

## THE FIRST 15

Thursday, January 30, 2025

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Today is Thursday, January 30. As we continue our study on the Practice of Prayer, we study what the Bible says about listening to God.

### OPENING PRAYER

*As a new day dawns, I seek the presence of the God who loves me. I claim a quiet space set apart from the rush of the world. I pause and become still, and breathe deeply and slowly. Quiet my mind to listen. Help me recognize the distinct sound of Your voice speaking to my soul. Reveal the message You have for me through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### SCRIPTURE

***Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. Mark 7:31-35***

### REFLECTION

In the Gospel of Mark, after walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee and before feeding the crowd of four thousand, Jesus journeys through the territory known as the Decapolis. The Decapolis was a group of ten Gentile cities on the eastern frontier of the Roman empire. The local residents introduce him to a man who cannot hear or speak.

This is an opportunity for Jesus to bring the miracle of healing to this man and fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah about the Messiah of God. Through the power of the Messiah the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped (Isaiah 35:5-6). A God who listens and speaks to humanity, gives the gift of hearing and speech.

I cannot imagine what it must be like to be deaf. I do not want to minimize the depths of struggle for those over the centuries who have lived their life without sound. I am thankful for stories of physical healing and modern improvements in technology for those who cannot physically hear. Yet, today, I ponder this scripture from another perspective. What about those who are spiritually deaf? Those who are unable to hear God.

I recognize that sometimes I cannot hear the Lord. I am unable to listen to God's voice and need healing for my spiritual deafness. As I reread this scripture, I imagine being the man who is deaf. The people around me are sorry that I cannot hear God's voice, so they bring me to Jesus and beg him to place a hand on me. Jesus' wounded hands touch the ears of my soul and he says to my deaf heart "be opened!" Whatever barrier that existed before, is now removed by Jesus and I am able to listen to the voice of God.

I consider what God is revealing to me through these words of scripture. Does the Holy Spirit want to encourage me to listen more or speak more? Should I endeavor to spend more time in quiet reflection listening with the ears of my soul? Should I spend more time using my voice to speak to God? Speak to the world? Or speak to others? Maybe I should spend less time speaking words that harm others and more time speaking words that heal and lift them up? If my tongue is loosened will I speak the truth plainly? If my ears are opened will I be able to hear what I am currently missing or of which I am unaware?

**Ask:** Do I need spiritual healing to open the ears of my heart and/or loosen my tongue?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Jesus, You are the great Physician and You are the healer of my soul. I do not understand why I am sometimes unable to hear God's voice in my life. Remove the obstacles that exist which interfere with my communication with You. Open my ears that I may hear, open my eyes that I may see, open my lips that I might praise you, open my heart that I can love, open my hands that I might give. Heal my heart and my soul as only You can, so that I can experience life more fully. Show me what I am missing, Lord, and awaken me because I do not want to miss a thing. Amen.*