

GIVE SIGHT TO THE DEAF
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I read a disturbing poem today in a science fiction book. It was a paraphrase of the ending of W.H. Auden's poem, "The Unknown Citizen." The revised version went something like this. "Was he happy? Was he free? The question's quite absurd. If anything were going wrong. We surely would have heard."

That bothered me just a bit. We very rarely hear when life is going poorly for others. This is for the same reason we say "Fine" when they ask how we are doing. When we expose our pain and hurt to others, we take too big a risk. We might find out they really do not care. We would rather live with the illusion we are cherished than open our mouths to discover we are not. So we remain silent, and shielded, wearing the masks we believe those around us wish to see.

Not all problems manifest in words. Some are expressed in silent grief. Unusual silence and withdrawal is also a clue. Deviations in routine often signify a change in circumstances. Maybe another part time job is added to an already hectic schedule. But almost all clues to the hurt and pain of others, except for rare words, involve changes in normal behavior and routines. Noticing such would require us to know others well enough to even be aware of the changes. Few do. So those we profess to care for, usually attempt to deal with their problems themselves. They try and fail, absolutely and usually unnecessarily alone.

Since I probably won't hear, God grant me the wisdom and ability to see and understand when friends are hurting. Don't let me wait for them to tell me.