

"Take those stupid things out of your ears! I need to talk to you!" she demands. The words are high-pitched. The earphones move ever so slightly. "You two are never satisfied! Always wanting more, more, more, more! Christmas is such a depressing time it is so hectic and so tiring. What am I doing this for?... certainly not for you two! You never do anything worthwhile to deserve all that I do for you! I am so tired of your selfish attitudes, I could just... DO YOU HEAR ME?" And with her finger she flicks the earphones of one of the girls. "Did you hear me?" And the mother pulls the earphone out of the other girl's ear, as the daughter glares back at her mother, facing turning red from the neck up. The other one, stopped shoulders, straight tangled hair, acne covering her beautiful face, looks around to see who is watching what is happening. When she realizes we all are, she quickly turns her back to her mother, and us... facing the candy rack, shuffling the wrappers. The earphones go back into her ears to silence the cutting, searing of her heart from the barrage of her mother's words. But the mother does not quit! Even as she unloads the many cans from her grocery cart she continues the bantering... "what you girls need is to go live in a country where you'd have to appreciate the hundreds of things that I do for you... take those earphones out of your ears right now... do you not hear me?"



I feel so helpless. I want to take the girls and hide them under my coat where her bitter words cannot find their heart. I want to tell them about Jesus and a Holy God that is a Father filled with overflowing love, compassion, acceptance... so much compassionate love that He would never tell them He is "tired of them" ... never!! ...instead He would say, "come to Me if you are tired and your heart is shattered by living and I will fulfill your heart's deepest desires according to My Good Pleasure!"



The acne faced one is now "beet red" and she looks as though she may crawl under the candy rack to escape the mother's vile words...just to hide from the people who are now whispering and 'side-glance watching'... the other daughter still has her back turned, hoodie up to protect her mind and heart from her mother's harsh words spilling forth from her lips at rapid pace... words that she can never retrieve from the air...nor from her daughter's tender forming heart...

The canned goods from the shopping cart are being lined up so neatly, carefully, and in order of what item is stamped on the label.

I wish she would take such cautious care of her daughter's hearts as she does the cans of tomatoes, green beans, corn, spam... she turns to the lady behind the cash register who is scanning the cans for their price... her voice is suddenly quiet and controlled... low and falsely sweet... "ALL this canned food is for our food pantry families this Christmas. Isn't it just wonderful? I am in charge of our food pantry ministry at our church and people have just given so generously! We have a real ministry here!"

I feel a deep 'gut-wrenching' emotion tightening around my heart. I am not sure what it is...anger maybe? Pity maybe? Indignation?... definitely compassion... then I remember God's sentiments as He pronounced judgment on a rebellious Israel... "for I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God than burnt offerings!" The word knowledge used here in Hebrew is "intimacy" (Hosea 6:6). ...when tears flow freely from my eyes as I stand in the middle of a check out aisle in a store... I know that my heart is broken with the very things that break the heart of God... all because a mother who can buy food for the food pantry in her church and brag about it to a stranger but cannot show respect and love for her daughters.

This verse now takes on a whole new meaning in my heart... "behold, I bring you Good News of Great Joy... that will be for ALL people...a Savior is born! He is our Hope... our Peace... our Acceptance... our Joy... our Salvation... our Restorer of broken hearts, dreams, and emotions... wisdom in the midst of confusion and fear... He is a Holy God that is touchable through the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives.



Rejoice! He was born, died, risen, and now lives inside of you...and me! He is the Greatest Gift-Giver of all! His intent gaze if for YOU... is upon YOU!... He gave Himself! Don't forget to hold someone's heart with your eyes... Blessings at Thanksgiving! Jesus' Joy deep inside at Christmas! Peace at the New Year!

Written by Cheryl Mong contributor to HeartCry



HeartCry



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ANTICIPATION



Anticipation is everything when you are watching the arrival of someone you dearly love and haven't had the chance to just sit, talk, and look into their eyes – eyes are the window to our soul – a chance to just hear their voice – touch their arm...gaze at them.

With anticipated breath this Christmas, who are you anxiously awaiting? ...will their eyes dance when they meet your eyes? ...will they hold your eyes for a long time in their gaze? ...just so they can remember what your "heart-eyes" are saying right at that all important moment of connecting ...are you choosing to make memories, my friend? If you aren't – someone else will....!

I was in a store yesterday ... watching all the excitement of gift buying that was happening all around me. As I was in line at the check-out aisle, this is the scene my "heart-ears-eyes" heard and watched unfold before me.



It is the LOUD, grating, screeching voice ahead of me that attracted my full attention... but it is the "look" in the girl's eyes that will hold my heart captive for a long time...down the aisle, I can see heads beginning to turn, stare at the heart wrenching display of action and words... and then I see "her"...and the target of her vicious attacks of hostility.

Two girls with headphones looped under their chin and secured in their ears...follow the wire and you see the IPOD...purposely loud so that the world is kept at bay... BUT is it the world or 'the voice' they choose to keep out?... I am not sure...or that I blame them!



PRAYER MOBILIZATION TEAM
of the Evangelical Congregational Church



MAKING PRAYER MEETINGS INTO DYNAMIC ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD



Dear Pastor or Prayer Class Leader,

If your prayer meetings or adult Sunday School classes have become poorly attended and kind of boring you may want to consider the following method. Ask your group to read a Scripture passage during the week and ask them to prayerfully answer the questions below before their next class. Each person should get alone with God in silence and solitude and meditate on His Word for about 15-20 minutes per day until all the questions are answered.

At the next class come with your own answers and lead the class in a discussion of everyone's responses. It is helpful to use application Bibles and a commentary to answer some of the tough questions. I have found this method to be so effective that I have used it for all of my small groups. Try this with one of the following readings: Old Testament—Deuteronomy 8; Gospels—Mark 4:1-25, or New Testament—James 1.

What did God say to me? List 2-5 main points or summarize the reading:

What questions do I have? What words do I need to look up? _____

What is God telling me to do? _____

What has God promised to me? _____

Rev. Michael Campbell (Bair, Faith)

What is the most meaningful verse to you? Rewrite it as it is, or rewrite it in your own words? _____

What have I learned about God's character? How has the reading uncovered how God thinks, feels, and behaves toward you and others? _____

Write a 1 or 2 sentence prayer in response to God: _____
