

How's Your Hearing

The deaf and hard of hearing account for the single largest group of disabled Americans (28 of 49 million). Twenty-eight million is more than all those with heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, blindness, tuberculosis, and kidney disease combined. Approximately 12 percent of the U.S. population suffers from hearing loss. Only 9.7 percent of people over 65 have normal hearing.

The Bible speaks often of ears and hearing. Solomon said, ***“The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them” (Proverbs 20:12)***. God wanted Israel to ***“give ear to his commandments” (Ex.15:26)*** and David pleaded with God to ***“give ear”*** unto his prayers (*Ps 86:6*)

The Bible also speaks of hearing loss so Jesus healed a deaf man (Mark 7:31–37). While he healed the physical deaf, He was unable to help some whose spiritual ears were “dull of hearing” (*Mat 13:15*) ***For this people's heart is waxed gross, 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.*** He did not force them to hear His saving message, but He did encourage them to listen: ***“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9)***. What about us? How is our hearing?

The Parable of the Sower is found in the first three Gospel accounts (Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8). It is interesting that each rendition of the parable has the same basic story but each uses a different closing admonition about hearing. Placed together, in summary, the Parable of the Sower suggests three attitudes:

- ***Take heed that you hear (Matthew 13:9),***
- ***Take heed what you hear (Mark 4:24),***
- ***Take heed how you hear (Luke 8:18)***

TAKE HEED THAT YOU HEAR

Why did God give man ears in the first place? Certainly, He had many purposes, but the primary reason you have ears on the side of your head is so you can hear God's saving message before you die. Your ears will never serve a more important purpose than the day they enable your mind to grasp God's plan of salvation.

Hearing is essential to initial salvation. One cannot be saved without faith in Jesus (John 3:16; Hebrews 11:6) and one cannot gain faith without hearing the gospel. Paul explained, (*Rom 10:17*) ***So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*** Later Paul would say, (*1 Cor. 1:17*) ***For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.***

Hearing is also necessary to remain saved as a Christian. Paul wrote, ***“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain” (Philippians 2:16)***. It's important that we try to put ourselves in contact with God's Word under favorable learning conditions. *A jeweler displays gold necklaces on black velvet. The contrast heightens appreciation, and removes distractions from view.* To gain fresh insight from God's Word, it often helps to see it under favorable circumstances.

Experts call interfering sounds around those that are hard of hearing as white noise. Those with good hearing do not notice the sounds of passing traffic, air conditioners, other conversations, televisions, and

beeping elevators, but the hearing-impaired have difficulty separating these background noises from what they want to hear. **In our private devotionals**, it's good to remove as much of external noise (TV, children) and internal noise (stress and worry) as possible. **Publically**, favorable conditions would be a sound congregation and knowledgeable teachers. It might also include finding a place in the assembly with as few distractions as possible. We need to try to avoid being distracted and we need to try not to be a "distracter."

TAKE HEED WHAT YOU HEAR

There are many voices competing for our attention in this culture. There is the voice of political correctness, the voice of Hollywood, the voice of the media, the voice of Wall Street, the voice of tolerance, and the voice of education/peers. There are bits of truth and wisdom in each, to be sure, but the only voice that is always in perfect pitch is God's.

God speaks today through His Son. He says, simply, ***"This is my beloved Son: hear him"*** (Mark 9:7). In the past, God has spoken through a burning bush, prophets, a donkey, visions, and dreams. ***"God spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," but "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"*** (Hebrews 1:1–2).

Jesus speaks today through the Holy Spirit. Before He went back to heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into "all truth". The Spirit inspired the apostles and prophets to leave for us the written record of that truth for all succeeding generations. ***(2 Pet. 1:20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. (21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.***

Paul taught us in 2 Timothy 3:16–17 that the Bible is sufficient for leading us in all aspects of life. We will not learn what God wants us to do in any way other than simply opening up the Holy Bible and listening to what it has to say. In almost all cases, another Christian is involved in helping us a person in understanding and obeying the Bible. This was true with the man from Ethiopia and Phillip (Acts 8:30–31). This is why we have been commissioned to go and teach (Mark 16:15), but it is still God's Word that has the power saves us. If what you are hearing from your preacher, church, or religious reading material is not what you are reading in your Bible, then don't embrace what you are hearing. ***Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.***

TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR

One who is hard of hearing—physically and spiritually—can take steps to improve his hearing. For one thing they can turn and face the speaker. The design of the ear allows it to catch additional sound vibrations from the front, but hinders catching those from behind. Paul wrote of some who would turn away their ears from the truth. ***(2Tim 4:3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*** But on the other hand, some like the brethren in Berea were eager to hear God's word. ***(Act 17:11) These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.***

- **Focus single attention.** One should put down the newspaper or mute the television and focus on listening to the Word of God. As the Hebrew writer said, ***"unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"*** (Hebrews 12:2)."

- **Reduce distance.** Proximity of hearer to speaker is key; ***"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you"*** (James 4:8). If you have a problem knowing what God wants you to do, then get a little closer to

Him by listening to His word. Responsibility shifts from preacher to listener during a sermon. Once we hear it, we become responsible of a hearer to become a doer. James wrote ***“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).***

A Japanese legend tells of a man touring heaven. He came upon a room with boxes full of what looked like mushrooms. Upon closer examination, he found that they were human ears! He asked an angel why heaven had boxes and boxes of ears. The angel replied, “They listened but did not do, so only their ears were saved.”

“He that hath ears, let him hear.”

Invitation