

# What Does It Mean When God Doesn't Intervene?

**An age-old Bible story of abuse re-emerges in today's context with full force and frankness. Will you follow up?**

“Here, let me bring out my virgin daughter and the man's concubine now. Abuse them and do whatever you want to them. But don't commit this outrageous thing against this man.’...the man seized his concubine and took her outside to them. They raped her and abused her all night until morning. At daybreak they let her go...When he entered his house, he picked up a knife, took hold of his concubine, cut her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and then sent her throughout the territory of Israel...Think it over, discuss it, and speak up!”  
Judges 19:24-25, 29, 30b

## **Grappling with God**

Have you ever felt like God had an opportunity to show up for you and He didn't? Have you ever felt like He had the opportunity to intervene and stop something bad from happening to you, but He didn't? Well you aren't alone. In Judges 19 we're introduced to a woman from Bethlehem whose story causes us to ask that really hard question: what does it mean when God doesn't intervene? Many of us remember the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, but for those who are unfamiliar, Sodom and Gomorrah was a city that was known for its affinity for immorality. Homosexuality, drunkenness, and perversion was rampant throughout the city. The city had sunk so deep into degradation that God alerted Abraham that He was going to destroy it:

“And the Lord said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know’ (Genesis 18:20-21).

## **Risky Reconnaissance**

So God sent angels disguised as men to check out the city and see if its destruction really was necessary. Lot, a resident of the city and Abraham's nephew, encouraged the men not to stay in the square. He insisted that they stay with him instead.

It wasn't too long after that men from the city got word there were visitors staying with Lot. Soon they surrounded the house demanding that Lot release the men so that they could have sex with them (Genesis 19:5). Lot pleaded with the men not to disgrace his guests. He even offered his two virgin daughters to the angry and aroused mob.

But they declined the girls and pressured Lot for the men. They pressed so strongly the Bible says, they “came near to break down the door” (Genesis 19:9). At that moment, the men who were really angels pulled Lot back into the house, shut the door, and struck the men outside with blindness so that

they became tired trying to find the door (Genesis 19:10-11). That night the power of God stepped in and prevented the depravity of humanity from abusing and killing the men and Lot's daughters.

## **Script Flipped**

In Judges 19 the story is the same, but the outcome is very different. A Levite was traveling with his concubine and servant and decided to rest in the city called Gibeah. It was an Israelite territory belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. They chose to stay in Gibeah because they believed they'd be safer among their own rather than in a foreign city with unbelievers (Judges 19:12).

When they entered the city an elderly man welcomed them to stay with him. As they were enjoying their visit with the old man, the men of Gibeah surrounded the house demanding the old man give them the Levite so that they could have sex with him (Judges 19:22).



*In one of the Bible's most graphic accounts of abuse and rape, the unstated charge is unmistakably clear.*

The old man pleaded with the men, "I beg you, do not act so wickedly!...do not commit this outrage" (Judges 19:23). To assuage the crowd the old man even offered the mob his own virgin daughter along with the concubine.

When the Levite saw the old man wasn't really persuading the crowd he seized his concubine and threw her out of the house for the mob. Judges 19:25 relates the grievous details: "they raped her and abused her all night until morning. At daybreak they let her go."

When the Levite found his concubine on the ground in front of the door, unresponsive, he picked her up, put her on his donkey, and carried her home. There he cut her body into twelve pieces and sent each piece to the twelve tribes of Israel.

## **God, And God's People**

In my opinion this is one of the hardest stories in the Bible. The sexual

abuse is extremely hard to stomach. Her dismemberment is immensely difficult to fathom. But for me, it's God's inactivity that is most difficult to understand. Why is it that God intervenes and protects Lot's daughters from evil men in the world, but He doesn't intervene to protect this concubine from evil men in the church?

Hanging on a cross I believe Jesus was faced with the same question. With a crown of thorns pressing into his skull, I see Christ hanging from splintered wood, struggling to breathe, writhing in pain as His lacerated flesh pressed against the wood; His hands and feet pounding from the nails; His body chilled as it hung naked and exposed. I see my Jesus hanging there on a cross looking up to His Father wondering if He was going to intervene.



*Broken bodies that save lives. Is there another outcome?  
One that does not end in more suffering?*

It's such a hard truth to receive, but I believe the reason God didn't intervene on behalf of the concubine, on behalf of Jesus, and sometimes on behalf of us is because God understands this extremely hard truth: broken bodies save nations.

Just like the broken body of Jesus Christ saves us from sin and grants us the gift of eternal life, I believe women and men whose bodies have been broken by sexual and physical violence can save our communities from the psychological, physical, and spiritual death that abuse brings. I believe our communities can experience emotional, physical, and spiritual life from the stories of women and men whose bodies have been broken from sexual and physical violence.

The Bible says the crime at Gibeah started a war against the Benjamites because instead of burying the concubine's body the Levite displayed and distributed it. Survivors have the same power! They too can start wars against sexual and physical violence when they refuse to let their stories be buried, and instead allow their stories to be distributed.

## **Righteous Rage**

The story of this unnamed concubine ends by saying, "Think it over, discuss

it, and speak up!" I believe it's time we think on the stories of survivors of sexual and physical abuse and allow their stories to ignite a righteous rage within us that activates us to war against such violence.

Brittany Cooper in her book *Eloquent Rage* says, "we should not have to rely on supernatural acts of God to keep women safe." The story of the concubine along with Cooper's statement provides a plausible answer to the question: what does it mean when God doesn't intervene?

What if God doesn't intervene in some cases of sexual and physical violence because God is waiting for the broken bodies of the abused to send us to war? What if God is looking upon the Earth waiting for humanity to enact justice? What if God doesn't intervene in things that He believes humanity has the power and responsibility to handle on their own? What if while we're waiting on God to intervene, God is waiting on us to intervene? What if God is waiting on us to be the justice we're constantly waiting for Him to provide?