



WHEN KIDS ASK...



“Can the dead respond?”

Why kids might ask:

Kids have a natural desire to be heard and seen. They want to share their feelings and thoughts with someone who listens and values them. When someone who has noticed or listened well to a child dies, it's natural for the child to wonder how it might work to continue interacting with that person. Kids might ask questions about what death means for them: Can those who died still sing “Happy Birthday” or be present for important moments? Are they able to hear when someone speaks, whether at a gravesite or at home? Can they communicate through dreams, thoughts, or feelings? Do they still care about those who are alive? Can they receive love? These questions are normal as kids process the changes that death brings. It can be especially painful when kids have unanswered questions or unspoken thoughts, and thus they wish for at least one more interaction with this person.



...➤ 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 discuss:

With preschool ages: “When people die, their bodies do not work anymore. This means that they can’t move, breathe, or talk. People who have died can’t talk to us. That doesn’t mean they are ignoring us or don’t want to talk. We can remember what the person said to us before they died, and we can talk to each other and other people when we miss them. It’s okay to say what you wish you could say. The person may not hear you but God always hears you.”

With school ages: “Death means that people’s bodies do not work anymore. They are not able to move, breathe, or talk. People who have died can’t talk to you or send messages in other ways. This does not mean that they don’t want to talk or are ignoring you, but only that they aren’t able to communicate since their bodies are no longer able to move. Sometimes you might hear or read things about dead people communicating, but that doesn’t match with what God tells us. God says that people who have died can’t talk to us, and we shouldn’t try to make that happen. Sometimes, you might think about what you wish you could have said to the person who died. It can make you feel better to write that down or to say it out loud, even though the person can’t hear you anymore. You can also pray or talk with other people or God when you miss the person.”

...➤ What you could do:

Encourage communication with God or others: Ask your child if there’s anything they wish they could have said or done for the person who passed away. Together, you can say a prayer, asking God to help you express those feelings or actions. You can write the words or share them with someone you trust.

Start new relationship: When you notice moments that used to involve interactions with the person who is gone, gently suggest creating new habits. Maybe there’s someone else who could talk to or listen to your child, or perhaps your child could start a new activity or visit a new place when thinking about the person who passed.

...➤ 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