

**Dear Christian,  
(A Letter to a Bad Listener)**

For the love of God,  
Would you let me say something?

I mean, give it a rest already.  
I feel like whenever you call, it's less of a conversation  
And more of just you thought vomiting into thin air  
While I sit up here twiddling my thumbs and waiting for my turn.

And yes, in one way, I suppose I am kind of your therapist  
Along with being your omnipotent Creator and sustainer,  
But what good's a therapist  
If you never quit flapping your lips  
Long enough to hear any kind of response?

And really, out of the two of us,  
Who's words should really be pulling more weight,  
Yours, or the Lord of the universe  
Who called all things into existence *with His word alone*?

But look, now I'm sounding petty,  
Which is not very becoming of an All-Supreme Deity.

Really though, kid,  
I love you and I love hearing about your days,  
And your struggles, your hopes, and your family and friends.  
But if you got together with your family or friends  
And entirely dominated every conversation the way you do with me  
Then you probably wouldn't really be that surprised  
When they stopped inviting you over as often,  
Would you?

But that's what really gets to me:  
You're not that way with them,  
So why are you that way with me?

When you pray  
Why do you treat it like you're the star of some play,  
Standing alone on a stage and delivering  
Yet another soliloquy for the audience of Heaven?

Why do you continually come before me, Your God,  
Who is supposedly so high and exalted above you,  
In order to stand on *your* soapbox  
And spew *your* news and views without interruption,  
Before walking off and going right back to your day to day business?

Would it even matter if I wasn't here at all?  
If I just walked away from the phone the next time you called  
And let you talk it out with yourself,  
Would you even notice?  
Most times I'm not so sure you would.

Ok... I'm sorry.  
Let's take a step back.  
I didn't write you just to rain down shame on you.  
But it's because I love you  
That I get so frustrated and yes, deeply disheartened  
When I think about how one-sided our relationship has become.

All these problems you keep bringing before me—  
Don't you know that I,  
the All-knowing and All-seeing One,  
Have a treasure trove of wisdom, solutions,  
And peace beyond all understanding,  
And that I am ready to give these to you  
If you would only  
Stop,

open your hands,  
and receive them?

And this peace beyond all understanding,  
I don't mean only that my peace is so amazing  
That it is unfathomable to you,  
But also that this peace of mine *becomes yours by the very act*  
Of giving up your total faith in your own understanding;  
My peace beyond all understanding becomes yours  
When wrap up your perpetual inner monologue

and sit,

and ask,

and listen,

and wait;

My peace becomes yours when you put to rest  
All the plans and schemes that race around your head  
By placing them out of your hands and into mine;  
My peace becomes yours  
When you turn off the TV in your brain  
That endlessly channel surfs through the hurricane  
Of scenes, and sounds, and words that the world fills you with  
*And gives them all up —*  
Gives up the world and all its spectacles to instead,  
Come before me in the stillness  
*And listen.*

And once you've made a habit of this kind of listening,  
Don't you know that I would soon bring stillness  
To that sleepless storm that rages in your heart and mind—  
The storm that, I know, generates your many restless and all consuming thoughts,  
The very ones that have stifled our dialogue for so long  
And fractured our friendship, along with your inner peace?  
Oh, if you only valued *your own peace* enough—  
If you were only honest about your need and your inability to rewire your own mind  
Then you would desire *to make the time* to listen and rest in my presence more often—  
And then, then my still small voice would slowly but surely  
Become more audible.

And yes, I know how ironic it might seem  
That the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is so soft spoken,  
But that's just generally how I operate.  
And there's a way that my rest comes naturally  
When you begin regularly talking with me on my level—  
In softer tones and with a more patient ear.  
Because when that kind of patient dialogue  
Becomes more commonplace between you and I  
Then the place of prayer and meditation where you and I meet  
Becomes its own portable sanctuary.  
Then, peace and rest become available to you  
At all times and in all places,  
Whenever you choose to open up with me.  
And you and I, too,  
Naturally come to a greater understanding of one another.  
Well, you know what I mean.

So, you see,  
I don't command somber reverence before me  
For my sake only, but just as much for yours.  
I mean, really, my own peace is eternal and unshakeable,  
It's you who keeps on coming to me to vent!

So my child and student and friend,  
Take it easy.

Let tomorrow worry about itself,  
And spend some quality time today with your Old Man.  
And even with all the distance and frustrations,  
Just remember that I'll always love you,  
And I'll always want the best for you.

Talk soon.  
Love, [insert ineffable name of G-d]  
(aka Dad)