



GOD ONLINE

David Brandt Berg

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A Mountain Streams book

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INTRODUCTION

God isn't far away in some cosmic somewhere—and He's never too busy for you. He's right there with you, He's watching, and He's just waiting to help solve your every problem and meet your every need. He's a loving, personable God who wants to have a loving, personal relationship with you. And like any happy, successful, and mutually satisfying relationship, He wants it to be built on loving two-way communication. He's just waiting for you to connect with Him.

How to establish and maintain that connection are the central themes of *God Online*, ten articles by David Brandt Berg that are sure to inform, inspire, and point the way to God's never-ending, all-encompassing, and unconditional love—the only thing that can truly satisfy your deepest longing, transform your life, and provide a rock-solid foundation for your faith.

God Online will appeal to readers of all ages and backgrounds—those who are looking for a way to connect with God, as well as those who want to strengthen their connection and learn more about God's love and ways.

Why struggle through life on your own when you can have God's help? He says, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Stop! ... Look! ... Listen!

For a Christian, one of the main principles involved in reaching a decision is this: Don't start trying to reason it out, or talking it over with others—pray! God likes for us to give Him a little honor. Prayer is not just getting down on your knees and speaking your piece, but more importantly, letting God speak His. If you'll do that, He'll tell you what you're supposed to do.

I don't see how anyone can hear from the Lord unless they get quiet and really *listen*. I told some folks one time, "You remind me of the child prophet Samuel in reverse. When Samuel heard the Lord in the quiet of the night, he said, 'Speak, for Your servant hears.' But the way *you* pray is 'Hear, Lord, for Your servant speaks!'"¹

Many Christians today seem to be more concerned in having God hear what they have to say than they are in hearing what God has to say.

¹ | Samuel 3:2–10

They're trying to put *their* program across on God and get Him to sign His name to it. The question they should be asking themselves is not, "Can I present my program to God for His signature?" or even, "Am I willing to be presented with God's program for my signature?" but, "Am I willing to sign a blank sheet of paper and let God fill it in without my even knowing what His program is going to be?"

It doesn't matter how well you know the Bible or how many spiritual gifts you have, if you don't know how to pray or don't keep in touch with the Lord all the time, you're in trouble.

Christians who don't take time to listen to the Lord remind me of the story of the little girl who had a kitten. One day she heard it purring in its sleep and exclaimed, "Oh, Mama, the kitty's gone to sleep and left its engine running!" You may run around and appear to be busy, but still be asleep spiritually and not be getting anywhere, "as one who beats the air."¹ Unless you get quiet and try to seek the Lord, how are you ever going to hear what the Lord has to say?

I love to be alone with the Lord because then I can hear Him so clearly. I'm convinced that I have heard more from Him when alone, quiet, and in a position to listen, than any other way. He can talk to us when we're alone and we can give Him our full attention and the reverence due Him. The Lord

¹ | I Corinthians 9:26

speaks in a still, small, but very definite, very firm, very loving voice. But if we're too noisy, we're not going to hear it.

You can be your own worst distraction. Anybody can make a racket, but it takes real *effort* to be quiet. If you're praying so loud and making so much noise that you can't even hear God, if you're not getting quiet and listening, then there's really not much point in praying. God's not deaf. You have to wait awhile and see if He's going to speak to you in some way. Stop and be quiet, and wait for the answer.

The only way you can hear the Lord clearly is to get quiet yourself. If you really want to hear the Lord, He'll talk to you, but He doesn't usually scream. By the time God has to yell over your racket in order to be heard, you're probably headed for trouble. That's why God sometimes allows people to have an accident or suffer illness or bereavement: He wants them to stop long enough to listen to Him. A funeral is about the only time a lot of people ever stop their feverish daily activities long enough to think about and listen to the Lord.

Lord help us to get quiet before Him and listen! We all need quiet times with the Lord, to receive inspiration and instruction from Him. Personally, I find that I hear from the Lord most clearly alone in the quiet of the night, when everything is still and there are no distractions. If I wake up in the middle of the night and can't go

back to sleep, I assume that it's because the Lord wants me to pray. As soon as I get prayed up, I go right back to sleep.

If you really want to hear the Lord, He will talk to you. But in order to hear, you're going to have to get quiet by yourself, somewhere, somehow, sometime. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God."¹ How much have you learned about being quiet before the Lord? How many "quiet times" do you have? "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."² Do you know what "confidence" means? Confidence is faith! The very fact that you keep quiet shows you have faith. It shows you're expecting God to do something and not trying to do it yourself.

If you don't know what to do, stop everything! Get quiet and wait for *God* to do something. The worst thing in the world you can do is to keep on going when you don't know what to do. That was King Saul's mistake. He kept right on going, even after he didn't know what to do; he figured he had to keep busy and keep going no matter what—and it lost him the kingdom.³

Getting quiet before the Lord shows you have faith that God is going to handle the situation, that He's going to take care of things. It shows you trust the Lord. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he

¹Psalms 46:10

³1 Samuel 13:7-14

²Isaiah 30:15

trusts in You.”¹ If you’re not trusting, you’re going to be in confusion all the time. As this little poem aptly puts it:

When we’re trusting,
We’re not heard to fret.
When we’re fretting,
We’re not trusting yet!

If you’re confused, worrying, fretting, and fuming, then you’re not trusting. You don’t have the faith you ought to have. Trusting is a picture of complete rest and peace of mind, heart, and spirit. You may have to continue working, but your attitude and spirit are calm.

You don’t *always* have to be down on your hands and knees praying frantically to be heard by God. Prayer should be something you’re doing all the time, no matter what else you’re doing. You can’t always wait until you’re through doing this or that, and then pray. Sometimes you *can’t* get quiet. —You’ve got to pray as you go. It’s like thinking on your feet.

But any soldier preparing for a battle is going to have some quiet time beforehand. He is going to pray before *and* during the battle. We who help fight the Lord’s battles are going to get most of our instructions ahead of time.

¹Isaiah 26:3

When you truly trust the Lord, you can have peace in the midst of storm and calm in the eye of the hurricane. It reminds me of an art contest that was held in which the artists were asked to illustrate peace. Most of the contestants handed in paintings of quiet, calm scenes of the countryside—absolute tranquillity. Well, that’s a form of peace. But the hardest kind of peace to have was illustrated in the picture that won the award. It depicted the roaring, raging, foaming rapids of a storm-swollen waterfall, and on a little tree branch overhanging the torrent was a nest where a tiny bird sat peacefully singing in spite of the raging river. That’s when your faith gets tested, in the midst of turmoil. Quietness is a sign of faith.

Moses had several million people sitting out in the middle of the desert, waiting for him and tearing their hair, wondering, “What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? Where are we going? What are we going to do?” And what did Moses do? He climbed to the top of a mountain and stayed there alone with the Lord for 40 days!

What if he had been fretting all the time, “What if something happens? I have to get back. What if Aaron makes a golden calf?”—Which he *did!* And when Moses *did* get upset and broke the stone tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments, he had to go back up the mountain and get quiet for *another* 40 days! What good did it do for him to get upset? He might as well have come down

and taken it quietly and calmly. It would have saved him another 40 days on the mountain!¹

Jesus, on the eve of His ministry, went out and spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness, and it seemed like He spent much of the time with the Devil. He had to defeat the Devil first.² If you don't get alone with the Lord and beat the Devil first, you never get far.

It took Noah 120 years to build the Ark. I wonder how much of that was spent in prayer? He must have taken some time with the Lord, or he never could have gotten all the precise instructions on how to build the vessel. God probably gave him the *exact* specifications for every part of that boat. And Noah just went calmly about his business, building the Ark. He could have panicked and hastily slapped it together, thinking rain was coming any minute, but he didn't. He took 120 years to build the Ark. Many of us would probably think we were spending a lot of time preparing for something if we just spent 120 days on it. It sure showed that Noah had faith!³

They say that farmers often make the best missionaries because they don't expect everything in one day. They live next to God's creation and are dependent on the Lord. Farmers have a lot of patience and faith in the long process of waiting for the plants to grow or the animals to produce. They

¹Exodus 24:12–18, and chapters 32 and 34

³Genesis 6:11–22 and chapter 7; Hebrews 11:7

²Matthew 4:1–11

just have to trust the Lord and not worry about it. God does the biggest part of the job: He sends the sun and rain and makes the crops grow, and He's the one who causes the animals to produce.

If there's any picture of a quiet type of personality, it's the farmer. City folks often make fun of farmers, but if the farmers didn't take it slow, they'd go crazy like many of the city people! The farmer's motto is "Go slow." The farmer is a perfect example of faith and patience. We should take a lesson from the farmer.

Why is it that so few people want to live on a farm these days?—Because it takes too much dependence on God. They have to leave so much up to the Lord. In many countries, people are moving off the farms in droves. God's too much in control. It's too quiet—"too dead, no action," they say. But if they took time to really look around and listen—to watch the animals, the trees and the storms, and to listen to the thunder—they'd see and hear a lot.

Some people have to be in motion all the time; they've got to be *doing* something! I think one reason for this is that they don't want to *think*! That's why they have so many "amusements." Do you know what that word means?—"Away from thinking!" People are terrified of the quiet and stillness because they know the voice of God might come through. So the Devil keeps their minds, eyes and ears filled with noise and violent sights and sounds.

That's one reason why large cities are such a curse—so much noise and confusion! They're

largely man-made environments, with hardly a tree or a blade of grass. Many people live and work where they can't even see the sky, the sun, the moon, or the stars. The noise is continual: traffic, sirens, and screeching trains and subways. Children raised in large cities often develop hearing problems because they live in an atmosphere of constant noise, whereas children who live in the country usually have very keen hearing.

Just so, if you live in an atmosphere of spiritual and physical confusion, you'll eventually develop a hardness against the voice of God, because to hear Him you have to learn to block out all the noises around you. But if you live in a quiet, peaceful environment, your ears become more sensitive to the few sounds around you—very keen and sharp—and it's also easier to hear the Lord when He speaks to your heart or mind.

Think of the years Abraham, “the father of faith,”¹ spent out in the fields watching flocks. No wonder he heard from the Lord. He had time to listen.

Lord forgive us, we get so busy! If you're too busy to pray, you're *too* busy! If you're too busy to get alone with God and pray, you're too busy! It's as if a servant told his king, “I'm sorry, I can't come and listen to your orders today, I'm too busy *servicing* you!” The most important job you have is listening to the King—to stop, look, and listen. You need to learn to *listen* to the Lord most of all.

¹Romans 4:11,16

It's not up to the king to go chasing after his subjects, screaming and hollering at them to try to get them to follow his instructions. Rather, his subjects should come to the king with quietness and respect, present their petitions, and then wait silently for the king's answer. You need to respect and reverence the Lord, and treat Him like the King He is. Sometimes Christians can get so familiar with the Lord and His Spirit that this familiarity breeds contempt. The Lord is so sweet and close to them that they don't respect Him like they should.

A lot of Christians start playing with the gifts of God or the gifts of the Spirit, and neglect God Himself. It's like parents coming home with gifts for their children, and the kids grab the presents, forget to greet and thank their parents, and start playing with the toys.

It also reminds me of the story of the little girl who wanted to make her father a present for his birthday. Each evening, instead of spending her usual time with her father, she worked on making him new bedroom slippers—and she nearly broke his heart! God may appreciate the bedroom slippers you're making for Him, but He'd rather have *you!* And the truth is, you'll probably make an awful mess out of those slippers if you neglect your time with Him!

My mother used to tell about how she had gotten so busy with the Lord's work that she wasn't listening enough to Him, so He had to let her get so sick she *had* to give Him her full attention! When she was

flat on her back, sick in bed, that was the only direction that she could look—straight up! She summed up that lesson in the following poem:

FIRST PLACE

I was longing to serve the Master,
But alas, I was laid aside
From the busy field of workers
In the harvest field so wide.
They were few, yes, few in number,
And I could not understand
Why I should be left inactive;
It was not as I had planned.

I was longing to *serve* the Master,
And the need indeed was great.
For me it was easy to labor,
But oh, it was hard to wait,
To lie quite still and be silent,
While the song was borne to my ear,
From the busy field of workers,
In the harvest field so dear!

I was longing to *serve*, just to serve the Master,
But He led to a desert place,
And there as we stopped and rested,
His eyes looked down in my face.
So full of tender reproaching,
They filled me with sad surprise!
Did He think I had begrudged my service,
Or counted it sacrifice?

“Oh, Master, I long to serve, just to serve Thee,
There are so few at the best!
Let me off to the fields,” I pleaded.
“I care not to stay and rest!”
I knelt at His feet imploring,
I gazed in His face above.
“My child,” He said, “don’t you know
Your service is nothing without your love?”

I was longing to serve, to serve my Master,
Oh, this was my one fond thought.
For this I was ever pleading,
As His footstool in prayer I sought.
But there in that lonely desert,
Apart from the busy scene,
It dawned on me slowly and clearly
Where my great mistake had been.

My mind was so full of service, just service,
I had drifted from *Him* apart.
And He longed for that sweet communion,
The union of heart with heart!
Well, I sought and I found forgiveness,
While my eyes with pain were dim.
And now, though His work is still precious,
The *first* place is kept for *Him*!

—Virginia Brandt Berg

God will not take second place, even to His service! He says, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.”¹ That is probably the greatest mistake of sincere Christians: to make a god of God’s service!

One day when Martin Luther and his co-worker Melanchthon had a particularly strenuous and busy day ahead, Melanchthon suggested that they cut their prayer time together at the beginning of the day in half. Luther refused vehemently, and insisted that instead of their regular two hours in prayer, they would have to spend four hours in the presence of the Lord that morning because they had so much to do!

Here’s another of my favorite poems:

I DIDN’T HAVE TIME

I got up early one morning
And rushed right into the day!
I had so much to accomplish
That I didn’t have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me,
And heavier came each task.
“Why doesn’t God help me?” I wondered.
He answered, “You didn’t ask!”

I tried to come into God’s presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
“Why, child, you didn’t knock!”

¹Exodus 20:3,5

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
But the day toiled on, gray and bleak.
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, "But you didn't seek."

I woke up early this morning,
And paused before entering the day.
I had so much to accomplish
That I *had* to take time to pray!

—Grace L. Naessens

When Moses was a smart young man, 40 years of age, he really thought he knew how to do the job—but he made a terrible mess out of it and had to run for his life! It took God 40 years to straighten Moses out and show him that he had to depend on Him.¹

Hurry is often a sign that you're afraid you're going to be late—which means you have fear, which means you haven't got enough *faith*. If you're late, take it easy! Trust the Lord! One reason we hurry when we're late is because it's probably our own fault and we don't want to suffer the consequences.

Another reason we hurry is that we're not trusting the Lord. We're afraid that if we don't get to our destination, we're going to miss something. We can't trust God that He's able to hold up the whole world or stop the sun, like Joshua had Him do.²

One time when I was rushing to catch a train, the Lord warned me that the strain I was putting myself

¹Exodus chapters 2 and 3

²Joshua 10:12–14

under could kill me. So I put the matter in the Lord's hands, asked Him to delay the train, and relaxed and took my time. I made it to the station, boarded the train, and sat there for 40 minutes, wondering why the always punctual train had not yet left the station. I finally asked the Lord and He told me, "You asked Me to *stop* the train, but you didn't tell Me you wanted to *leave* yet!"

"The hurrier I go, the behinder I get!" Just relax, slow down, don't rush, don't be hasty, and the Lord will slow everything else down for you if necessary.

Look at all the examples in the Bible of patience: Job, Moses, and David, to name a few. David spent 24 years working under that old blunderbuss, King Saul, and the Lord really taught him a lot from Saul's bad example. Saul often became impatient and tried to do things in his own strength, and he found he wasn't strong enough. David learned that he had to let *God* do everything, and wait for Him.

Some people remind me of King Saul. They ask the Lord something and if they don't get an answer right away, they just go ahead and do the best they can. Look what happened when Saul didn't wait for the Lord's blessing through the prophet Samuel. Saul went ahead with the dedication ceremony himself, instead of waiting for the Lord or His prophet, and Saul lost the whole kingdom as a result.¹

So slow down! Stop! ... Look! ... Listen! Wait for the Lord—especially if you don't know what to do

¹ | Samuel 13:7–14

and haven't heard from the Lord yet. Where did John the Baptist show up from—the big city of Jerusalem? Is that where he got his education, his anointing, his great power? No! He came out of the desert, out of the woods, out of the wilderness, where he had time to get away from the crowd and hear from the Lord. And when he finally came, he sure had something to say!¹

Jesus spent 30 years of His life in preparation and only a little over three years in His public ministry. We're in such a hurry!

The apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, and it must have taken some time with the Lord to do it. However, John's greatest masterpiece was virtually written by the Lord, while John was in exile on an island—the book of Revelation. His biggest work was just letting God do all the directing, the speaking, the revealing—*everything!* Let's slow it down! Stop! ... Look! ... Listen!

The world is always in a hurry! That's the Devil's own plan: "Speed up the world! Anything to make everything move faster!" God created the earth 6,000 years ago, and it has hardly varied in its speed since then. *God* never got in a hurry. It's still revolving at the same rate every day. God hasn't speeded up the seasons or the years, but man is speeding things up—and the result is a world hell-bent for destruction!

So let's try to slow things down. Relax! But most of all, stop, look, listen ... and *wait!* Warning signs

¹Luke 3:1–18; 7:24–28

like this are posted at dangerous places, such as railroad crossings—places of crisis where there is an interruption of your routine, your way, your road, your highway—otherwise you might drive across the train tracks and get hit by a train.

“But,” you say, “I don’t have *time* to stop, look, and listen!” Well, if you don’t, you may never make it. Better late than never! Which is easier, to try to beat the train, to try to plow through the train, to jump over the train—or to stop for a few minutes and watch it go by? It’ll soon be gone, and you can go peacefully on your way.

Trying to force the situation and push your way through just won’t work! It doesn’t pay to rush around trying to get someplace or to do something when you’re supposed to be waiting on the Lord to find out where He wants you to be and what He wants you to do.

The Lord wants to teach you to make decisions. The first step in making a decision is not to try to reason it out in your mind or discuss the situation with others. The first step is to ask the Lord. God likes for you to give Him a little honor. Prayer is not just speaking your piece, but most of all letting God speak His piece, and waiting in quietness and confidence until He does.

You’ve got to get not only in prayer, but you’ve got to get in the Spirit. You’ve got to put aside your own thoughts and partake of the Lord’s Spirit, through communion with Him. If you’ll do that,

He'll tell you what you're supposed to do. You've got to know that you can't do it and be desperate for God's answer, and then you've got to stop everything else and listen. Getting quiet before the Lord shows that you have faith that God is going to handle the situation, that He's going to take care of things. Take time to hear from God, and He'll take time to straighten out the problem. Your feverish activity is nothing, your service is nothing, if you don't give the King your attention, your love, your time, your communion.

Remember that hurry is lack of faith and is of the Devil! If you're hurrying and rushing around, fretting and impatient, you'll never be able to focus your full attention—your eyes, ears, mind, and heart—on the Lord for the solutions to your problems, the answers to your questions, the best decisions for your situation! But when you have learned to stop, look, listen, and wait in communion with Him until you get His answers, you will have learned how to make decisions! You will have learned to pray and to truly follow God.

He gives the very best to them who leave the choices up to Him!