

EXCERPT



Spiritual Conversations with Children ***Listening to God Together***

March 10, 2020 | \$17, 192 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4669-6

“By gripping story and vivid metaphor, Lacy Finn Borgo shows us step by step how we can be truly present when we are with others, children especially. Spiritual Conversations with Children provides us with open windows and swinging doors into the inner lives of children. I recommend it highly.”

—Richard J. Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline* and *Streams of Living Water*

Learning to Be a Listening Adult to Children

In this book we will explore how spiritual conversations with children support their life with God. We will learn not only what makes these conversations unique but also how to have them. We will begin by learning from Jesus. Jesus had a hospitable and welcoming posture toward children. We will uncover the role of longing, belonging, and connection in a child's life with God. Diving into spiritual formation with children as a guide for spiritual growth, we will think deeply about the four elements of children's spiritual formation and the implications for children and the adults who long to accompany them. We will take a look at three Ps—*posture, power, and patterns*—and how each of these shape spiritual conversations with children. We will notice the natural power dynamic between adults and children and how Jesus used his body to empower and honor children.

Pushing against our natural inclination to talk at or teach children, we will learn how our eyes and ears help us to contemplatively listen to children, and further how this listening opens a child to respond to God's invitation. We will learn from children how play and projection help them to experience God and reflect upon their life in light of that experience. As we become more fluent in play and projection, we will learn how to help children recognize the Spirit's movement in their life and respond to this movement in a way that is unique to their natural inclinations.

Finally, we will rest in mystery. The human relationship with divine love is to be lived not dissected. Our grasp of the workings of this relationship is at best a generous guide; at worst it is a mechanized jail cell. When we accompany a child on their journey with God, we do so from the position of knowing only in part. We hold this pearl of great price and marvel with wonder at its beauty.

Learning to be a listening adult to children yields enduring benefits. When children have a listening companion who hears, acknowledges, and encourages their early experiences with God, it creates a spiritual footprint that will shape the way a child engages with God, others, and themselves. Spiritual conversations with children foster resiliency in the life of the child. Children who have learned to listen to their inner life and orient that life in divine community have a calibrated inner compass that can guide them when the storms of life inevitably come.

Parents are essential listening companions, and children need additional adults who are present to listen and to encourage them in their life with God. A child's life with God suffers spiritual anemia when there is a lack of community. You can be one of the listening adults who supports a child's spiritual life.

Spiritual conversation with children also benefits the adult doing the listening. When we are fully present and open to another, we will be changed. Our own childhood self will be offered the invitation to connect with God. The Spirit longs to heal old wounds and to embrace long-buried gifts. Indeed, as you listen to God with a child, the child will lead you into a fuller experience of God's love and acceptance.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Spiritual Conversations with Children ***Listening to God Together***

March 10, 2020 | \$17, 192 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4669-6

Lacy Finn Borgo holds a doctor of ministry degree in leadership and spiritual formation and a certificate in spiritual direction from Portland Seminary, where she also teaches classes on spiritual direction and spiritual formation. In addition to her practice with adults, she provides spiritual direction for children at Haven House, a transitional housing facility for homeless families. Lacy also serves on the Renovaré US ministry team. She lives in Montrose, Colorado, with her family and assorted animals.

If you are a parent or grandparent, this book is for you. Listening to a child's journey with God is a sacred gift we can give them. Family is the most deeply formational social context we will ever live in. If you are a pastor, friend, or teacher of children, this book is for you. To accompany children in their life with God has the potential to shape the classroom, the congregation, and the world. If you are a spiritual director, this book is for you. It is my hope that it will offer a few guides and a heap of courage for you to begin to host listening spaces for children. These young beloveds of God are participants in the present and future; to invest in them is to witness the unfolding of grace.

—Taken from the introduction, "Learning from Christopher"

"If you are a parent or grandparent or if you have ever been a child, this book is for you. Lacy Borgo writes in a way that is humorous, folksy, insightful, practical, and engaging. And she is sneaky-wise. Like her friend Jesus, she knows that if you want to find the kingdom of God, you'll need to listen well to children. They know how to receive it and have much to teach. So buy this book because you want to be a better caregiver to one or more children you know and love, but read it to deepen your own relationship with God."

—Gary W. Moon, founding executive director of the Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center, Westmont College, author of *Becoming Dallas Willard*

*"This book is a gift to the next generation of friends of children. We have needed to listen to the spiritual life of children for a long time and Lacy has taught us how. In *Spiritual Conversations with Children*, Lacy shares her bag of tricks, helping us learn to be present with a child. Illustrated with well-chosen stories, this book is a reminder of Jesus' presence with ordinary little people. Yet it is also an introduction to a new worldview of children's ministries, the view from a child's own encounter with God."*

—Evan Howard, professor of Christian spirituality at Fuller Theological Seminary, author of *Praying the Scriptures*

"A resource is finally here that helps us know how to talk with children about things that matter—spiritual things, eternal things. We know how to talk at children and to them, but with them is a different skill. It is an even greater challenge to be able to listen to children. Lacy Finn Borgo masterfully helps us do these things. Loaded with examples from her years of first-hand experience, she explains creative approaches using ingenious objects. Three words describe this remarkable book: inspiring, instructive, imaginative! Borgo also helps us recall our own past so that we ourselves can be open to healing. How that happens is mystery: 'Mystery is to be experienced, not mangled. It's pure grace. It cannot be planned.' Let it happen as it did for me while I read this book."

—Scottie May, associate professor emerita of Christian formation and ministry, Wheaton College

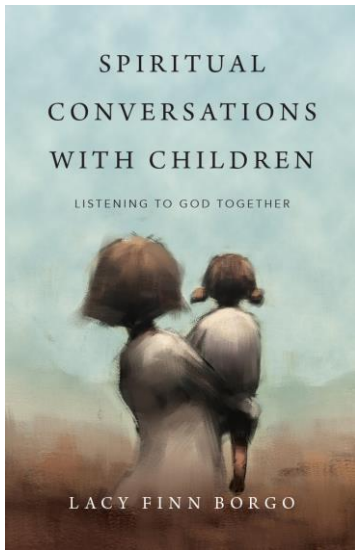


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Q & A



Spiritual Conversations with Children *Listening to God Together*

March 10, 2020 | \$17, 192 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4669-6

When children have a listening companion who hears, acknowledges, and encourages their early experiences with God, it creates a spiritual footprint that shapes their lives. Lacy Finn Borgo draws on her experience of practicing spiritual direction with children as she introduces key skills for engaging kids in spiritual conversations, offering sample dialogues, prayers to use together, and ideas for play, art, and movement.

Nourishing the Inner Life of Children

How did you become interested in learning about and nurturing the inner life of children?

Lacy Finn Borgo: In my twenties I was a public school teacher in upstate New York at an inner-city school. It was there that I began to notice that there was something deep going on in children, something that couldn't be quantified by education or mere observation. I didn't know at the time that I was not only hearing the interior movements happening in children, but that they were stirring and resonating with my own childhood self and my long-forgotten inner life as a child. The children at Rochester School #22 taught me to listen more deeply than I ever imagined possible, and pretty much that was the only way they were willing to connect with me. A child who struggles in school is a child that needs to be listened to, I learned.

When I moved to Colorado and had two of my own children, I continued to learn that the inner life of a child is robust and full of life, and further, that the God of the universe is glad to meet them in this mysterious place.

I tried to nourish the inner life of children by creating the curriculum *Life with God for Children* with Renovaré. After nearly a decade of implementation, the feedback is good. The curriculum is a helpful educational tool for churches and homes, but something was missing. With my friend and colleague Ben Barczy, we created a family devotional series, titled *Good Dirt*, based on the life of Jesus found in the Seasons of the Church. After five years of use we have learned that it has been a helpful tool for families and even some churches and Christian schools, but something was missing.

During this time, I summoned all the inner courage I had to go to seminary, a long-held dream of mine. I earned a doctorate of ministry in leadership and spiritual formation as well as a certificate in spiritual direction. It was the spiritual direction training that touched what was missing. I learned that children were having a deep, mysterious, and lively inner life with God, and from my theological training I learned that God was more than willing and able to meet them in their experience.

What was needed, then? Children need a listening companion, an adult who can listen deeply to their unique experiences and connect those experiences to the God who loves them. My book *Spiritual Conversations with Children* is a guide to help adults come alongside a child in their life with God. It offers examples and tips and experiences for adults to learn to accompany a child and even to accompany their own inner child.

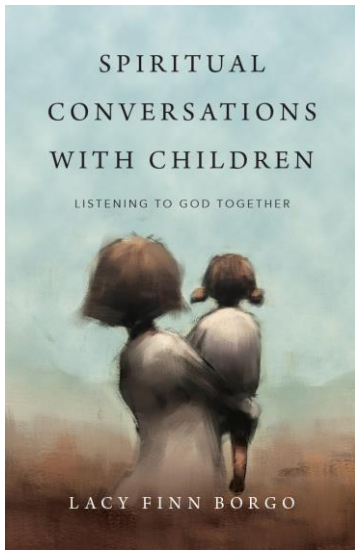


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Q & A



Spiritual Conversations with Children ***Listening to God Together***

March 10, 2020 | \$17, 192 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4669-6

What is the main message in your book, and how is your approach to spiritual formation for children unique?

Lacy: Children are having experiences of God. While children may lack the articulate adult language to express these experiences, they are still happening. The Spirit loves and longs each child into existence for the purpose of intimate connection. The Spirit leaves fingerprints of goodness, beauty, and truth woven throughout the world as invitations to connect. Children who are wired to connect with God will quite naturally reach toward God. Children need adults who can listen with their ears, eyes, and heart. Children need adults who can create a safe space for response to the God who loves them.

This approach is unique in several ways. We (adults) have sought to educate children into the kingdom of God, thinking that mental assent leads to lasting relationship. We are learning that while mental assent might be helpful, it is woefully lacking. Human beings are wired for relational connection, human with human and human with divine. *Spiritual Conversations with Children* teaches adults how to listen to what is already stirring within a child and, further, how to embody this relational connection. It teaches adults how to honor the spiritual knowledge that a child already possesses and bring awareness to that innate knowing.

Another way this approach is unique is that all the human dimensions of a child are honored. Children engage the world around them through their bodies, their feelings, their thoughts, and their social contexts. In *Spiritual Conversations with Children*, each dimension is included, as well as guidance and examples for how to listen for the movement of God through various dimensions.

This approach is interactive. This book includes helpful engagement tools, practical suggestions, useful practices, and links to additional resources.

What are the two-to-five main things you want readers to take away from your book?

Lacy:

- God has loved and longed each person into existence and that includes children.
- Children are already having a life with God.
- A child's life with God is greatly enlivened by an adult listener.
- Any adult can become a faithful and gentle companion to a child.
- Listening is multidimensional and key to intimate connection.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media