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Can You Hear Me Now?

I can still remember when I got my first cell phone. It was my thirteen-year-old son, Steven's idea. He was so embarrassed that I was the only mom he knew that refused to get one. Boy was I surprised that Christmas when I opened my gift from Steven to discover my new cell phone, purchased with his own ten dollars. Of course he had convinced my husband to sign the service agreement and pay the monthly fees.

A few weeks later, I decided to try out my new toy. My husband, Steve, and I were out for the evening so I called Steven and asked him to call the phone to see if it worked. Nothing happened. I called him again and told him to try once more. Once again, nothing happened.

The next day, I called the cell phone company to find out why I could send a call, but not receive a call. She offered four possibilities for my poor reception: I was in a dip in the road, I was behind a tall building, my antenna was not up, or my battery was not sufficiently charged.

Then I asked her, "Why is it that I could place a call, but I had trouble receiving a call?" "That's because it takes more cell strength to receive a call than to send a call," she replied.

I was very frustrated with the new technological wonder and still didn't see the draw. Then I settled down to spend my daily quiet time with God. I was trying to calm my spirit, when He sent a call to my heart...

Could the reasons you had difficulty receiving calls on your cell phone be the same reasons you have difficulty hearing from Me?

That came through loud and clear and for the next several days I studied, prayed, listened, and realized the similarities for poor reception on both accounts are remarkable. If I am having trouble hearing from God I need to ask myself the following questions:

Am I in a dip in the road? The first question the operator asked was my location. I was in a dip in the road – a depression or valley that did not allow the radio waves to reach my cell phone. Likewise, when I'm not hearing God's voice, I have to ask myself the same question. Am I in an emotional dip in the road? Am I depressed or despairing? At times like those, I often cry out, "God where are You? I can't hear You? Are you there?"

As I read through the Psalms, I noticed many times King David felt the same way. During difficult times in his life, he wrote many psalms. In quite a few he began singing the blues, but after recounting the unfailing character of God, he concluded by singing songs of praise. If I am in an emotional dip in the road of life, I need to begin praising God, remembering His blessing and watch Him take me to level ground where the reception is loud and clear. (Psalm 13)

Is there a tall wall of sin that is blocking my reception? The second possibility of my not being able to receive a call on my cell phone was that the tall church building was blocking the signal. Sometimes in our spiritual lives, we can erect walls that block God's voice. Walls of pride, selfish ambition, materialism, hard heartedness, bitterness, and rebellion – just to name a few.

Remember the particular wall that was blocking my reception? It was a church building. Yes, even religion can get in the way of a personal relationship with Christ. If there is a tall wall of sin blocking our reception, we need to repent, the turn and go in the opposite direction back to God. (Isaiah 59:1-2.)

Is my spiritual battery depleted? The third possibility for my poor reception was a depleted battery. If I'm not hearing from God, it could be that I need to spend more time in prayer and ask God to fill me anew with the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote that we should be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). That is a present tense verb which implies a continual process, and it occurs when we spend time with Jesus.

Is my antenna up? Finally, the operator asked if my antenna was up. If I'm not hearing from God, perhaps I need to check and make sure my spiritual antenna is raised, or if I have retracted it because I really don't want to hear what God has

to say? I need to always remember that God's ways are loving and there is nothing to fear. His plans for me are always good. (Jeremiah 29:11)
Am I too Busy? Finally, just as it was easier to send a call than to receive a call, it is easier to me to talk to God than to hear His still small voice. It doesn't take more power, but more discipline to sit still before Him and listen. (Proverbs 8:34, Psalm 5:3-4)

Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd who speaks to His sheep (John 10:14, 17). If we are having trouble hearing from God, we need examine our lives for these five barriers and ask the technician, the Holy Spirit, to walk us through the steps for improving our reception.