

ARE YOU HEARING GOD?

FRIENDSHIP WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

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Many Christians complicate their relationship with their heavenly Father by not realizing that He is more loving than any physical father could ever be. We all need to realize that, as God's child, we can return His love and enter into a Father-child friendship. That Father-child relationship makes it possible to hear God, because there is a communication in prayer and in Bible reading that was never there before. In thinking about hearing our heavenly Father, I think you will agree that it is necessary to hear Him if we are to fellowship with Him -- to become His friend.

All of us need to hear that "still small voice" of God so that we can receive His guidance and know more and more about the plan He has for our lives. We need a friendly exchange (fellowship) with Him all through the day. We need to allow Him to speak to us by placing His thoughts in our minds. We need to hear Him teach us as we read the Scriptures. We need to seek to hear Him much as children seek the guidance of their parents as they develop a friendly exchange of love with them.

BECOMING AS LITTLE CHILDREN

If we are to hear God, we must humble ourselves as a little child. We try so hard to be sophisticated adults not realizing that God desires for us to be "as little children." God does not look upon His people as sophisticated adults -- if we are Christians, we are "children of God." Of course, older children can become rebellious, but little children are naturally trusting, teachable and submissive to their parents; they depend on them. Is that the way you are with your heavenly Father? Or, are you a sophisticated adult?

God wants His people to be responsible for what they say and do, but He wants them to be as little children in their hearts. Jesus said, "Anyone who humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:4). The desire to be sophisticated adults with God makes it difficult to humble ourselves as a little child. The way to hear God is through an on-going Father-child friendship. Out of a trusting,

teachable and submissive attitude, we can truly commit ourselves to God -- He then makes it possible for us to grow in His grace by the power of His Holy Spirit.

It takes strength or power to live this life and God has very clearly promised it to us. Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (Acts 1: 8). Our heavenly Father, through His Holy Spirit, gives us strength to be successful in life -- to be what He wants us to be. If we are to have the help and strength we need we must seek that Father-child friendship with a repentant heart.

REPENTANCE

Most of us, most of the time, do not realize that we are sinful. We deceive ourselves. The Bible says, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 St. John 1: 8). Sin is not just lying and stealing -- that is the result of sin. Sin is separation from God -- the absence of love and the absence of a desire to obey.

It is only when we see the reality of our separation from God that we can become truly sorry for our sin. And it is only when we repent (turn away from separation), that we can gain fellowship with God. When we repent, we open up that Father-child relationship that is so vital for our spiritual growth.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (IS! John 1:9).

That is the way to receive what Jesus did for us on the cross including the ability to hear our heavenly Father.

YOU CAN HEAR GOD

You may be a businessman, a housewife, a church member, a deacon, an elder or even part of the church staff, but if you are not hearing God, you need to become as a little child in your heart. God will give you the power to humble yourself as a little child and truly repent of your separation from Him. Ask Him to forgive you and fill you with His Holy Spirit every day. Realize that God loves you as an individual and ask Him to teach you to return His love as all friends do.

All loving relationships are characterized by an exchange of love. That is the way to a real Father-child relationship. It is also the way to hear God and be heard by Him.

BEING HEARD BY GOD

In any exchange of love, each person is focused on what the other says. Where there is an exchange of love, we not only hear the other person's voice, we also understand what they are saying. Out of that understanding of what our heavenly Father is saying, faith wells up inside us. As we exercise that faith, our prayers are answered. As faith and

answered prayers increase, the relationship deepens and we begin to share our whole life with our heavenly Father. That is fellowship with the living God because we are hearing God and being heard by Him.

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