

EARS THAT HEAR

Was I losing my hearing? I was only in my late 30's. How could this be? Perhaps all those hours working around noisy farm machinery while growing up on a dairy farm had taken their toll or maybe I had jacked up the sound on my music too much over the years.

It was a visit to Dr. Ho that laid my concerns to rest. He discovered that my ears were full of wax. An instrument that looked like the ones cake makers fill with frosting to decorate a cake was brought forth. It was filled with water and then inserted at each ear. Suddenly a great swooshing of water flushed through my ears which removed the wax. I could hear again!

The Bible gives many examples of those who also had trouble hearing. However, it was in respect to spiritual hearing. It had been 400 years of oppressive labor and slavery under the heartless Egyptian rulers. The Israelites cried out to God for intervention and in his compassion, He sent them good news through his servant Moses. God was going to set them free and bring them into the land he had promised to Abraham many years before.

The Israelites were jubilant when they heard the news! At least that is what we would have expected, but that was not their response.

*Moses reported this to the Israelites (the good news of freedom), but **they did not listen** to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. Exodus 6:9 NIV*

It is easy to get entrapped in a cycle of negativity and unbelief when we go through hard times that seem like they will never end. Our hearts can get so calloused that we have a hard time believing anything good will happen again. In the early 2000's I was going through a difficult time in my life. There was a phrase that was sometimes chanted alternately by a leader at the church which I was attending.

God is good..... all the time. All the time..... God is good.

Hearing that phrase bugged me. I did not like itor feel good when I heard it. Frankly, I was disappointed with God and myself, but that is not something you broadcast to fellow Christians, especially when one is an elder in the church. Thoughts influence our feelings. Most Christians go through some desert times in their life when they wonder if God has forgotten them. Pat answers by others often fall on our deaf ears at such times. A good listener is more to be desired at such times than someone who comes as a 'Super expert Bible explainer'. Jesus was familiar with those who had trouble hearing.

*For this **people's heart is waxed gross** (thick, calloused) and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. - Matthew 13:15 KJV*

Jesus was referring to the Pharisees and the Jewish teachers of the law. He had just finished telling a story about a farmer who went out to sow seed. (also in Mark 4, Luke 8). It was a parable with a spiritual meaning in which the seed is the Word of God and is effective only when it is in properly prepared soil. **For those who hear but do not understand, Satan comes and steals from their heart.** Some receive the seed with joy, but it is only temporary since it never establishes roots. When trouble or persecution comes they quickly fall away. Others hear the word but they allow the worries of this life, the deception of riches, treasures and the desire for other things to hinder it from being fruitful. However, **those who hear with their ears and understand with their hearts reap the benefits of good fruit and healing.**

A key issue to hearing is the condition of the heart.

The long ago promised Messiah was standing right in front of the Pharisees, but they could not hear him as he proclaimed eternal life changing truths. What was the **spiritual wax** that blocked their ability to hear? **Pride** in religious tradition and learning, greed and wickedness - Luke 10:21; 11:39. People who think they know it all or have it all do not see the need to listen to others or to God, for they are self-sufficient and independent. **Jesus lived and taught the key to improving our hearing..... humility.**

*Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Matthew 5:3*

In the early 1990's I was asked to write several correspondence courses for a Bible school in London. I spent over 200 hours researching and writing the one on the Beatitudes, which had a powerful influence on my own life. It occurred to me that Christians could call them.....

THE DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

God wants us to acknowledge our emptiness without Him, to fully yield to Him, and be filled with his Spirit and Word so that we can bring healing to the world.

Many of the churches in Asia Minor had hearing problems, especially the one at Laodicea, which felt that they needed nothing. - Revelation 3:17. God resists the proud but gives grace and favor to the humble.

*He **guides** the **humble** in what is right and teaches them his way. - Psalm 25:8*

*The Lord **confides** in those who **fear him**; he makes his covenant known to them. Psalm 25:14 NIV*

*The **friendship** of the Lord is for those who **fear him**.
Psalm 25:14a RSV*

Jesus told his disciples that the **secrets** of the kingdom were given to them and not to the others - Matt. 13:11. Most people do not like to share deep secrets with everybody but only with their closest of friends. Jesus was the same. He warned his disciples.....

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces. - Matthew 7:6

The closer we get to Jesus, the more spiritual insights and nuggets we will receive from him. This is not merely about spending more time in the Word and in prayer. It is maintaining an attitude of **humble receptivity** as we live out our daily life. How many times have we heard that Christianity is not about religion but about a personal relationship with Jesus? Yet, I have heard fine leaders say that God no longer speaks to us directly anymore but only through his written Word, however this would seem like a strange relationship.

Imagine living with a spouse that you never talk to, but you merely read old letters that they once wrote to you or only look at photos of them. It is silly to think that God, the creator of the universe and of all languages, now has gone silent. Granted, his written Word is a primary way he does speak to us, but certainly not the only way. The Word of God is like a photograph of God's character and activity but he also wants to interact with us personally as we both speak and listen to each other.

Radio stations are sending out waves of sound all the time, which are available to those in their broadcast range. However, certain things will optimize this.

- * They must have a radio (AM, FM or Short Wave)
- * The radio will need power (electric, battery or solar)
- * They must tune in to the station
- * Optimum benefit will occur if they set aside distractions and listen carefully

God is communicating regularly to the inhabitants of this earth.

- * Those who have a spirit (God enlightens the spirit of man - Proverbs 20:27)
- * Those born of the Spirit will have increased ability to hear from God - John 10:27
- * Those who are filled with the Spirit will choose to set aside distractions and will learn to become more sensitive to the leading of the Spirit

Mary and Martha had opened their home to Jesus and his disciples. Martha was worried about all the practical details of preparation while Mary was adoring Jesus as she poured expensive perfume on his feet and wiped them with her long flowing hair. Both were expressing their love for Jesus, but Mary wanted to be closer to Jesus and to hear his voice. **God appreciates our acts of service unto Him, but he especially takes note of those who want to spend time with Him....alone.** Martha wanted Mary to come help in the kitchen, but Jesus told her that Mary had chosen the one thing that was better.

*Mary sat at the Lord's feet **listening** to what he said - Luke 10:39*

Mary's heart was tender toward Jesus and she was willing to spend personal time with Him. While she listened to Jesus it seems that she may have grasped the truth that he really was going to die. She wanted to express her love for him in an extravagant way..... a year's worth of wages of perfume!

For a period of a few years I did not seem to hear much from God as disappointments and distractions had formed spiritual wax in my spiritual ears and some callousness in my heart. During the summer of 2014, Jesus restored my first love for Him and opened my ears so that I could hear Him better.

Once or twice a year I still need to remove wax from my physical ears, especially my left one. I also need to be alert to the build up of things that may begin to harden my heart or distract me from loving Jesus with all my being. Spending time with Jesus brings greater sensitivity, compassion and tears. I want to be more like Mary.....who took time to listen to Jesus, for she had **ears that hear**, for her heart was open to Jesus.

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