

# Why Is God Silent When We Want Him to Speak?

## *A Discussion Guide*

Gregory A. Smith

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Why is that the Bible doesn't seem to give plain, definitive answers to some of our most important questions? Why is God silent when we want Him to speak? Why is it that the Scriptures seem silent or ambiguous on issues such as the following?

- What is the eternal destiny of children who die in the womb or in infancy?
- Are divorce and remarriage ever permissible?
- To what extent should women be involved in church leadership?
- Are polygamous marriages acceptable?
- Is it legitimate for married couples to use contraceptives?
- Is tithing mandatory for Christians today?
- Are tongues and other miraculous gifts valid today?
- Is it permissible to drink alcohol in any form or quantity?
- In what way, and to what extent, should wives submit to their husbands?
- Is public dancing acceptable under some circumstances?

Why is it that so little of the Bible seems to address the categories of life that matter so much to us--work, marriage, parenting, finances, decision-making, friendship, and emotional well-being?

If we take the Bible at face value, we must accept it as perfect, divinely inspired, containing all that is necessary to help us fulfill the will of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (NKJV).

So how do we explain the apparent irrelevance of the Scriptures to our everyday lives? The following axioms may shed some light on this issue:

### *1. The relevance of Scripture is obscured by our cultural, linguistic, and geographic distance from the text.*

It is only as we immerse ourselves in the world of the Bible's authors and original readers that we can truly understand its message. Following are some examples of biblical texts that are best interpreted in light of cultural, linguistic, or geographic knowledge.

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19 NKJV). [This promise was given to a church that had repeatedly supported Paul's ministry. The Philippians are most likely in view in 2 Corinthians 8:1ff, where Paul refers to the churches of Macedonia. In this case, proper interpretation hinges on knowledge of context, parallel passages, and geographic detail.]

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7 NKJV). [Paul uses a contrast between two words here to state that there is a system that purports to be like the gospel but is not a viable alternative. It is another in the sense that it is different; it is not another in the sense that it is legitimate.]

"And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.'" (John 2:3 NKJV). [The shortage of wine was evidence of a lack of preparation. In the oriental culture, where there was great sensitivity to the matter of hospitality, this would have been a very embarrassing moment for all involved.]

## 2. *The Scriptures are finite and context-bound.*

The books of the Bible were written to address specific questions in particular communities at specific points in time. Though they collectively constitute the whole of God's inspired revelation to mankind, they do not present an exhaustive, systematic arrangement of truth that caters to the 21st-century scientific mind.

The following verses explain the context in which some portions of Scripture were written:

"Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor. 7:1 NKJV). [Paul was addressing questions that the Corinthians had asked him.]

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7 NKJV). [Paul had heard that the Galatians were slipping into doctrinal error.]

"But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward" (Heb. 10:32-35 NKJV). [The audience was facing persecution and needed to be encouraged to persevere in faithfulness to Christ.]

## 3. *God expects us to apply the principles of Scripture in the absence of specific commands.*

Some cultural practices are not inherently moral. In such areas we are to apply biblical principles as led by our conscience and the Holy Spirit. This is precisely the context of Romans 14:5-6:

"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks" (NKJV).

## 4. *In order to understand the relevance of the Bible, our minds must be renewed according to biblical categories.*

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2 NKJV).

"However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:6-10 NKJV).

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, . . . that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:17, 22-23 NKJV).

"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2 NKJV).

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Heb. 8:10 NKJV).

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13 NKJV).