Why doesn’t God
ANSWER ME?
Why doesn’t God answer me?

Do you speak with God? Do you share your problems with Him and ask for His help? Many people don’t see the point. If you’ve asked God for things and not had a response, you probably think that either God doesn’t exist or, if He does exist, He doesn’t care that much about you.

It may surprise you to know that the Bible contains many prayers of people struggling with this exact same issue. Psalm 77 is one such prayer, written by a man called Asaph. In this prayer we see Asaph is nearly driven to despair because it seems like God is ignoring him. But by the end of the prayer, Asaph has moved from despair to a deeper trust of God. How’s that possible? We’re going to look through the prayer to find out.
1 I cried out to God for help;  
I cried out to God to hear me.  
2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;  
at night I stretched out untiring hands,  
and I would not be comforted.  
3 I remembered you, God, and I groaned;  
I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.  
4 You kept my eyes from closing;  
I was too troubled to speak.  
5 I thought about the former days,  
the years of long ago;  
6 I remembered my songs in the night.  
My heart meditated and my spirit asked:  
7 “Will the Lord reject forever?  
Will he never show his favour again?  
8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever?  
Has his promise failed for all time?  
9 Has God forgotten to be merciful?  
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”  
10 Then I thought, “To this I will appeal:  
the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.  
11 I will remember the deeds of the L ORD;  
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.  
12 I will consider all your works  
and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”  

—Psalm 77:1-12

[2] WHY DOESN'T GOD ANSWER ME?
Asaph starts his prayer as many of us do if we talk to God, by calling out in need. He came to God in “distress” and would “not be comforted” (v. 2), probably because he wanted God to step in and fix his situation. We don’t know what the problem was. But we can tell that Asaph was desperate.

Every one of us goes through very hard times and situations. It’s unrealistic to think that anyone will have a pain-free life. Yet when we go to God in our trouble, as Asaph did, do we get help or do we just end up more confused? Things seemed to just get worse for Asaph as he wondered if God had forgotten how to be kind or compassionate (v. 8-9). In the midst of God’s silence, Asaph found that prayer wasn’t bringing him any answers or reassurance.

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

Psalm 77:11
(emphasis added)
Asaph was right to ask God for things—after all 1 John 5:14 encourages us that “if we ask anything according to his will [so, in line with His purposes and character], he hears us”. Jesus Himself explained to His disciples: “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (John 16:24). God wants us to bring all our requests and needs to Him. But that’s not the sole purpose of prayer.

Maybe Asaph thought that prayer itself would solve his problems. Yet when God tells us to pray, He doesn’t just want a to-do list; and He isn’t after simply a ritual or religious technique. He wants us to talk with Him (that’s what prayer actually is) and get to know Him, just as we do in any other relationship.

We often think that prayer is a formula. Asking God for help equals an amazing, problem-solving answer from Him. With that mind-set though, Asaph ended up asking: why doesn’t God answer me? (Psalm 77:7-9).

God wants us to talk with Him and get to know Him, just as we do in any other relationship.
We may well have asked that question. If our view of prayer is to ‘get things’ we need, then often we will be left disappointed and wondering if God cares at all. Imagine if God simply said “yes” to all our requests and needs (according to our understanding). It would bring the world into chaos almost immediately! All of our supposed needs would conflict and collide with the opposite prayers of others!

Finally, the questions, doubts and silence led Asaph to this conclusion: “Has God forgotten to be merciful?” (v. 9). In other words, “I’ve prayed all night long. God hasn’t done anything. There’s only one possible conclusion: God isn’t reliable. He’s forgotten how to look after me. I can’t count on Him.”

With that thought, Asaph faced the real possibility of giving up on God entirely. What is the point in relying on a God who isn’t reliable?
Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, Asaph makes a U-turn in his prayer. Verse 11 says: “I will remember the deeds of the LORD” (v. 11).

His fear and doubts are suddenly overshadowed with a new sense of confidence in God. So what happened?

Let’s be clear, Asaph’s doubts haven’t just magically disappeared. He hasn’t had a brainwave or seen a spiritual lightbulb click on. Asaph has done a very simple, but very important thing. He has shifted his focus from himself to God. He is no longer talking to God about his troubles; he is now talking to God about God—in effect, he is reminding himself, by talking this way, of who God is and what He has done (both in his own life and in the pages of Scripture).

We don’t need to be afraid of our doubts; we don’t need to hide them from God. God understands our doubts and insecurities. But He wants us, in our troubles, to focus on Him, not on our weaknesses. Asaph’s doubts had driven him to despair. But when He thought about God, and spent time remembering who God is and looking at what the Bible says about Him, he was encouraged and refreshed.

Let’s be honest, prayer is normally the last thing we do when we’re in trouble. And when we do pray,
we do the same as Asaph and tell God all about the things that we need Him to fix. Instead, we need to view prayer as Asaph does from verse 11. It is a conversation with God in which we get to know Him better. It is time where we can grow in confidence in who God is as we remember what He has done for us, what He is going to do for us, what He has promised us and who He has made us to be. The focus is entirely on Him.

If we begin prayer with ourselves and our problems, we limit what prayer is and we box our vision to be only about ourselves. If prayer is about God, when we then come to talking about our troubles, they’ll no longer be the centre of our vision. This doesn’t mean they’ll disappear or be ‘fixed’ right away necessarily. But it does mean that we’ll be able to cope with them, because we’ll be relying on God and not ourselves.

Why didn’t God answer? Often we may never really know why God seems silent. However, one thing we can learn from Asaph’s story is that God’s silence gave Asaph the time he needed to change his focus from himself back to God. Even though it was painful for Asaph, it helped him draw closer to God, which is first and foremost what God wants for us. He wants us to know Him and be close to Him. If God constantly gave immediate solutions to our problems, would we seek to know Him? Our time with Him would be brief. We would know Him just as some kind of problem-solving ‘vending machine’.
Psalm 77:13-20

13 Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? 14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. 15 With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. 16 The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. 17 The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. 18 Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. 19 Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. 20 You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

—Psalm 77:13-20

As Asaph changed his point of view, and started to talk to God about God, what did he reflect on and think about?
God’s redeeming acts: Asaph remembered how God had “redeemed” (v. 15) His people in the past. To redeem something means to buy it back or to regain possession of it. So Asaph was remembering times when God had rescued His people from trouble or enemies and brought them back to safety with Him.

Christians can also remember how God redeemed them from a life that was separate from Him and deserved judgement. When Jesus, God’s Son, came to earth, He did so in order to pay for how we reject God. All of us live as if God doesn’t really matter, preferring to do things our way. This is what “sin” is.

“God made [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness [perfection] of God” (2 Cor. 5:21, emphasis added). God the Father made the sinless one, Jesus, responsible for our sin, and He paid the penalty for sin in our place so that we could be redeemed (brought back to God again). Jesus was crucified, dying in our place, and then raised to new life. Jesus invites everyone to join Him in this new life with God.

Just as God’s redemption was the real starting point for Asaph’s prayer, it is also a great focal point for our conversations with God. When we say, “With your mighty arm you redeemed your people” (Psalm 77:15), we should be reminded how much we depend on God. We cannot belong to Him again by our own strength or ability. We belong to Him by relying on what Jesus has done and by trusting Him. And this is how we are to live
every day and face every trial—by relying on God and drawing close to Him.

**The greatness of God:** Linked to remembering God’s saving acts is reflecting on God’s greatness, power and strength. Christians can reflect on the many things God has done in their lives. They can also look in the Bible at the life, teaching and works of Jesus. He is the “fullness” of God (Col. 1:19), and we can read of His incredible strength and love. Nothing could defeat or overwhelm Jesus. In fact, He told His followers: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). The very powers and forces that frighten us are themselves under the command of God. The thing you fear, fears Him.

You might say, “But Jesus was executed on the cross! So He was defeated by something: death.” Actually, Jesus’ death was God’s plan all along to save us. And what’s more, Jesus came out of the grave three days later. Jesus has defeated every enemy, even death. No matter what troubles we face, we can trust God to bring us through them.

Asaph also reflected on how even nature belongs to God. He wrote: “The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked” (Psalm 77:17–18). There is nothing in this world that is bigger than God. He is in control.
In those times when hope is fading and there seems no way out, we need to place our confidence in God and focus on Him. He has done everything necessary to redeem us, and He is mightier than any problem. He may not answer how we expect or when we expect. But we need to trust that His plan is perfect. We can’t imagine what God will do, but we can trust that whatever He does will be the best thing for us.

**God’s character and attitude towards us:** The final truth that Asaph discovered was this: the Lord is the Shepherd of His people. He wrote: “You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Psalm 77:20). Here Asaph is remembering a specific time when God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, leading them “like a flock”. He used Moses and Aaron to ‘shepherd’ the people out of that country and eventually into a land He had set aside for them.

The idea of God as our shepherd is a great image to think about. Shepherds are always with their sheep, always know what their sheep need and always provide for them. And when they need to lead their sheep through dangerous places, they make sure not a single sheep is lost. Sheep depend 100% on their shepherd.

This is how we should think of God. We are sheep; He is our Shepherd. Even in hard times we can say: “The **Lord** is my shepherd, I lack nothing” (Psalm 23:1). Why? Because He cares about us and will never leave or abandon us (Heb. 13:5).
Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd. He explained His relationship with His sheep (us) like this:

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep . . . They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” —John 10:14-18

Whenever we feel God is being silent, we need to remember that He is our Shepherd. We are always in His protective care, even when we are not aware of it. God always shepherds His sheep. Jesus, our Good Shepherd died for us (John 11:14) and rose again (v. 18) to bring us back into God’s ‘fold’. We belong to Him and He will not let us go, no matter what trials we may face.

If you are struggling with prayer or a specific challenge, and you don’t feel God is answering you, make sure you tell one of your church leaders, or another Christian you know. They will be able to encourage you and talk to God with you.
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