

HEARING FROM GOD AS HIS FRIENDS



Part 1

This session we are going to be talking about how God is our friend and how he talks to us as his friends and today I am here with my friend Susanna and we are going to have a little discussion about what being a friend with God means to her.

Bev: "I love the way Jesus as our friend is so intimately involved with every single part we have our lives. He really is. And I love the way in Psalm 139 it says: 'Lord you know everything there is to know about me.' He knows everything about us everything! 'You perceive every movement of my heart and soul and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me Lord. You read my heart like an open book and You know all the words I'm about to speak before I even start the sentence You know every step I will take before my journey even begins.'

So the reality is that Jesus, our friend, really is intimately aware of us. He thinks about us. He knows what we do. He knows what we're thinking and he loves us all the time and he's with us everywhere we go and in everything we do.

So Susanna, would you like to share with us a bit about your journey of discovery of how powerful it is and how precious it is to know that Jesus is your friend?"

Susanna: "Well, I think that changes in different seasons in your life and it deepens as you get older. Just because you've had the friendship longer..... I think any friendship that is a healthy friendship develops over time. So I don't think, I have to say, I don't think I've arrived the end of my journey of my friendship with the Lord. It just gets deeper and deeper as I go along but I remember, even as a child, I was aware that Jesus was my friend because my parents taught me that and I was very conscious, as a child, that He was my friend and I know it gave me a lot of security even when I was going through the stage of rejecting my parents faith, I still somehow or other, knew He was there but it was a more of a distant friendship that I had with him because I didn't bother communicating with him much. But it still was a friendship, strangely enough, but just an estranged friendship, I guess. But I knew then that it was me that was pulling away from the friendship. I knew that it wasn't Him, and so I've always been aware of his presence with me, I guess, but as I've gotten

older, I've become more aware and his friendship really is everything to me. To be honest, my relationship with him is everything. Yes, I have a great relationship with my husband Rob and my children and my grandchildren but my friendship with Jesus affects my relationship with my family, because it tells me who I am and it's where I get my worth and my value from - is my relationship with Jesus. And I guess what I've learned over the years is that He is so kind that He is so patient. In fact, I was only writing in my journal to him this morning that I can't get over how patient He is and it's just so loving and His love and His friendship is pure it's nothing like ours. We as humans, I guess have challenges that even when we try to be a really good friend and when we try to love people well, ours is limited. There is no limit to His kindness, His patience and His love and therefore there's a whole dimension in my friendship with Him that goes so much deeper than any relationship I have with anybody else on the planet Earth. So it's yeah, it's everything to me it. It encompasses me. He's there all the time. Nobody else is there all the time for me, you know. Nobody else can be there all the time for me and I think that's one of the ways it does make my other relationships healthier because I realized they can't be my all because He is my all. So I don't expect them to make me happy. I don't expect them to make everything all right for me. I don't actually even expect him to make everything all right for me, but he actually does because he always works out everything good for me. It's amazing! Even when I stuff it up He still turns things around so it's good for me.”



Bev: “So would you be able to answer the question how you feel about his closeness to you?”

Susanna: “Well again I guess it's hard to put into words, however I think a lot of it comes down to practice. I think I've said before - I love that booklet that brother Lawrence wrote called *Practicing the Presence of God*. I think you have to practice it which is the same as any other relationship let's face it. You've got to work at practicing it. It's exactly the same with Jesus. I do find though, that until I really allowed the Lord to fill me with His Holy Spirit and I connected with the Holy Spirit, I didn't have the intimacy that I have now. I think purely and simply because I had a hunger and I actually asked the Lord for hunger. I still ask Him for hunger. I asked Him to put a fire in my belly for Him. I asked Him to keep stirring that fire up. But I also realized that, like any other relationship, I have a responsibility in stirring that hunger up and stirring that fire up as well, and then He meets me and the way I do that, really, is spending time in the word, spending time in prayer, spending time worshiping and very much, especially in the latter years, spending time and being still and being silent and



saying absolutely nothing but knowing that I'm in His presence. So it's not uncommon for me to take myself into my room; originally when I started this actually, was to start saying that I was having a date with Him once a week. It was Tuesday night and I would block it out because my children were younger then so I had dependent children; and so I would block out every Tuesday night for about two to three hours. It started off as one hour, but it very quickly became two and three hours where I just go into my room. I would put worship music on very softly and I would say "Lord I'm here. I'm here for just you and me. Song of Songs is a very big part of my journey. I'm not asking for His hand in anything, He's not asking me to do anything for Him. It's purely and simply for Him and I to be with each other and for Him to enjoy my company and me to enjoy His company."

Bev: "Just like friends."

Susanna: "Just like friends."

Bev: "I remember once I was walking past the couch in my lounge room and I just felt like Jesus was sitting there and He said to me, 'just come and sit here by to me.' And then I go over and sit down and then - you know, 'just don't press the button (to switch on whatever). Just sit here and just be with me.' He is our good Friend who enjoys our company.

Part 2

Susanna: "So one of my really favourite verses in Song of Songs is in chapter 2 and I'm gonna be reading it out of The Passion Translation, but it's beautiful in all translations where it says, 'Arise my dearest, hurry my darling come away with me. I have come as you have asked to draw you to my heart and lead you out. For now is the time, my beautiful one. The season has changed. The bondage of your barren winter has ended. The season of hiding is over and now the rains have soaked the earth..... ' and it just goes on and starts explaining about what it's like to actually arise and go with him. And did you know times like that are really special to me? Coming away with Him and it just being the two of us.

But I find from those times I'm much more aware of Him, even when I'm in the middle of the busyness of the day and the friendship's very precious in that as well. So I learned over the years to be acknowledging Him all through my day. It might be little things like (and people might say, 'oh that's just coincidence' but I don't believe for somebody who belongs to the Lord and He really loves, I don't really believe in coincidence, to be honest, I

believe that it's Him orchestrating what needs to happen for you to keep you safe) and so like little things like if I'm maybe not paying enough attention in the car and all of a sudden I need to stop and I stop in time and just miss the car in front I go, 'oh thank you Jesus!' Things like that. And also.....way back when I was learning to hear His voice for me as a young mum, one of the things that I taught myself to do was..... say I'm in the shopping line and I'll remember something that I was going to get that I haven't got, well I believe because I've asked the Lord and I've committed myself to Him first thing in the morning and I've asked him to take my mind, my will, my emotions saying, 'take all of me Lord and just be with me all day.' Then I believe that's the Holy Spirit reminding me. And so instead of me thinking that I'm clever and I remembered it, I go, 'thank you. Thanks for reminding me. That's amazing!' And so that keeps the friendship alive as well. So that's one of the things I used to practice when I was younger.



But now I find it just happens automatically. So I find when anything works like that for me at all in my favour, I'm very aware that I'm walking in His favour and His grace. He's there He's my friend and so I'm always thanking Him for it and acknowledging him for it which makes our friendship even richer because I'm thinking of him. But I've trained myself to do that over the years. It's become a habit and now it's become a reality. It's way beyond a habit. It's just my reality. I'm aware that I'm in Him and He's in me, like it says in John, I think it's chapter 17 He says that you're in me, I'm in you and together we are in the Father. That's where we live. And like in Psalm 91, that we LIVE in the shelter of the Most High. It's not something we come in and come out of. We live there. But to be able to live there and to be able to have that friendship you have to practice it."

Bev: "So tell me, how does that affect your life when you go to work?"

Susanna: "Well it affects every part of my life. So, when I'm at work I have some friends like you that are Christians and I have a lot of them, the majority don't know the Lord. I talk to the Lord a lot and I talk to them about the Lord a lot and it definitely affects my heart for them. I have a heart for them and I want them to know how real Jesus is. it's not uncommon for them to hear me say 'Thank you Jesus!' They come on the journey with me and so when, I don't know..... so, say for instance one of my directors is having trouble with the computer. And I'll say, 'well let's pray about that' and then the computer will work for them and they'll go 'wow! But I don't preach at them and say, you know, 'you should be praying that'. but I'll let them see that that's how it is. Or

if they're having challenges with children I go, 'well let's pray about that. Let's ask the Lord to help that child or to help that parent'. But I am conscious that some people can handle it more than others so I might be more open with it with some than others and I think that's just respectful to them. It's about me loving them and it's about me letting them know that I can love them and I am who I am because of the relationship that I have with Jesus. They know that it's only because of my relationship that I actually value them and love them the way I do so they're willing to put up with my wackiness!



Bev: "Definitely. Our friendship with Jesus is the thing that helps us connect our friends and work colleagues with His love by Him helping us to see them the way He sees them. By Him putting His love in our hearts.

Part 3

This is something that we can make our children aware of. If we can build this habit into our children of being aware of Jesus; that he's with them wherever they are and wherever they go. And we can do this by just simply asking them a question. So wherever you are, whether you're sitting at home in your lounge room or whether they are playing with their toys in their room, ask

Them, "So, where do you think Jesus is at the moment?"

"What do you think he's doing at the moment?"

"What do you think Jesus thinks about this?"

"What do you think Jesus thinks about your friend?"

And then, if you do this often enough they will become aware and get used to thinking about Jesus and what he's doing.

Susanna: "I think that when we're doing that we have to be very careful that we're asking the children those questions around pleasant things, not when they make a mistake. For us to say "What do you think Jesus thinks about that?" as a discipline thing (the reality is Jesus just thinks they're just children anyhow and he's not even cross with them) but yes if we use it as a discipline thing like that, that will ruin their relationship with Jesus and not enhance it."

Bev: "Yeah, so I'm thinking more of when you're putting them to bed at night, asking them what they think Jesus is doing and where he is. A wonderful thing happens when your children get into the habit of asking Jesus where he is, what he's thinking and what he's doing, wherever they are and whatever they are doing, is they begin to see Him and they will become more and more like Him. When they copy and do what He's doing, when they realize and understand what he's doing, your children become a light on a hill and your children start



shining their lights that Jesus gives them in dark places. So encouraging your children to be aware of Jesus helps their light shine brighter. As your children develop their friendship with Jesus and as that friendship becomes deeper and deeper and more and more intimate sets them up to be resilient - to be resilient in their emotions as well as to have a resilient faith. Their friendship with Jesus will help them survive; will help them reach their full potential and they will also become resilient in their identity because friendship with Jesus helps us know exactly who we are, because as He communicates with us, as He speaks to us He tells us and will tell your children what He thinks of them and who they are - as He thinks of them and who He's made them to be.

Part 4

There are some questions that you could ask your children as an activation to help them along in their friendship with Jesus. Now remember when you get your children to spend time with Jesus and to do that sort of thing, remember to get them to calm down. Just centre them; get them to breathe; maybe play some nice music, have a quiet place where you can do this, and ask them this question:

“Jesus what is it that you really love about me?”

You can ask that question too and see what Jesus tells you, as a parent, what it is that he loves about you.

Another question you can ask is:

“Jesus what is it about me that makes you proud?”

You know, I asked him that question one day and I had such a surprising answer! The time he was most proud of me was when I was most ashamed of myself. And that brought such healing to my heart. So know that when we ask these simple questions of Jesus He will bring healing to your heart he will bring healing to your children's heart because when Jesus speaks to your children His words are powerful and they are full of truth.

There is a PDF attached that will have some more questions that you can ask your children as activations. Feel free to use them. While you are teaching your children about hearing from Jesus as their friend it's a really good idea to ask them a question every day, so there'll be about seven questions, different questions that you can ask, but, you know, I'm sure you can come up with creative ways, creative questions to ask your children to further enable them and to grow their friendship with Jesus.

So we hope you enjoyed this session.

Susanna, thank you for joining us.
See you next time.

Questions and activation for practicing.

Have some paper/journal and some textas/crayons/coloured pencils available: (before you jump in with the questions, remember to get your children to quiet all the busy thoughts in their minds, to take a few deep breaths and if you like you can put some quiet instrumental worship music on. A good way to help them focus on God is to ask them where Jesus is for them right now and ask them to sit close to Him. You can pray and just spend a few minutes thanking Him and praising Him.)



1. Ask your Heavenly Father: What is it that you love about me? Really? Why that? Take time to talk to the Father and write or share what He shares with you. If He shows you something that you don't understand, just ask more questions. Remember all the ways He speaks to you from the first session the ABC's of Hearing from God.
2. Ask: Jesus, would you give me a memory of something I did that made you laugh? Why did it make you laugh?
3. Open up your journal or get a clean piece of paper and write a letter to your heavenly Father. You can begin by writing 'Dear Father/Jesus....and tell Him everything you want to say. Pour out your heart to Him. If you are too young to write or don't like writing you can ask a parent to help or you can draw a picture for the Father or for Jesus. Then, when you have finished, get a clean piece of paper or a clean page in your journal and write 'Dear (put your name)...Sit quietly and ask God to share with you what He wants to tell you. As He shares something with you, write it down and keep listening and writing down what He shares with you until you feel the letter is done.
Spend some time thanking Him for speaking to you and ask Him to keep teaching you to know His thoughts.
4. Draw a picture of a giant heart. Ask the Father what He sees when He looks into your heart. Spend some time listening or looking and then write or draw what He shares with you. PARENTS: you can use a colour chart with your children and ask them to choose a colour to draw in the heart to represent what God sees when He looks in their heart.
5. Ask Jesus what kinds of things He likes. Spend some time listening and looking and write or draw what He shares with you. You can use colours to show what He shares with you if you want to. Then ask Him what kinds of things He doesn't like.



6. Find the biggest piece of paper you can (like butcher paper or poster board), put on some quiet worship music, lay on the floor with your textas/crayons etc. and ask the Father and Jesus the following questions: (you can do this all together as a family and then everyone can share what they saw or heard)
 - “Father, what are you doing right now in my city?”
 - “Father, what are you doing right now in my country?”
 - “Father, what are you doing right now with children all over the world?”
7. Ask this question:
 - “Jesus, if you were to walk into our house right now, what would you do here? What would you say to us? What are you teaching us as a family? (using a colour chart if you choose, you can ask: “what colour are You bringing into our house? What colour do you want to give our family? Why that colour?”)
 - What are you teaching me personally?”

Reference Material

Eyes that See and Ears that Hear: A Parent’s Guide to teaching their children to hear the Voice of God, 2007 by Jennifer Toledo)

Here is a link to the physical

book: <https://store.expression58.org/products/8028034>

Here is a link to a PDF version: <https://store.expression58.org/products/copy-of-eyes-that-see-ears-that-hear-by-jennifer-toledo-digital-download>