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Easy Listening

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Easy Listening

A local radio station proclaims that their music is "easy listening" which could be true from a number of perspectives. Music that is easy to listen to might have little or no content to engage the mind; perhaps the sounds are soft, and with very little change in tempo or volume.

Many people report that when they turn to God for answers, listening is not easy: they strain to hear, but receive "nothing." But, another possibility in listening to God can be found in a faith-full decision to listen easily: by leaving aside expectations of receiving answers that are intellectually stimulating or of dramatic intensity (similar to "volume" and "tempo" in music). Choosing a manner of easy listening to God might at first seem difficult when we are unfamiliar with the experience, but, unlike the background music that has little meaning, the responses we can receive to our many and varied ways of relating with God are exactly what we need to satisfy our deepest needs and desires. The attitude of trust that we apply to our mode of listening makes possible a manner of listening that is unstrained, yet is powerfully effective.

We generally find it easy to listen to those we love and to those whose company we enjoy, whether the content is light and with little for our minds but plenty of satisfaction for our hearts, or the subject matter is quite serious, and elicits deep compassion from within us. Whenever we are inclined to exercise trust while we listen to someone, we are almost sure to receive something of value, even when we might hold a different understanding or belief than the person speaking to us. If we bring trust with us to the times when we listen to God, especially if we have previously found companionship and love in that relationship, easy listening is a natural consequence.

Though communication with God can seem to be primarily one-way, with us having all the words, if we listen with a peaceful spirit, or at least stop talking, we are ready to receive the kinds of responses that we need. And what we need might sometimes include a few words that speak directly to our hearts, but more often turns out to be awareness that we are loved, that we are fine as we are, or that we are where we belong at this particular moment. We might receive inspired thoughts that open our minds to greater truth, but we more often find that rather than thoughts in our minds, we notice stirrings in our hearts - of peace, contentment, acceptance, joy, longings, and desires.

Easy listening has a sometimes surprising and even disconcerting aspect when we remain quiet for a time and are patient. Rather than a hoped-for

"word" from God, we might hear our own mental chattering, and realize that some of what is taking place in our minds is less than useful, and that we need to carefully identify those that are inhibiting our availability to spiritual experience. Some are critical of our simple desire to be in contact with God, others are merely passing directionless thoughts of no value. Rather than becoming discouraged with such a discovery, we can quietly choose to listen not to the foreground noise in our minds, but to the One who remains quietly in the background of our hearts.

If easy listening to God is not yet a familiar option, ask. And, after asking, listen – with trusting ease.