



What Do You Mean, “Be Still”? I Have to Do Something About This! Bible Study

[**Please provide:** musical accompaniment; hymnals, Bibles and copies of the first four pages of the Bible study for attendees.]

“If you can remain calm while all others are panicking, you probably don’t understand the situation.” This is an old saying that brings a chuckle and a nod of agreement from many, especially in the weeks before Christmas. There are so many preparations to be made – presents to buy and wrap, cards to address and mail, food to purchase and prepare – how could anyone be calm! Yet, God invites us, even commands us, to be still – to fully comprehend and embrace the meaning of what He has done for us through the birth of His Son.

From the beginning, God has asked us only to be still and let Him work His will through and for us.

The Lord’s first interaction with man was to put him into the Garden of Eden.

Read Genesis 2:15-17. God gave Adam one very important instruction. What was it?

It was imperative that Adam listen carefully to God’s instruction about “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*,” give that information to Eve, and respect God’s will. However, **read** Genesis 3:1-13. Why did Adam and Eve eat the fruit they were told not to eat? (v. 5)

Read Genesis 3:8-13; 16-19. What had God’s will been for their lives? What would their lives have been like had they obeyed God’s will?

Adam and Eve allowed their minds to be cluttered with the idea of “being like God,” rather than being at peace with doing the job that God had given them, tending the garden. Have there been times when you have gotten sidetracked trying to be like God?

Read Genesis 15:3-6. What did God promise Abram?

Abram believed God's promise. Sarai, however, got impatient. **Read** Genesis 16:1-6.

Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. **Read** Genesis 16:12. What did an angel tell Hagar about Ishmael?

Ishmael's descendants became bitter enemies of God's people. We can only imagine how different things would have been if Sarai had let her heart be still in the Lord and had waited for His timing.

Have you ever been impatient with God's timing and taken things into your own hands? Share the outcome with the group, if you are comfortable doing so.

During Moses' time, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for a deliverer from the Egyptians. God sent Moses. **Read** Exodus 14:10-25.

What was the Israelites' initial response when they saw the Egyptians pursuing them?

What did God have Moses tell the people that He would do?

What did God tell them they needed to do to be free of this situation?

Read Exodus 14:29-31. What was the Israelites' response to the Lord's action for them?

Scan Exodus 16. What were the Israelites doing in that chapter?

What did God do for them?

Scan Exodus 17:1-7. What familiar scene is presented in these verses?

Have you ever grumbled about a situation? What did God teach you?

Eventually, the Israelites' trust in the Lord was put to the test as they finally arrived at their destination – The Promised Land.

Read Deuteronomy 1:19-40. God had not let the Israelites down one time since leading them from Egypt. Why do you think they were still unwilling to go into the land where He directed them?

God proved trustworthy to the Israelites over and over. Yet, they missed the blessing of the Promised Land because they could not put their hearts at rest and trust Him.

How has God provided for you?

Have you ever opposed God's plan for you? What was the result? Are there changes you can make to that situation now that can put your heart at rest? Share with the group, if you feel comfortable doing so.

Elijah, a great prophet of God, faced great persecution and felt alone in his effort to bring the people closer to God.

Read 1 Kings 19:3-4. How would you describe Elijah's state of mind in these passages?

An angel ministered to Elijah and sent him to a place where the Lord would speak to him.

Read 1 Kings 19:9-13. What was Elijah's attitude the first time God asked him what he was doing there?

How did the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire compare to what Elijah was feeling in both of these passages?

Where did Elijah find God?

On that basis, what should be the condition of our hearts for us to hear God?

God is in the stillness.

Americans picture the night of Jesus' birth as peaceful and "silent." Songs like "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Silent Night, Holy Night" lead us to that picture, of course. But if we really think about the situation of Mary and Joseph, it had been far from still from the very beginning.

Read Luke 1:26-38. How would God's message to Mary have been unsettling to her?

Mary's reaction to God's message was, "*let it be to me according to your word.*" How was she able to feel that way?

Read Matthew 1:18-25. Joseph is called a “righteous” man, which means he was zealous for following the law. He would have been a prime candidate to publicly humiliate Mary and make an example of her. What do you think made him want to handle the divorce quietly?

Mary and Joseph could both have been indignant about the situation. They could have had prideful, stormy reactions and refused to follow God’s will. They did not, and God’s peace was provided for all of us through His Son. Jesus’ birth in a cave, a stable, or wherever it actually was, was certainly not what Mary would have planned. She had no family there to support her, no midwife there to help. It was just Joseph and she, trusting in the Lord and clinging to each other, in a town bustling with tired travelers compelled to leave their homes because of the census. They found the only place available for a little privacy, and Jesus was born there and laid in an animal-feeding trough. Yet, we equate the night of Jesus’ birth with stillness – with peace.

Read Luke 2:8-14. The stillness of the Christmas season is the stillness that comes from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. He brought stillness to the world.

How has He brought stillness into your life? Share with the group, if you feel comfortable doing so.

God has the power to speak to us anytime, anywhere, and in ways we cannot ignore. However, He often chooses to speak to us quietly. In the words of “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” we hear “Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.” Are you prepared to hear Him?

Let us close by singing “O Little Town of Bethlehem” LSB 361, TLH 647, LW 60.

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” (Psalm 46:10)

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

... but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious (1 Peter 3:4).

Scripture references are from the ESV.

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