



Take Your Earbuds Out!

Reflecting the glow of recovery from Starlight at Tamasee

By Jon Holland, CEO of Tamasee DAR School



I love and hate noise canceling earbuds. While I can hear music, audio books, and podcast better than ever and I can actually rest on a long flight, my teenage and young adult children also have noise canceling headphones. So, I routinely call for them and get no reply. I'm talking, but they can't hear me. Sometime I tap them on the shoulder and motion for them to take their earbuds out. Sometimes, when I'm really frustrated, I'll just holler.

That's a pretty good picture of what Alcoholics Anonymous means by meditation. In 12 Steps Fellowships, prayer is talking to God, and meditation is listening to God. But too often we have spiritual noise canceling headphones on. God is talking to us, but we're not listening.

The pioneers of the 12 Steps believed and experienced that hearing God was indispensable to recovery. This is what Step Eleven means and what many in recovery call two-way prayer. People who embrace the 12 Steps as a way of life learn to listen to God speaking to them every day, and they follow the guidance God gives. So, how did they learn?

While I've known people who heard God speak audibly, most of us learn to hear God speaking within. For the prophet Elijah, God was not in the fire, the earthquake, or the gale; he heard God in a still, small voice. God is not in the noise of our lives or the chaos of our circumstances. God is in silence of our inner world. There, God's Spirit speaks to our spirit. God's thoughts are revealed in our thoughts. God's words flow through our pens and our mouths.

Like the prophet Habakkuk or the apostle John, we find the place and posture to pay attention. We learn to see God with our mind's eye. We tune into his voice, and we write down what we hear. It really is that simple, but like becoming a good listener in human relationships, it takes practice.

So, here's a quick guide to this life-changing experience. First, find a quiet place and focus your mind and heart on God. Give him any distractions that come up. Second, use your imagination to see God. Picture being with him in a safe, comfortable spot. Third, ask God a question on your mind or ask what he wants to say to you. Then, fourth, write down everything you sense. Don't edit or evaluate the flow of thoughts, feelings, image, or impressions. Just capture them. Fifth, once the flow stops, read back over what you wrote and use your intuition to distinguish your inner voice from God's. 12 Steppers use the test for self-will (dishonest, selfish, fearful, or resentful) versus God's will (honest, loving, trusting, and forgiving) to recognize what God said. Finally, act on what guidance God gave you. We grow in hearing God more clearly as we obey what we've already heard.



Many people struggle when they begin this practice. They get in their own head, or they short cut the process. Don't skip using your imagination or journaling. These are key to learning to hear God. As you practice, you'll increasingly recognize how God's voice inside of you is different than your own inner voice. It's also wise to find a partner to share your two-way prayer experiences. You will encourage each other as you each learn to listen.

To flip the analogy I began with, in two-way prayer, the earbuds move from our keeping us from hearing God to having his voice be the earbuds we are listening to. When that happens, we move to the fourth dimension of life. It's incredible!

At Starlight at Tamasee, we believe mothers and children can hear God speak to them and guide them to freedom and wholeness. To learn more about Starlight, visit www.starlight.tdarschool.org, or contact us at starlight@tdarschool.org or 864-944-1390. If your church or civic group is interested in a presentation on recovery, contact Jon Holland at jholland@tdarschool.org.

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MIRACLES AWAIT AT TAMASSEE