



How to Pray When God Seems Silent

1. Pray Honestly — God Invites Lament

Psalm 13:1–2 – “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?”

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

³Look on me and answer, LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

⁴and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

⁵But I trust in your unfailing love;

my heart rejoices in your salvation.

⁶I will sing the LORD’s praise,
for he has been good to me.

Psalm 22:1–2 – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

²My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.

³Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.

⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
⁵ To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

⁸ "He trusts in the LORD," they say,
"let the LORD rescue him.

Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him."

⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.

¹⁰ From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

¹³ Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.

¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶ Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

¹⁹ But you, LORD, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

²⁰ Deliver me from the sword,

my precious life from the power of the dogs.
²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.
²² I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.
²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
²⁴ For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.

Psalm 42

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, O God.
² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?
³ My tears have been my food day and night,
While *they* say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
⁴ These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go along with the throng *and* lead them in procession to the
house of God,
With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.
⁵ Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And *why* have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him
For the help of His presence.
⁶ O my God, my soul is in despair within me;
Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan
And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.
⁷ Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls;
All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.
⁸ The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;
And His song will be with me in the night,
A prayer to the God of my life.
⁹ I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

¹⁰ As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me,
While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

¹¹ Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

2. Pray Scripture When You Have No Words

Psalm 25

To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in You I trust,
Do not let me be ashamed;
Do not let my enemies exult over me.

³ Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed;
Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

⁴ Make me know Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.

⁵ Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
For You I wait all the day.

⁶ Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they have been from of old.

⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
According to Your lovingkindness remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you,

according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

3. Pray Persistently — Silence Is Not a Closed Door

Luke 18:1–8 – The persistent widow

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ² saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³ There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ ⁴ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge *said*; ⁷ now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.

4. Pray in Surrender, Not Just Request

Matthew 26:39

³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is

overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Isaiah 55:8–9

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the LORD.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

⁷ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

5. Pray in Community When Personal Faith Feels Weak

Exodus 17:8–13 – Aaron and Hur holding up Moses’ hands

¹⁰ So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. ¹¹ As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. ¹² When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. ¹³ So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

Matthew 18

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Mark 2

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

6. Remember: God’s Greatest Silence Led to His Greatest Work

Psalm 27:14

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Psalm 33:20

We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield

Psalm 37:7

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Psalm 40:1

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.

Psalm 130:5

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.

Psalm 130:6

I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

Isaiah 8:17

I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob. I will put my trust in him.

Lamentations 3:24

I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."

Lamentations 3:26

it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Micah 7:7

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my
God will hear me.

James 5:7

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See
how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop,
patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.