

## Deaf by Choice

By

Bruce A. Howell,

General Director of Foreign Missions

Ever notice that hearing can be turned on or off, at will? I think it was Charles Swindoll, years ago, who related the following synopsis. In the stillness of the night, a mother, who normally sleeps soundly, can hear the cry of her little baby. She jumps out of bed and like a speeding bullet is at the crib ready for the early morning feeding. All along, the father, in the same room, sleeps undisturbed. He is oblivious that his wife has been up several times in the night.

What is the difference? Both have the same ability to hear. The maternal instinct of the mother is sharpened to when the slightest movement in the crib brings her jolting out of bed. She slept with one ear open, while her husband slept with both ears closed. He was deaf by choice.

And men seem to have that unique capacity. A wife tells her husband something, and hours later he insists she never said it or he never heard it. The truth is, he didn't. He was deaf by choice. His wife's voice and persistent speech go in the proverbial "one ear and out the other" never making contact with the brain. (Of course, I might add, this phenomenon never happens to me. Ha!)

Open ears and a willing heart have always been prerequisites to hearing from God. With the hustle and bustle of life, it is sometimes difficult to hear His voice above and beyond all the others. Are you listening? That is the best place to begin. Have ears attuned to what the Spirit is saying. No wonder, seven times in the Book of Revelation, John admonishes, "Hey, guys! Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches!" God was trying to get their attention. Some of them were plainly deaf by choice.

Roger Barrier in *Listening to the Voice of God* suggests the following checklist:

- God speaks to my innermost spirit. Satan and the flesh speak to my mind.
- God speaks with a gentle leading. (God does not push, drive, or dominate.)
- God's voice produces freedom. Satan places people in bondage.
- God tends to speak when I'm seeking Him (Jeremiah 29:12-13).
- God gives specific directions.
- When God speaks, you feel everything is under control. When flesh and Satan speak it feels as if things are out of control.

- God speaks with 100% truth that can be tested by the Word of God.
- God's voice leads to deep peace (Philippians 4:7). Satan brings confusion.

As missionary kids, it is easy to pass over the voice of God, because it is all too familiar, or because we choose to deaf by choice. Remember the young mother. She slept with one ear open. The father slept, with both ears closed. Open your ears! God is trying to speak to you. He wants to lead you into His will for your life, into a deeper walk and commitment to Him, and be a friend that sticks closer than a brother.