

May 9, 2021

Words We Love to Hear or Promises We Need to Hear

When we think of someone being read to, we usually imagine a cozy scene of a toddler sitting in her mother's lap, looking at the pictures in a book while her mother reads the words to her. But reading aloud includes many other scenes too: a group of third- and fourth-graders listening to their Sunday school teacher share a Bible lesson, an audiobook keeping us company on a long road trip, teenaged sons listening to their dad read his favorite history book, or a congregation listening to God's Word on Sunday morning.

When children develop enough skills to read on their own, we often stop reading to them. But reading out loud to older children has enjoyed a resurgence in the last few years. This is partly due to recent studies showing its practical benefits. When children are read to, they hear new words pronounced correctly. Their ability to focus improves. They learn that reading books is an enjoyable activity and not just an assignment that needs to be completed.

Reading aloud to children and teenagers can have benefits far beyond the practical ones. When we read aloud from the Bible, a devotional, or a theologically-sound Bible story book, children hear the truth about God and His love for them. When they hear I John 3:1a, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God," they can rest in the comfort of knowing God is their heavenly Father. When they listen to the story of Jonah, they hear about God's protection and His forgiveness. When they hear about how Christ died on the cross and rose again, they hear that this forgiveness is for them: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). These words are especially meaningful when spoken by someone the child knows and trusts.

When we share God's Word with children, they hear the comforting words of God's promises—that He loves them dearly, that He protects them, and that their sins are forgiven through the finished work of Jesus Christ. We all need to hear these promises spoken to us, no matter what our age. I hope that you hear God's message of love and forgiveness spoken to you today.

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