

# When God is silent

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We know Abraham as a friend of God. Friendship takes time and investment. They talk to each other regularly, and God was like this with Abraham. Yet Abraham also experienced times when God was very quiet.

It is important to ask ourselves whether there were reasons for that.

Abraham was called by God. We find this story in Genesis 12:1:

*"The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.*

*'I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.*

*I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;*

*and all peoples on earth*

*will be blessed through you.'*

*"So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran."*

It seems that God called Abraham in Haran when he was already quite old but actually Abraham was called in Ur.

Chapter 11: 27-32 shows the history of his father Terah. They all lived in Ur and Terah took the initiative to go to Haran. If we turn it into a time axis, we see that the Bible first describes the life of Terah, until he dies. Then we go back in time and see the life of Abraham.

In a flow chart it looks something like this:



If you go back again to Genesis, you will see that it was not Abraham but Terah who took the initiative in Ur. I think sometimes that Terah was afraid that Abraham would leave without him. At that time the children took care of their old parents. But God had told Abraham to leave everybody and to just go. So Terah did not wait passively until Abraham left. He took the initiative and started the whole family on a journey to Canaan.

This however was not what God wanted. Abraham was called in Ur to go alone but, with his family with him, he only partly obeyed and when they stayed in Haran, God did not speak.

What we can learn from this is that God works step by step in our lives. He asks something of us and waits until we do it. If we do it, He will show the next step. Because Abraham was not obedient God was silent.

Interestingly, Terah means 'delay' and this is exactly what he was for Abraham. Terah started the journey but when he reached Haran he thought that was enough and he could rest. Abraham stayed with Terah at the very time God was wanting him to move.

It was not God's intention that Abraham's family remain in Haran. God wanted Abraham moving to his destination.

Abraham was not the obedient leader. Instead, he followed Terah - who had no calling - and it was Terah who determined the speed.

An important lesson in this is that if we experience the guidance of God, it can be that God is still waiting for our obedience.

After Abraham's show of obedience, God did not say 'I will bless you', but instead started to use 'I am', and that is so much more.

When Abraham came to the place of destination (even Lot was there too) God spoke to him again - see Genesis 12:7. It says that God spoke again when Abraham was partially obedient and he had arrived where God wanted him.

Then there was one point of disobedience. Abraham still had Lot with him. See Genesis 13:14 and how the LORD said to Abram after Lot had separated from him.

God gave a command to Abraham and when Abraham had fully done what God asked, God could speak again. It is expressly described this way. After Abraham was in the right place and without his family, who were a hindrance, God could speak again.

If God gives us a command then we can expect it to come in small doses. And God is waiting - for He has all the time - until we have accomplished that task. Then He can speak again and give a subsequent command.

God works step by step, from obedience to obedience. If we want God to speak in our lives then here is an important lesson: obedience opens the door of Heaven so you can hear God's voice again.

The first few times that God spoke to Abraham, it was in this way: "I will bless you." But as Abraham obeyed, God led him into a deeper and deeper relationship with him. He no longer speaks of 'I will', but of 'I am'. See Genesis 15 : 1 or 7. Again, it is confirmed here that God called Abraham in Ur.

In Genesis 22 we see another command from God, a very difficult task, when Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son. Abraham went straight away in obedience (Genesis 22:3 says early in the morning). By this time, he had learned the lesson of obedience. Have we?

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