

Challenging Your Kids To Hear From God

Presented by Pete Hohmann at the 2009 National Children's Leaders' Conference of the Assemblies of God in St. Louis, MO

Can Children Hear God's Voice?

Children hear the Lord easier than anyone else. The most common blockage that children encounter is the unbelief of the parents and children's leaders. The earlier you expect a child to sense God's presence and voice, the less likely you are to shut down their spiritual eyes and ears. Our greatest responsibility as parents and children's leaders is to lead the children into an intimate friendship with God, which includes teaching children how to recognize and respond to the voice of God.

Why Teach Kids to Hear God's Voice

- * They can have friendship with God (the most important thing!)
- * God can help them make decisions (imagine if kids could avoid the mistakes YOU made!)
- * They can be used by God to minister to others (the supernatural, including hearing God, is really more for demonstrating God's power in the world than it is for spicing up our church services. For children to move in a pure, undiluted gospel of power, they must learn to hear God's voice.)

How Does God Speak?

His Word, dreams, through others, through parents, a still small voice, spontaneous thoughts, impressions, feelings, inner-knowing, pictures, and circumstances.

Journaling

A "Hearing God Journal" is the best way to practice hearing God's voice. In journaling, you simply ask God a question and then record what you feel God is saying to you. Here are the steps for using a hearing God journal:

1. I Quiet Myself.

Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." Our minds can be so busy and noisy that we can't hear God's gentle whisper. It's impossible to empty our minds of all thoughts and we should not try to make our minds blank. What we need to do is focus on Jesus. Express your love for Him – more with feelings and desire and less with actual words. It's like sitting

quietly with your best friend. Just being together is enough. Listening to a worship CD is also a great way to quiet your heart.

2. I Picture Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says "...Let us run the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus." Imagine your heart is like a movie screen. Ask God to fill this screen with His words and pictures. Pray, "Lord, I present the eyes of my heart to you. Fill them with vision and revelation." Just as our physical eyes see into the natural world around us, our spirit sees into the supernatural world when we ask God to open them. Imagining ourselves with Jesus in a Bible story is a good way to "prime the pump." In the beginning we may need to "prime the pump" with a little help from our imagination, but when we exercise faith, it quickly turns into a pure flow of the Spirit. The water we prime the pump with may be warm and stale, but it is followed by a fresh flow of pure water.

3. I tune to the words and pictures that gently light upon my heart.

John 7:38 says, "Rivers of Living Water will flow from the heart of anyone who believes in Me." Before we can hear God, we must know what His voice sounds like. The Bible says that God's voice is like a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-12). Usually it is not a whisper that we can actually hear with our ears, but the Holy Spirit speaks directly to our spirit through spontaneous thoughts. "Spontaneous" means that these thoughts seem to just appear in our hearts. They are not just something we were already thinking about. When God puts His thoughts in our heart we often feel peace, or faith, or conviction, or a special excitement. God can put a thought, a word, an idea, a feeling, an impression, or even a vision in our heart.

4. I write down.

Revelation 1:11 says, "Write in a book what you see." We call this "journaling." In Habakkuk 2:2-3 God says, "Record the vision...for the vision is yet for the appointed time...though it tarries, wait for it...it will surely come." Journaling is writing out our questions and God's answers. Simply ask a question and then write down the spontaneous thoughts that come to your heart. Don't try to figure out if your writing is God or not until AFTER you are done writing. Nothing stops the voice of God speaking to you more than doubt. After you are done writing you can go back and compare what you wrote to the Bible or ask your parents or pastor if they think it sounds like it's from God. You can also write down what God speaks to you from the Bible and any other lessons God is teaching you.

Here are some real life examples from my own journal:

Lord, what do you want me to teach the children this Sunday?

Teach them to hear my voice. Although I speak in a variety of ways, my voice is usually a gentle whisper in their spirits. They complete their homework assignments, yet the assignment to hear and obey my voice is so much more important. The knowledge and wisdom I can give them is greater than all the books in the world and more than all the education the world can provide.

Lord, what can I do to hear your voice more clearly?

Practice hearing My voice. Desire to hear My voice. Plan your time to make room to hear My voice. When you desire to hear My voice above all else, you will hear Me. It delights Me that you want to hear My voice. I will grant you the desire of your heart.

Did you notice how I asked a question and then I wrote like God Himself was speaking the answer? This takes FAITH. You must believe that God will put His words in your heart as you write! It takes practice. Don't give up if it's hard at

Faith Builders

It takes faith to hear God's voice. Here are some faith builders to help get kids going:

- ★ Hearing the Word- Sometimes it helps to visualize yourself as part of a Bible story. For example, you become the woman at the well. Jesus turns to YOU and says... Most kids do this pretty naturally.
- ★ Worship in the Spirit- Tongues definitely opens your heart up to the spiritual realm and makes us sensitive to God's voice.
- ★ Reading back through your journal enlarges our faith.
- ★ Seeing Jesus with eyes of heart- It's OK to visualize Jesus and imagine His face as He speaks to us.
- ★ Leap of faith- You just have to believe God is willing and able to speak to you. Just do it!
- ★ Just start writing! If kids are stuck, I have them start with, "I love you my child" and just keep on writing! We KNOW God is always saying this to us and it helps get us prime the pump.

We CAN learn to hear God's voice. John 10:27 says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

Is it God?

A big question is whether we are really hearing from God. Explore these questions AFTER you are finished journaling.

- ★ Does it agree with the Word?
- ★ What do others say about it? God especially speaks through parents.
- ★ Do we feel peace about it?
- ★ Does it glorify God?

Here is another way to identify whose voice is speaking:

- ★ God's voice - kind, peaceful, truthful, sweet, it always lines up with His Word
- ★ My voice - selfish, self-centered, self-protecting, self-serving
- ★ Satan's voice - evil, persuasive, deceiving, threatening, accusing.

Idols In My Heart Distort God's Voice

Anything that is bigger or more important to me than Jesus has become an idol. An idol can also be something that I am trusting in instead of God. I need to be aware of where I am fixing my eyes when I am praying. Am I thinking about something or someone other than Jesus? Ezekiel 14:4 says, "... Everyone who set up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble... I the Lord will answer him according to the multitude of his idols." An idol in my heart will distort what I am hearing. Think of it this way, the idol is speaking to me instead of Jesus. I must be willing to lay aside my own thoughts and desires about what I am praying about and be open to what God wants to show me.

Activities to teach children to hear God's voice.

All these activities start with quieting yourself before God.

#1 Forgiveness (Mark Virkler – "Glimpses of God's Heart for Me")

- ★ Ask Jesus to give you a name or picture of a face of anyone you need to forgive.
- ★ Picture Jesus responding to that person in the way His love would cause Him to.
- ★ Forgive the person in prayer.
- ★ Repent for not forgiving right away or even holding a grudge.
- ★ Pray blessings upon the person just as Job did (Job 42:10)

#2 Praying for others (Mark Virkler – "Glimpses of God's Heart for Me")

- ★ Picture Jesus and then the person I am praying for.
- ★ Ask Jesus what He wants to show me or say to me about this person.

- * Tune to the flow of words or pictures that light across my heart while seeing Jesus with the person.
- * Pray about what Jesus has shown me.

#3 God's heart for the world.

- * Ask God what He is doing on the earth right now or what does He want to do right now. God is always at work. Where does He want us to join Him in prayer?
- * Pray for whatever he shows you. Sometimes God will give children the names of specific people and places.
- * When praying as a group, children will often build on the prayer as God speaks to them. For example, God may give a country to one child, the name of a missionary to another child, and the specific need to yet another child.

#4 Personal Change

- * Ask God what He would like you to do to change your life to draw closer to Him.
- * Ask Him what may be hindering you from getting closer to Him.

#5 Convert bedtime prayers into listening prayers (Brad Jersak)

Turn bedtime prayers into three-way conversational prayers between you, your child, and Jesus. You can ask the question, the Lord can provide the answer to your child, and your child can report it back to you. Here are some good starter questions:

- * Jesus, is there anything today that we could thank you for? Why?
- * Is there anything we need to say sorry for? Will you forgive me?
- * Is there anyone you want us to pray for? How?
- * Are there any burdens we are carrying that you want to lift from us? If so, ask Jesus where the burden came from, what it is, and if he would please remove it.
- * Jesus, do you have any promises or blessings for me before I go to sleep?
- * Jesus, what was the best part of YOUR day? What made YOU happy?

Resources on teaching children to hear God's voice:

"Dialogue with God," by Mark and Patti Virkler. Mark is a left-brain person who is not naturally prophetic. As a result, his explanations on how to hear God's voice are very clear and easy to follow. This book has been reprinted many times by different publishers and will not be hard to find. This book is

written for adults, but concepts can be transferred to children. **“Communion with God”** is similar to “Dialogue with God,” but updated and more of a workbook format. **“Glimpses of God’s Heart For Me”** is a workbook for children on hearing God’s voice.

“Can You Hear Me,” by Brad Jersak, comes from a more prophetic point of view. He talks about finding a meeting place with God and it also has many other activities, many of which relate to inner healing. This book is also written for adults, but many of the concepts can be adapted to children. Available from Freshwind Press at www.freshwindpress.com (expensive because it’s from Canada, but worth it).

“Children, Can You Hear Me?” by Brad Jersak. This is a picture story book for kids. At the end there is some good instructions on how to teach children to hear God’s voice. Order through Fresh Wind Press (also expensive, but worth it).

“Journaling – A Guide to Journaling Our Journey With God,” is a full color brochure for children from Bethel Church (Assemblies of God) in Redding, California. It teaches children how to use a journal to practice hearing God’s voice. Go onto their web site at www.ibethel.org. Click “church life” and then under “Kids-Young Adults” click “Children.” Once in the children’s page, click “Teaching Materials.” The set of 8 brochures are listed under “Supernatural Children’s Ministry Teaching Series.” The entire series is great, but you will have to call them if you want to just order a lot of the Journaling brochures.

Akiane Kramarik – Her web site is www.artakiane.com. The Paul Keith Davis interview DVD and Akiane’s book are available from White Dove Ministries at www.whitedoveministries.org.

“Kids Making a Difference,” a book I wrote a few years back, is not specifically on hearing God, but it is a collection of incredible stories of what kids today are doing around the world after hearing God in their hearts. It includes the story of Barb Vogel’s 4th grade class who helped put an end to slavery in Sudan and Craig Keilburger, who at age 12 started Free the Children, which works to set children free from abusive labor in Asia. You can order it from Gospel Publishing House or get a copy directly through me.

-Pastor Pete