

## Hearing with the ear of the soul

Joni Woelfel | Apr. 23, 2013 Soul Seeing

"Raise your hand when you hear a beep," the nurse instructed me. She held the testing device in my ear and I waited for a beep.

And waited.

"Nothing?" she inquired.

"No," I answered, hoping the instrument wasn't working. But I never got to raise my hand that morning because I never heard a beep.

Later the audiologist told me I could understand only 44 percent of words spoken in one ear and 63 percent in the other. There were no graphs at all in the normal hearing range. I was a candidate for hearing aids. I told my friends and family, "I'm hearing impaired. Please speak up and look at me when you talk."

Diagnosed with late stage Ménière's disease (which I suspected, since I've had this debilitating illness for three decades), in my anxiety I looked for Scripture verses about hearing and listening to the word of God. As I paged through my Bible's index, I was surprised to see as many verses about God listening to us as those urging us to listen to God. A loving balance of communication both ways, the Bible suggests, is the way to peace, understanding and gratitude.

The worst thing for people like me with hearing loss is not being able to follow conversations. We often miss portions of what is said and have to ask, "What?" This gets embarrassing and frustrating for everyone. Sometimes we pretend to hear so nobody has to repeat themselves. Sometimes, not wanting to risk drawing attention to ourselves, we become quiet and don't say anything. This leads to disconnection, feeling isolated, and not being able to participate in the fun of a conversation.

I looked for spiritual connections to these challenges. The ear-nose-throat specialist told me that when hearing loss is present, it is best to get hearing aids promptly so that the nerves in the inner ear that still function are kept working for as long as possible. This surely applies to life and faith: What we stop using atrophies. We must always exercise our soul's faculty for listening to the Spirit within. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God, and Mark 4:24 reminds us to pay attention. In John 5:24 Jesus asks us not only to hear but to believe. Revelation 1:3 says that not only is it a blessing to hear the word of God, we need to keep it alive and active in our hearts. These verses say nothing about ear drums. Our soul has an infinite capacity to hear God that has nothing to do with our bodies.

Being encouraged to hear with our soul inspires optimism. Sometimes this means confidence that we will get better, but even if that doesn't happen, it means we can hear and understand God's assurance to Julian of Norwich that, despite appearances, "all shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well!" In God, where we already are, it always is. "We live and move and have our being" in God (Acts 17:28) and so

are never diminished. Not only can nothing good and beautiful be added to us, nothing real can ever be taken away (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Through all our suffering, God invites us not only to "speak up and look at me" when we pray, but to listen quietly for his tender response with the ear of our soul.

As I write this, my vision is off, and I am experiencing tinnitus, pain and fatigue. My head is in a fog. Clarity of mind and body seems impossible. For many of us on many levels, that's life. That's what's normal for us. But we can hear and realize love. The ability to concentrate is not an indicator of our relationship with God. When we feel as if we can't hear a single "beep" from God, he is leaning toward us and soothing our soul. This is something we can come to know.

Scriptures such as Psalm 34 remind us that God's ears are open to the cries of the distressed. God is eager to receive our feelings, doubts, despair, stress and weariness. And as Psalm 40 indicates, God has given us the gift of spiritual hearing. Many times over, Scripture simply says, "Let anyone with ears listen!" (Matthew 13:9)

Through our trials, we learn that communication with God is a matter of sending and receiving the silent language of love. Soul seeing is essential to beholding what is real. Soul hearing is essential to experiencing the love of God.

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