

IF YOU'VE WONDERED...

“Can the dead respond?”

When someone who has noticed you or listened well to you dies, it's natural to wonder how it might work to continue interacting with that person. You might have heard, seen, or read about others communicating with the dead. You might have noticed things that seemed to be signs from the person who died or felt like that person was with you. It's common for people to dream about someone who died or to have a sense of what that person would say or want. When you are missing someone who died, you might want to express some things that you didn't get to say before that person died.

.....➤ What the Bible says:

The Bible mentions that those who have died cannot hear or respond unless God revives them. The Bible says, "The dead know nothing." Death is compared to sleep or unconsciousness, which means the dead are silent, unresponsive, and cannot communicate on their own. Some differences between sleeping and death are that the dead can't hear, speak, or move without God's help, but those who are asleep can do those things in their sleep. So, if we don't hear from someone who has passed away, it doesn't mean that the person is choosing not to communicate. It's simply that the dead don't have the ability to respond without God's intervention. When we long to speak to someone who died, the Bible encourages us to talk to God instead.

Many people have shared experiences of seeing or hearing from loved ones who have passed through visions or dreams. The Bible tells us that these are gifts from God, not something we or the dead can control. While there have been times when people who died were brought back to life briefly to speak to someone, this is always by God's power and not through magic, divination, or efforts by the living. No interaction with the dead occurs unless God makes it possible. Only God can bring the dead back to life.

This doesn't mean that we can't talk to someone who has died. Sometimes we wish we could tell that person things we didn't get to say. We know that the dead can't hear or talk back, but sometimes it helps to say the words anyway. We can write out the words or say them out loud to ourselves, God, or others whom we trust. Thankfully, the Bible assures us that God is alive and active, and we can always communicate with God. And the dead who were connected to God remain connected even in death, which means we can still connect with them through God. God has perfect knowledge of those who died, and God knows what we need too.

.....> What you could explore:

How to interpret dreams or visions: Sometimes we can have dreams, visions, or feelings in which we interact with someone who died. These things can be gifts from God, but they don't mean that the person is directly speaking to you after death. It can be helpful to explore the meaning of the experience by consulting a theological resource or talking with a licensed therapist or religious leader.

How to interact at a gravesite: Some people go to a person's grave, write letters, or speak what they wish they could say to the one who died, which can help even though you know the person can't hear you. You can also invite other people to join you, pray to God at the gravesite, or consider the memories you have of the person. If you have questions about what you could do, talk with the caretakers of a cemetery or funeral home.

.....> What you could do:

Encourage communication with God or others: Consider if there's anything you wish you could have said or done for the person who died. You can say a prayer, asking God to help you express those feelings or actions. You can write the words in the form of a letter, poem, or song. You can share them with someone you trust.

Start new relationships: When you miss interacting with the person who died, think about creating new connections. Maybe you could spend time with another person, try a new activity, or visit a new place. These are not replacing the person who died but are enabling new relationships to grow and flourish alongside the memories and connections you used to have.

.....➤ **Where you could look for more information:**

- ✦ **Some conversations after someone died and was raised to life again:** 1 Samuel 28 • Ezekiel 37 • Daniel 12 • Matthew 17 and 27 • Mark 9 • Luke 9 and 16 • Hebrews 11:35
- ✦ **What the dead are unable to do:** Job 14:7-22 • Psalm 6:5, 115:17, 146:6 • Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 and 12:7 • Isaiah 38:18-20 • Romans 8:38-39 • James 2:26
- ✦ **Warnings against trying to contact the dead:** Leviticus 19:28-31 • Deuteronomy 18:10 • 2 Kings 21:6 • 2 Chronicles 33:6 • Isaiah 8:19 • 1 Thessalonians 4:13 • Revelation 13:13