

Not too long ago the pastor of our former church made the long drive to Nashville to participate in the baptism of our younger daughter, as well as to preach during the Sunday morning worship service. It had been six or eight months since we'd seen him. We'd talked with him only a few times in between.

But as he began to deliver his message, it was clearly more than just his familiar voice and tone that resonated with my family and me. Our move from the country back into the city had been a good one in many respects, but we had also left much behind—the home where our kids had spent the bulk of their growing up years—all their elaborate childhood adventures in the nearby hayfields and pastures, pretending to be subsisting on nothing but honeysuckles and berries, combing the surrounding acres for water and shelter.

Oh, and the quiet. My, how we miss the quiet.

Yet the words of his sermon that day, as well as each hymn selection and Scripture verse, spoke of new beginnings, of God's plan that survives through it all.

There's no way he could've known all we needed to hear that day. But the Spirit did. And our friend had been listening.

### Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-13

It's good that we don't know everything. Yes, we've seen the emaciated faces and bloated bellies of poverty on relief-fund infomercials. We've seen the earth-moving devastation of overseas tsunamis and Gulf Coast hurricanes. We've seen a young mother collapse against a column on her front porch, her child thought to be abducted by a drifting psychopath, her life unraveling at the hands of the unthinkable.

We've seen these things in isolation, usually from a distance, through the lens of the morning news, all the while maintaining the stomach to lift a cereal spoon to our mouths.

But if we could somehow feel all the accumulated grief, pain, and panic felt by millions in our world this very minute, our hearts couldn't bear the weight. Our heads would swim, our breathing would stop, we'd likely explode.

Neither could we deal with knowing all the answers to all our questions. In fact, our brains can hardly process the information we already have as it is! Besides, if we feel the need to protect our children from various bits of knowledge that we don't consider them yet ready for, what makes us think that we—mere children ourselves—could handle everything there is to know?

And so God wisely, lovingly, parentally shields us from those things that would overload us, choosing instead to reveal everything we need to know one piece at a time . . . through the unfolding presence of his Holy Spirit.

### All Ears

So rather than bewailing God's silence, accusing him of holding out on us, we should instead celebrate his protective provision, while seeking at the same time to cultivate minds and hearts that are hungry to hear his thoughts. For he *does* yearn to tell us more to have our full attention long enough to speak in whole paragraphs and complete sentences.

As Paul said in some of the verses later on in 1 Corinthians 2, it is without our grace-given ability as spiritually transformed people to "evaluate everything" (vs 15), to walk with Holy Spirit discernment into any situation, our hearts carefully attuned to see much more than meets the eye.

Why don't we, then? It's because we insist on keeping enough of our "natural man" around to entertain us on days when God's not floating our boat. Therefore, we lose the capacity to distinguish truth from "foolishness" (vs 14). Flesh and blood simply cannot locate the frequency the Spirit uses to transmit his truth into our lives.

So we miss his signal. We keep things on the surface. We settle for small talk. And when we do, we resign ourselves to living in spiritual crisis, conflicted, wanting to know more yet not really willing to listen.

But “if our hearts do not condemn [us]”—if we are letting him grow the disciplined fruits of purity and simplicity in our lives—“we have confidence before God, and can receive whatever we ask of Him. . .from the Spirit He has given us” (1 John 3:21-22, 24)

### **Good Listeners**

That’s not to say this this ever gets totally easy. But it does get easier “for those whose *senses have been trained* to distinguish between good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14)—between natural and spiritual, between the readily obvious and the extraordinarily eternal.

It gets easier for those who become one with the Word, who regularly listen for the Spirit to point out a passage here, to highlight a phrase there, to enliven a certain section as they read or study or hear it proclaimed..

It gets easier for those who become people of ongoing prayer, who pray when the car is warming up, when the potatoes are baking, when they’re dusting the furniture or cutting the grass.

It gets easier for those who ask the Lord to help them read the news with spiritual glasses, to listen for spiritual clues in casual conversation, to spend time with people who are practicing the Spirit’s presence even late in the afternoon on Fridays.

The only thing that never gets any easier is trying to pull this off part-time, trying to *act* spiritual when called upon but not *being* spiritual when the curtain’s down. The Spirit has some mighty things to say when we’re ready to listen.

### **1 Corinthians 2:7 “We speak God’s hidden wisdom in a mystery”**

*It shouldn’t surprise us that our perspectives don’t make sense to everybody. What is our motive for wanting them to?*

### **1 Corinthians 2:10 “The Spirit searches everything, even the deep things.”**

*Think on that phrase: “the deep things of God.” How bad do you really want to plunge in for that?*

### **1 Corinthians 2:12 “In order to know what has been freely given to us by God”**

*Yes, we can begin to understand these things already. What can we do to understand them even better?*

The Spirit gives us insight into God’s plans. He knows the plans he has for you—“plans for [your] welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Therefore, the Spirit asks you to “call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13), when you listen with a spirit that’s willing to obey what you hear.

***Spirit of God, make our hearts open enough to hear what you have to say. And never hold back from saying what we need to hear.***