

Hearing from God

“Prayer is listening to the still small voice of God—listening to the ear of our hearts.”
— Richard Foster

Maybe you’ve seen the delighted expression on the faces of hearing-impaired children when they hear the voice of a parent for the first time. Medical technology brings them the marvelous gift of listening and it changes everything! They listen, truly listen, because every sound is precious to them! So it can be for us - and our children - as we experience **the wonder of hearing from God** through listening prayer!

Exploring the spiritual practice of “listening prayer” begins when we recognize that **God’s voice is the most essential part of prayer**. We become familiar with God’s voice, and when he speaks, we don’t move quickly on to

something else. Prayer is not a monologue; it is a dialogue. Which means that we need to consider again why we have two ears and one mouth. And, because humans tend to value their own words and thoughts, we will probably need to practice listening to God until it comes more naturally to us. We might not be good at it right away.

Intentionally listening to God demonstrates that **we really believe that he has heard us and has a track record of responding**. What does it say about the levels of trust in our relationship if we make a request or plead for help or pose a question, and yet we never pause long enough to receive God’s response? Failure to listen may mean that we don’t really believe that he will respond. Or it may mean that we don’t really value his response.

The benefits of listening to God are immeasurable – impossible to calculate. We can’t begin to quantify all that we, and our children, can gain from having interaction with our Creator. Hearing from God, being influenced and molded by his thoughts, **will deepen our love relationship with him and will transform us**.

The voice of God was clear when he spoke in Jeremiah 33:3: **“Call to me and I will answer you** and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know” (CSB). And he spoke clearly again in Luke 9:35: “This is my Son, my chosen one. **Listen to him.**” We move toward God when we respond like young Samuel in I Samuel 3:10, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” Though much time has passed since David sang, we can echo his words from Psalm 4:1, “Answer me when I call to you, O God who declares me innocent. Free me from my troubles. Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.” And if we are wise, we will pause to hear his answer – and invite our children to join us!



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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me a minute. Let’s talk about the listening part of our prayers to God.”

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

Tell the story from 1 Samuel 3. Find a kitchen spoon or some other common item to use as a microphone. Then invite the child to play a game called “Speak, Lord, I am listening!” **It is really important to hear from God before we start talking.**

So we begin each turn with the child holding the “microphone” and saying, “Speak, Lord ...” Then the big person holds the “mic” to read a message from God after which they hand the “mic” back to the child for a question to God or an affirmation to God – and the next “Speak, Lord ...” Messages from God are found in Jeremiah 31:3, Isaiah 41:10, Hebrews 13:5, and Isaiah 43:1.

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

Read Luke 9:35. Look through some pictures of family and friends and take about 15 seconds to “make some thankful noise” for one person the child sees in a picture. Then ask the child to sit quietly and “make some quiet” to listen to what Jesus thinks about that person.

Encourage the child to respond to God about that person. Have the child choose other people – one at a time - from the pictures. Invite them to continue “making thankful noise” and then **“making quiet” to silently love those people and listen to what God wants to say** about those people.

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Read Jeremiah 33:3. If God is answering, we want to listen well. Let’s learn to write the verb “to listen” in Chinese. (See graphic below.) Chinese characters are a combination of several words to make up a concept. Look carefully at each of the parts of this word. As we slowly practice writing “listen” in Chinese, talk about this question: How are my thoughts about listening to God impacted by the parts of this Chinese word? **Ask God what kind of listening he is asking us to do.** Write a response to God based on what you hear from him.



RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Spiritual Conversations with Children: Listening to God Together by Lacy Finn Borgo