

## **Bible and the Headlines: Selective Hearing**

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There is a malady that afflicts every husband at some point in their marriage. The affliction is selective hearing, and accusations of its presence increase with age. Recent headlines note that man's best friend can also catch this disease, and one article explains the biological mechanism used to hear only what we want.

On March 8 Yahoo.com commented, "Dachshund Experiencing 'Selective Hearing' Is Way Too Relatable." The pet's owner brought the hound to the vet multiple times to help solve her pet's indifferent responses to voice commands. The owner stated, "I was worried she might have nerve damage. I was determined to get answers. . . Turns out... she has a rare condition called selective hearing." The article notes that this affliction is neither rare nor limited to quadrupeds.

The web site DogTime.com on March 10 featured, "Video: Golden Retrievers Prove They Have 'Selective Hearing'." The Instagram video includes a pair of pups who initially respond to their owner's summons but then decide to tussle. The commentator states, "She seemingly wants to end their chaotic behavior . . . But the pets don't pay heed to their mom's words and continue with their activity." The pet owner admits this anarchy happens every morning.

The March 13 edition of Medical Xpress explained, "How the Brain Can Selectively Focus Attention on One Voice Among Others in a Noisy Environment." MIT researchers were examining how the brain solves the 'cocktail party problem.' This 'problem' is hearing (and listening to) one conversation when there are multiple other competing voices. The neuroscientists determined, "[W]hen people or animals focus on a specific auditory input, neurons in the auditory cortex that respond to features of the target stimulus amplify their activity." The features that allow selective hearing include pitch and location.

Selective hearing includes ignoring as much as listening and both traits are found in the Bible. In the book of Jeremiah God said, "I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people.. . But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts" (Jer 7:23-24). Jesus taught that His 'sheep' (people) would defeat the 'cocktail party problem.' Speaking about false prophets Jesus said, "All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them" (Joh 10:8). As the Good Shepherd Jesus said, "The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.. .his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (Joh 10:3-4).

My wife may not appreciate when I manifest selective hearing, but God expects each of us to use this ability when His Son speaks.