

**NEWS AND VIEWS**  
**MOUNT OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH**

3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612-5362

Phone... (919) 787-1910

E-mail: office@mobic.org

Web Page: [www.mobic.org](http://www.mobic.org)

*“Southern Baptists with the Full  
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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SAM GORE, Senior Pastor  
EDITH JACKSON, Prayer Coordinator

NANCY MCBRAYER, Office Manager  
MIKE KING, Maintenance Supervisor

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As I get older and older I've been told I'm hearing less and less. Can't argue that point. So why does the noise level in the world I inhabit seem to be getting louder and louder? And why doesn't this loudness seem to bother more people? I often find myself thinking, *It's so loud I can't hear myself think!* I was reminded of this phrase while having a conversation lately about the realization that the decibel level of the dull roar seems to be ramping up in the world. If this is true, and not only in my perception then what could be the purpose of all this noise pollution? It's like the atmosphere is full of spiritual static!

Consider an observation about the din around the dinner table. Some restaurants I go to are louder than others. People have to talk louder to be heard over some recorded music that adds to the auditory ambience. And it seems that the closer you get to bar the louder the people are...wonder what is influencing that? It would drive me crazy to be sitting at one of those bars (*thank the Good Lord I've been delivered*) and frantically trying to keep up with not one, or even two, but sometimes three large flat screen TVs blasting out the various sports events! Maybe it's not only the guzzlers but also the gamblers that are worshipping at that altar.

Then there's the interesting phenomenon I've noticed (*on rare occasions I might add*) in the more expensive establishments. The noise level you are subjected to during the meal in a high dollar restaurant seems to decrease proportionately to the increase of the cost of the entrees on the menu. No dollar menu there. Maybe a case can be made that people can choose to pay a higher premium for a peaceful eating experience. Then there are those people who do their eating at home because they can't afford the higher prices for the privilege of a quiet meal. Sadly in the lives of many folks today, a quiet peaceful meal at the family dinner table is a foreign concept. Busy families can't seem to find time to eat together at the table. And when they do, they still want to have the noise all around them. A blaring TV that no one is watching is a sure sign of self-induced selective hearing. Maybe as a culture and as a people we have become desensitized to the increased television volume every 5 minutes or so when the sponsors are trying to sell us something. We just talk over it or around it...or don't talk to one another very much at all. Some folks are so focused on the digital communications at their fingertips that the lonely but loud TV in our times of togetherness doesn't distract from the mission of messaging. So many in our chaotic culture seem to choose sound over silence. Texting over talking. Virtual reality over vital relationships. Loudness over listening. So what's the message? And who is hearing it?

Help me interpret the following statement I found on the internet at someone's blogspot.

*"I love when people hear rock music and say 'it's so loud I can't hear myself think!' because for me, that's the point."* If I am reading this rightly it seems that the loudness of the world can be a purposeful ploy to keep oneself from thinking. That's the point for the blogger and it must be the point for many more. It can be so loud you can't hear yourself think or hear what the Lord has to say. Who could be behind this plan of distraction? The Lord can surely shout. But He most often speaks ever so softly to those who are listening the most intently. You have to get quiet to hear His thunderous, glorious, wonderful whisper...a still, small voice. Hear the account of a lonely prophet of God when He encounters the mighty presence of the Most High God:

*So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was **not** in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was **not** in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was **not** in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*  
(1 Kings 19:11-13)

Let's ask ourselves the thought provoking question the Lord asked Elijah, *What are you doing here?* Let's pray our answer is...*Just listening to You, Lord God... just listening to You.*

It'll take some time, some *quiet* time, to be part of that privileged conversation. Make time for God.

Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam