through the waiting. We learned how to get through life.

We learned what was causing certain situations and in that waiting time, we actually did learn a lot. I don't mean we learned like went to school or anything, but we're in God's word, we're in that time of praying and God's word just comes alive and he's instructing us. You see, now you're quiet to where you can listen.

It's hard to listen when you're talking. And God is sometimes talking, of course, obviously through his word, circumstances, but there's certain times where he just doesn't say anything. I'm praying for this, it's not happening, it's actually getting worse.

Anybody pray for situations and they got worse? Marriage issues, praying for your children, praying for jobs, job situations. I know that happened to me in 2000. I was praying, I was in a bad work environment and it was not getting any easier.

It was getting more difficult and God taught me through that not to quit, to just see it through, not to quit and then when he opens the door, that's when there's peace because he opened the door, he made it clear, you didn't leave for the wrong reasons. And so silence, he teaches us. Number two, we can't overlook this, he could be convicting us, convicting us.

I'm gonna share a verse, but I think I'm gonna wait till I get down to a little bit more down on the list. So reflection helps us see more clearly. So when God's not answering, could it be there's God's wanting to convict us to make some changes, convict us to do things differently? And that reflection time helps us see more clearly.

So how do you know if he's instructing versus convicting? Well, I think, I don't know, we usually know the difference, don't we? Convicting is, I don't wanna do that, Lord. No, no, please, no, no, no, no, no, no. Okay, I'm gonna ignore God today.

Okay, wake up on Monday, oh, that conviction's still there. God, Lord, I don't wanna do that. I'm gonna ignore you, and then like Jonah, God brings a storm, and so that conviction is that gnawing at you, that you know you need to do something that God wants you to do.

That's a lot different than just waiting and listening to God and saying, Lord, I'm ready, whatever, I know you're instructing me, teach me, what do you wanna show me? Because the conviction, I think it was Charles Spurgeon who called the Holy Spirit the hound of heaven. The hound of heaven, he will hound you. And so that convicting work, and the Spirit often just convicts us, get rid of that critical heart.

Go forgive that person. Get rid of that besetting sin, and that conviction, that conviction. And so, many times, our prayers aren't answered until we deal with this issue.

And I don't wanna, I mean, this would take a whole sermon, where I'm, this rabbit trail I'm about to take you on. But there are times where God's not gonna move you further in the ministry or in other areas, things you're praying for, until you deal with this issue he's wanting you to deal with. If there's a, you know, get rid of this, God's shaping, he's not gonna bypass that and have you move into other areas of ministry or other prayer requests, or some of you praying for a spouse.

I know I was when I was single, but God's wanting me to deal with some things first. You're not supposed to find Mrs. Right, you're supposed to be Mr. Right first. And so, God's showing me, like, no, so I was hindering certain things.

Or, if he's calling someone, let's say, to a position in ministry or pastoring, there are often some things you have to deal with first, and these convictions, or if God wants, let's say, wanting us to really experience a powerful week during Ren the Heavens, he could be convicting some of us to make some relationships right. Correct? Like, come on, folks, let's just be honest this morning. We don't all come in here perfect.

Even though you have a solid relation with Jesus Christ, the enemy is still at work. Strongholds are still strong. And he's wanting us to go deeper, even with fasting.

Could it be convicting some of us to fast in preparation for Ren the Heavens? Fasting is one of the best things you can do to really, literally starve the appetites of the flesh so you can hear the voice of God more clearly. I know people that think it's legalism or things like that, but it's not, it's biblical. It's a very biblical concept.

So, instructing you, convicting you, you will know the difference. Instructing, you're waiting. Convicting, you're trying to avoid it, avoid what God has called you to do.

I'm curious, though, is there, how many of us are here this morning that know God wants us to do something, but we've been avoiding it? Let's try this again. That's good, though, right? So, could it be that that is the stumbling block to that next season where God wants to bring you? That next thing he wants to do in your life? And again, I'm not talking about living perfectly and we have this incredible, perfect walk with the Lord. We never fall, we never falter.

But there's something special about dealing with that issue that God wants you to deal with, that God wants to be resolved in your heart and in your life. I'm gonna ask, hopefully I remember to ask that question at second service. See if we get a little more honesty.

Number three, timing. Timing, timing, timing. Timing.

I don't like God's timing. Anybody can relate? He's never in a hurry. He could care less about my agenda.

He could care less I'm getting older. Things are getting more difficult. God, what is your timing? What is your timing? His sovereignty, as you've heard me say many times, must become your reality.

So we need to remove the lens we sometimes look through in what I call my sovereignty or my plans, and we need to remove those and put God's sovereignty in there. His sovereignty is our sanity. That's why I say that.

The only way to stay sane in this world is believing and understanding that God is sovereign. He governs the affairs of men. So even though it's not my timing, God, you are sovereign.

I'm trusting in you. And many times, he sees the whole picture. And we've noticed, have you ever seen where people really can destroy their life if they're promoted too early? Or if they want something too soon? And they're not, their timing, sometimes God lets the person do that.

Sometimes he allows them. The difference between his perfect will and permissive will that theologians would talk about often. Number four.

This is a little bit different than instructing. Teaching, teaching, how I at least biblically view it, instructing, like he's telling me to do something. He's instructing me to do it.

Whereas teaching, he's implanting knowledge and wisdom into my heart. I'm learning from the experience. Not necessarily doing anything just yet.

So he's teaching us often, waiting time is not wasted time. That's still one of the most popular sermons. People still tell me about it a couple years later.

I talked about that whole topic. Waiting time is not wasted time. And isn't that a mental shift that really helps? Wait a minute.

I'm not wasting my time during this waiting time. I'm actually being built up spiritually and encouraged spiritually. And God is doing different things behind the scenes.

Waiting time. What about from Moses to Paul? Look at all these biblical heroes in the Bible that we look to. Moses, you'd think he would've been ready at 40 to deliver the children of Israel.

But God said, nope, another 40 years. 80 years waiting on the backside of the desert. It was Paul, I believe, who went to the desert of Arabia and said, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.

He spent some time there. Jesus went out into the wilderness for a season. Other people, Joseph, Jacob, Abraham.

We can look at all the stories and you'll see that there was a season of waiting. Waiting on the Lord, renewing their strength. What about David? How frustrating is that? Samuel goes, he says, hey, the oil's not flowing.

Is there any other son? Oh yeah, he's this kid out in the back. We'll go get him. And then the oil flowed and God said, this is my man.

He is the king of Israel. Well, did it happen right away? Hardly. I read this guy's story, I'm like, wow.

Then he had to take little chunks of Israel to time and finally, you know, and fight for this side and there was some discrepancy and who was following him, who wasn't? It was just a nightmare for him. But eventually, that waiting time was confirmed. And then number five, if it's not obvious, it should be building character.

What might God be doing when he is silent? He's building character. And I've said this before, I don't really, this is hard because we often don't just build character without being challenged. Right, how is muscle built? It's challenged.

You give it a load it's not used to. It hurts, it's not used to this so it has to prepare for the next time. Same thing with our Christian faith.

We're building character. Those who wait upon the Lord are renewed. They renew their strength.

And spiritual exercise is, there's not physically taking place, spiritually taking place. I'm running out of patience. But how do you develop patience? Think about that.

How do you, I don't know if I ever develop patience just I wake up in the morning, yeah, I am so patient now. That was incredible couple years but now I've arrived. No, it's usually going through the thing that challenges my patience and I respond and grow from it.

How do we develop forgiveness if we're not wronged? And so all these things we go through, heaven is silent, God, you're not listening but it builds our character, our spiritual character and that's why usually when you see men and women of God who are seasoned, they've been through it. They've been hurt a time or two. They've been ridiculed and slandered.

They've been, you name it. Paul talks about the working of the flesh, the backbiting and the slander, jealousy and it's interesting if you read these things in Corinthians and Galatians, I believe, you realize that in a church setting, there's just like a, what do they call that, smorgasbord of all, I mean, there's the people

here who are not believers and they might think they are and they come to church now and then but they've really never repented and believed or their parents drug them here or friends came and then you've got people who are seasoned believers and very mature and then you have those in the middle, what Paul would refer to as carnal and the carnal people can hurt you pretty bad and we hurt people pretty bad, even mature people, right? And so you have all these people working together and carnality or other terms, lukewarm and that's what happens. Those who are carnal or lukewarm or not even believers, the natural outflow of what's in their heart is the work of the flesh.

So it just comes naturally. They're gonna struggle with those issues. I think it was Galatians, Paul said, if you bite and devour one another and he lists these things that just come out, envy and greed and double-tongued backbiting, gossiping, he says it's all works of the flesh and we know it, even as solid believers, you feel the gossip coming up but you don't wanna say anything.

You feel the slander or you feel like being impatient and rude, you feel it but you've restrained it or maybe some of you don't feel it. Sometimes, like I've told you, the best day for me is Sunday after church. You can be mean, nasty, get a flat tire.

Man, I'll just go with the flow. Come Thursday or Monday morning, right, that Holy Spirit gas tank is running on empty and that's why staying in the word and worshiping and praying and these things continue to, the filling, a lot of people are smiling on that one. I must've hit something there.

But isn't it true? I mean, you catch you at the right time, you can get through anything. Catch you on the wrong day, you're ready to quit. I'm out of here, I'm done.

Anybody relate? Okay, well, there we go. But so these difficult times build our character for the next time and the next time. And I remember one of the hardest spots that I began to work after I, many of you already know but I gave up my career, 24-hour fitness and just walked away totally and had to get, got back into construction and I worked for Quartz Hill Water District.

Oh my goodness, the most ungodly Babylon place I've ever seen in my life. And I think I walked off the job two or three times and I'm done, you guys are, man, I might've said a few bad words, you know, even as a Christian, right? I'm on fire for God. I'm early praying, but there, boy, when the people, you can only mess with somebody.

I told one guy, Morgan, remember, I said, hey, listen, the wick on my stick of dynamite is getting really small, leave me alone, right? And it's just, I was in the trenches and so I'd have to go back and hey, guys, sorry about that, oh, no problem. And so just that, that building character to where I can't, when I finally left, I could say bye-bye, right? And I, it was good, I still have a relationship with one of the guys there. And, but I remember, you know, it's just, Lord, what in the world am I doing here? But looking back, ah, the furnace of affliction and you grow and you don't realize some of that stuff is still in you.

You know, still cussing. I've been, you know, I came back to the Lord a year and a half ago. Some of you are like, ah, come on, give me a break.

You know that there's still works in the flesh sometimes that want to come out. In our attitude, in our thinking, and I'm just being honest with you. And so what that does, though, is it helps clean out the flesh.

When you're honest with God and say, Lord, I need to work on these issues. I need to work on these issues. I need help.

And he will, he will help build that character as you wait upon him. And then you're building character, but you're also building faith, correct? We walk by faith, not by sight. So you can look at unanswered prayers or when heaven is silent as an incredible faith builder.

Because your faith is built by trusting in God even though I don't see the results. I'm trusting in God even though I don't see that there's any outcome. And see, that's, I don't think a lot of people understand, and don't get me wrong, I love, I love to trust God when he makes it clear and I can see the road ahead.

So much easier. But when you trust him despite the difficulties, despite the challenges, that's, you're actually building a more solid relationship. Because the Bible says without faith, it's impossible to please God.

In other words, God says, trust me, even when you're going through the storm. Look to me, even when you're being, going through the difficulty and the challenge. Look to me, trust me, have faith.

That pleases God. Because that's really faith. Sometimes we think we have faith, it's not faith.

What it is, is oh, I see what God's doing, I like that, it's a great idea. We see it, that's not faith. Faith is, I don't see what's going, I can't see where this is gonna go, Lord.

I need to trust you, I need, my whatever prayer request is out in left field right now. It's going, things are going backward, not forward. However, I'm going to trust you.

And that's why if you've been coming a while, you often hear me say, you can become better, or you can become bitter. That's usually what happens. And I would like to report back to you that most people become better, no.

Most people become what? Bitter at God. And so they really don't see it as a trust faith issue. God is not doing what I thought he would do, and I become bitter.

Now, hopefully this will encourage some people. It's one thing to feel that way and you sense that, but then you repent of it, and you say, that's not right, that's a lie, I'm not gonna believe it. I was tempted by that thought, but I'm not gonna believe it.

Lord, I'm gonna trust in you. But some people beat themselves up, they're even having that thought. Hey, I've been bitter at God, I've been upset at God, not understood what in the world is going on, that lasts about five seconds, right? Like, oh Lord, that's wrong.

Am I being too transparent for you guys today? Golly. 15 seconds, yes. Yeah, that's even better.

But you know, you have the thought, temptation, what you do with that thought, you don't hang out there. You don't keep saying, okay, God, I'm upset at you, and you're really, who knows? I mean, the things I've heard over the years, it's, so many things can set us off. You know, we thought we'd have a certain job, and now we're not.

We thought we'd be a successful person doing this career, and now we're not. And that's one of the things that really harm, I think even in our culture today, and you know, really harm women, is that whole message, oh, you're a stay-at-home mom with three or four kids? Oh my gosh, what a failure. Actually, that's a huge success.

That's actually a huge success. And I, you know, this might be controversial, but I looked up to that way more than a bank president. A lady, a bank president, wanted to hold off her family life for a year.

I look at that as way more successful, especially in God's eyes. But again, the programming, right? Well, here comes those thoughts into our minds. So it builds faith.

I just caught a song recently on a radio network. It said, if I never see the promise on this side of the grave, my hope might be shaken, but my faith will never break. So I'm pulled over, I gotta write that one down.

If I never see the promise on this side of the grave, my hope might be shaken, but my faith will never break. And that is so true, because if I never see the promise, and I wanna be careful here, because I, you know, this is an interesting topic. There could be things that we're hoping for and praying for that I might not see on this side of the grave.

How many of you praying for prodigals, or grandkids? Or, you know, there's God ideas and there's good ideas, and sometimes they get, Lord, I have all these good ideas, but maybe, maybe that's not God's idea. Will I still stand on his promises, and will I still not be shaken, and my faith will never break, even if some of these promises don't come to pass here on this side of heaven? But the reason I wanna be careful on that is because I believe God does give people some promises, some things that are going to happen in their lifetime, and he's showed them that, he's confirmed it with Scripture. But unless it's just me, God's ideas and good ideas kind of get intertwined in my mind.

And the things you've waited upon the Lord, you've want to see, prodigal sons coming home, marriage issues, a lot of times God will answer those. Those are promises that we can take to the bank. But we have to remember, even if things aren't going exactly like we thought, my faith will never break.

I remember a friend of mine, I don't wanna say names or churches or locations or anything, actually I didn't know him too well, I knew the family, but he was certain that God was gonna heal him. And I talked to his son at his memorial, and he shared that with me. He was just absolutely certain.

And you know, what do you do with that, Shane? I'm like, sometimes I don't have answers. And I have seen that though, good ideas and God's ideas, sometimes they intersect, and sometimes things don't happen exactly like we want them to. Now the reason that shouldn't be discouraging but very encouraging is because come hell or high water, you rest in God's sovereignty.

So to me it's like, oh, that's so negative. No it isn't, I'm trusting in God's sovereignty. I may never see the promise on this side of the grave, my hope might be shaken, but my faith will never break.

And so it can be very encouraging. And you know, a lot of times we don't want to admit this, but I think we've all experienced things where God didn't answer like we thought. The promise, you know, he gave, sometimes better of course, but not everything we pray for and ask for.

Jesus said if you pray and ask according to, we can't forget about that part, according to God's will. If we have faith, there's a mustard seed, so faith plays a role, praying to God's will, according to God's will. And I believe that God actually, commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established.

Those prayer thoughts that really line up with God and what he wants to do in your life. And then number seven, number seven. I know this is kind of interesting for people to think, but God may be waiting.

God may be waiting, and this has something to do a little bit with timing, but God could be waiting on certain things. Even when our plans are interrupted, God's plans aren't. Might wanna take a picture of that one, right? Good reminders, even when our plans are interrupted, God's plans are not.

God might just be waiting for certain things to happen. Or number eight, God may be waiting for you. Uh-oh, getting a little controversial.

I believe a lot of times we're waiting on God, but God could be waiting on us. And here's a verse I'm gonna share that's not really popular, but it is powerful. This whole concept that besetting sin can keep us from some of what God wants to do in our life.

That's just straight Bible. Old Testament, New Testament. But we live under now, and I hear this sometimes.

But Shane, now we live under the age of grace. Yes, but grace doesn't relieve me of responsibility. I actually live under a higher standard, and so do you because of grace.

And God is talking to his people here. Your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. So Isaiah called to be a prophetic voice to the children of Israel.

The children of Israel who once followed Yahweh unconditionally, the sacrificial system, they loved their God. What had happened is they started to bring in practices of other religions, and they started to, because you can't serve both God and the other religion. You know, let's bring some of this bell worship in.

Nope. As soon as you do that, you just pollute and dilute all of God's godly worship. And it's no longer worship.

Now it's false worship, false fire. You cannot bring in other things. You can't bring in the Ouija board to the prayer meeting.

Oh, I've heard of things like that. You can't do that. And so they started to bring in these things, and even sacrificing their children, not unlike abortion today.

And they would have the meat sacrifice to idols. That's where a lot of this happened as well. They would know it was sacrifice to Ashtaroth or to all the pagan gods, and they would actually eat the meat, and then they would have these rituals, these parties, worshiping the other god, yet they were, and that's why, do you ever hear in the Bible, but they came back to the Lord, but the high places were not removed? So these high places are places they would build up in hills and things, and they would say they're worshiping God.

Oh, hey, we brought God's worship up here, but they would actually be worshiping to other gods as well, and that's why God would say, remove the high places and bring worship back down to the temple, how I have, because at the high places, you're just sacrificing something at the altar, where at the temple, they go through the whole process of the priest who has been set apart by God, the sacrificial system, putting the blood on it, and doing exactly how God prescribed their worship. So anyway, that's a long rabbit trail to tell you the environment that Jeremiah is in. So now the people are saying, why doesn't God hear? Why isn't God hearing our prayers? They were maybe overtaken by some of the enemies, that there was

drought, this is how God would wake them up in the Old Testament, I think he still does it today sometimes, when I bring pestilence, when I bring famine, when I bring drought, or when I bring the enemies against you.

If you call out to me and humble yourself and pray and seek my face, I will heal your land. That was 2 Chronicles, it's kind of around the same time. Isaiah then is saying, your sins, this false worship, your sins have separated you from God, and they have actually hid his face from you.

Now, think about that, is God saying, oh, darn it, where'd they go? Of course not, God doesn't even have a face, he's spirit, and those who worship him in spirit must worship him in spirit and in truth. But it's imagery saying, God's not even looking your way, he's not gonna hear your prayers because you have this block that's preventing you. In the cross, there's a block here.

So Jesus, I'm praying for this in my marriage, I'm praying for this, but listen, you've got this huge block here, you've got this unrepentant sin that must be dealt with, and without that being removed and repented of, I can't take you further. Yes, you're a believer, you're a Christian, absolutely, but how many of us know besetting sin can block the promises of God, just like anything else? I told you it's a difficult topic, but it's one we need to hear. God may be waiting for you, so ask him this morning.

Number nine, dependency, when heaven is silent, dependency. Trust in the Lord, maybe we just need to read that out loud. Trust in the Lord with some, right? Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Wow, so no matter what I'm going through, I'm trusting in the Lord with all my heart, and it's no surprise they give this word lean. Because we know what it is, right? I'm leaning up against something for support.

So they're saying when you need support, when you're questioning God, don't lean on your own understanding. What do you lean on? Jesus, yep, trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding, which is clearly saying lean on God's word and what he has revealed to you.

And that's a fight in itself, isn't it? I'm trusting the Lord with my whole heart, and I'm wanting to lean on my own understanding because I see things a certain way. Remember how I see things. And faith is not this sight.

Faith is trusting and believing God regardless of what I see. So there's that dependency issue. And then number 10.

Oh, number 10, number 10, number 10. This is one thing I do love about heaven being silent. Silence can renew, rebuild, and revive the spiritually dead.

One amen. Amen. There we go.

Can it, though, when God is silent? You have two choices, to run to the cross or run from it. So that silence, that silence can renew, rebuild, and restore the spiritually dead person or those who are drifting. And it's no secret.

Let's just get it out there right now. Over the years, let's just go back a couple, three years. Pastor Abram will agree, because we've seen hundreds of people at this altar over the rent in the heavens, all the

different situations, and nine times out of 10, 9.9, 9.9 times out of 10, they're going through something.

They're going through it. He's on his third recovery home. His marriage is toast.

He ran back to porn, losing everything. She's praying for a prodigal son who's not doing well. This person has to contend for healing or there's no hope.

Every, without a shadow of a doubt. It's no surprise. And so those difficulties, those challenges that we go through, let that burden do what? Bring you to your knees and begin to praise God and cry out to him.

It's a wonderful, wonderful blessing. The blessing of brokenness. And then I'll conclude with a little bit of wrong application, just so we don't forget.

Wrong application is when we listen to the wrong voice. Listen to the wrong voice. Number two, following the wrong influence.

And number three, having the wrong motivation. The reason I added this is, if you ever thought about, I don't know if you've thought about this much, but why do we do what we do reveals a lot. Why do we do what we do? The motivation behind our prayer requests.

The motivation of praying for more of God's spirit. What are we trying to get out of it? In short, many have trust issues. And trust is built through relationship.

Isn't that what this boils down to? Number two, trust issues. Trust is built through the relationship with God. So here's the key takeaway.

Take your thoughts captive, transform your mind in the word, push out worry with worship, and push out pain with prayer. And I would encourage you to revisit these 10 points, often, and see. Because what I do is I try to stay, okay, Lord, and you go through them.

Are you instructing me? What are you trying to teach me? And you pray it. You pray that. Lord, are you convicting me? Are you convicting me of something I need to work on? Is that really you? And usually, if it's something you need to do, it's not you.

Right, yourself's not gonna tell you, I better go ask that person for forgiveness. I should forgive that person. That must be me.

No, that's probably not you. It's probably God telling you to do something. And I've seen it.

I've seen bitterness, and anger, and gossip, and slander, and all this. I've seen it hurt spiritual life in the church. Division, the enemy uses division, big time.

And so if God is convicting us to do something and improve this area, we need to listen. And then timing. Lord, is it your timing? And what are you trying to teach me? God, what character do you want me to build? And though I can't see the end, I'm going to build my faith and trust in you.

And God, are you waiting for me? Are you waiting for me to do something? God, please show me. Do you know it's okay to ask for confirmation? People say, well, Shane, do you throw out a fleece? Well, you gotta be careful. Right? I should've never said that because now I've gotta explain what that is.

But maybe next week. Basically, confirmation is, it'd be like, okay, Lord, if there's water on that black pad when I turn it over, that's you leading me to do this. And I turn it over and there's a whole bunch of water.

Goodness gracious. Now I go throw in the baptismal and I say, okay, Lord, if it's dry, then I know it's really you. I like Gideon.

I can relate to that guy, can't you? Like, oh, that could've just been lucky. There could've just been some dew on the ground on that one. And so I throw it in the baptismal, I grab it out, and now it's dry.

And so Gideon threw out a fleece to the Lord because God was calling him to go out and fight for him. He didn't know if it was God. I don't have a problem with asking for confirmation in some way, shape, or form.

Because God, I say, Lord, I trust you, I don't trust me. No, but what about when the confirmation doesn't come? I don't think it confirms everything, necessarily. You know? Maybe some of you are praying, Lord, Lord, if I'm supposed to fast, have someone come up and tell me exactly what type of fast and how many days.

I've tried that, it doesn't work. It doesn't work. Or in his grace and love and mercy, he might lay a prophetic word onto someone and say, hey, you know what, Dan or Chris or Mike, this is so weird, all Sunday morning, does this mean anything? And they're just blown away.

Because God confirmed it. He knows we need a little help sometimes. You've heard of hamburger helper, I need some Holy Spirit help sometimes.

Sometimes. And so I'm praying for confirmation. I think you can, Lord, show me if this is you.

But the key is, until I know if it is or isn't, I'm still gonna trust you, I'm still going to obey you, and I'm still gonna walk forward. And Lord, you show me. That way you're not, and the reason I wanna explain that is because sometimes people play games with God on the confirmation.

It's not meant to play games with him. Oh yeah, we'll do this then, and do this. It's just more, Lord, I need some help.

I need some help here, show me. If this is you. And God will help to show you.

And sometimes it's a waiting time, is where he builds the most amount of trust. So I'm gonna close with this. What about when God is silent for those who don't believe in him? No doubt people listening to this on the radio or later, maybe they don't have that genuine relationship with Jesus.

And guess what? Isaiah 59 too, although it's in the Old Testament, is very applicable for you today. Your iniquities have separated you from God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. What I mean by that, in Old Testament times, or even now, a believer could apply that and say I've got sin separating, unrepentant sin that I'm just engaging in, and it's separating me from hearing God's voice.

It's separating me from that deep relationship. That's a lot different. The unbeliever, how this applies to the unbeliever, is sin has completely separated you.

You have no relationship with God. There's nothing there. The chasm between the cross and where you're at is very deep and very big and very wide.

Only repentance and belief in Jesus can save you and set you free. But it's the same principle still applies, does it not? Your iniquities and your sin have separated you from God so that he cannot, he will not hear if there is that separation. But praise God, there is one prayer that gets God's immediate attention.

Did you know that? There is one prayer that gets his immediate attention. I'm talking mainly to unbelievers here right now. Help, help God, I believe.

God, I believe. Save me from this life of sin and death. God, I cry out to you.

You are the only one true and living God. I acknowledge you today. Oh God, help, help me, a sinner.

And he beats his chest. That's the prayer God stops, hears and answers. That's why we always say the responsibility is left on the person.

That's why God doesn't make anybody go to hell. The decision is left to that person. What do you do with the truth that has been given to you? How do you respond to that truth? So you need to make that decision today.

Make that decision today and repent and believe in the only name that saves. And I just, I threw this up here right at the end because it was, something caught my attention. I looked it up like three different places.

Let me know if I'm wrong after the service. But when fathers are the first in the family to come to Christ, 93% of the time, everyone else will follow. Whoa, that's huge.

Men, 93%? The reason is God has given you that role of spiritual leadership in your home. And those even listening later, think about that. Think about that.

And I started just, now the weight of eternity, does that mean if a man doesn't come to Christ and rejects God, is there the chance that his children could also follow suit and reject God because of the leadership or the lack of leadership of the father? That's immense. I mean, that's incredible. I mean, that's what that means, correct? Now of course, people come to faith in Jesus all the time and their fathers weren't.

But think of the enormous responsibility. Think God's wanting the man to lead the family. Why, I've done too much damage.

God can't use me now. Oh yes, he can. Yes, he can.

If a 30-year-old sees your heart change and coming back to the Lord, you can change, you can influence that child no matter what age they are. We've seen it many, many times. So I want to encourage you this morning.

And I did put under there, it's kind of a hard one. Do they want the Christ they see in you? So Christian men, that one's for you. Do they want the Christ they see in you? And you can ask my wife.

I'll go to my grave hoping I measured up. Can you imagine leading others astray? And the question actually came from Josh McDowell about 25 years ago. He did a lot of retreats for young adults.

And he said the number one question, the number one question he got in all of these seminars and workshops and conferences, are you ready for this one? Teenagers, how can we live for Christ when we

don't want the Christ that our parents have? God, help us. I mean, I wanted to end this on a positive note, but you guys forced my hand. I know, I saw that last sentence.

I'm like, oh goodness, yeah. But isn't that true? I mean, we can be, here's what God, God convicts us, that's hard to hear, and then you say, but for the grace of God, I'm gonna get back up, I'm gonna fight again, I'm gonna be that example. Yes, I've fallen and I've failed, but I'm gonna get back up and I'm going to be that example.

And you strengthen yourself in the Lord. Why do you think I bring up, you think I bring up these hard topics, like oh, we're leaving here, like you just lost your favorite dog or something. No, I want to wake you up.

Wake us up and take that next step.

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