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Prairie Breeze

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Special Youth Edition

The Youth Special Edition of the Breeze has returned for the summer! Our Youth and leaders went to camp at Quest in Green Lake, Wisconsin at the end of June. The youth were asked to reflect on 2 questions for you all:

1. How do you hear God?
2. Where did you hear God at Quest?

We hope you enjoy reading their thoughts and reflections!



Kathy Pickett – Adult Leader

Listening to God and hearing God are both a matter of paying attention for me. Both lead to a practice of spiritual reflection and discernment. Both include spoken words from others, or their actions. Watching creation and then making time to be quiet and consider what God might be saying through it all often leads me where I am to go. I especially turn to this practice when something is bothering me, or I am seeking God's direction and answers. I also know that I must be open to a variety of lessons, hearing God's still small voice, or, speaking creatively loud and strong. For example, I decided to do a stain glass project during our free time. I've done these projects before and really wanted to enjoy to experience of creating and crafting on my own. Meaning, I wanted to do it myself. I wanted to see how far I have come in putting the pieces together, pinning them down, soldering the colored glass, and carefully finishing it. The instructor in the studio had something else in mind. Even though I

asked and shared my quest for completing my piece, she struggled to let me be. After the 3rd takeover of my work, it hit me, what does God want me to learn in this frustrating moment? How is God trying to speak to me through this very helpful teacher?

As I sat there watching the instructor work on my project, patience and taking deep breaths became my lesson. I overheard from the ceramics painting area a youth minister talking to his group about pottery, staying moldable like clay, and flexible so that God can continue to shape us. The overzealous instructor told me a story of middle school when an art teacher would take over her projects which was defeating for her. I giggled to myself as she really hoped she had not been quite like that. I washed my piece and put a patina finish on it. Rinsing it off once again, I realized my take away from this experience is to always practice patience, to be kind even when plans don't go as we imagine, and to remember we are all human doing the best we can. I took a big breath, showed her my finished piece, and celebrated the time together. Lessons heard and learned in the grace of God's love.



Connie Freeman – 2026 Graduate

How do I hear God? The reflection question this year really stumped me. It's something that I have never really been able to answer before. I get overwhelmed because I immediately think about those 1 in a million stories, you know them, the amazing experience of someone feeling like they physically heard God. But that has never happened to me, it has never been me and it has always made me feel a little bit like an imposter. What do you mean I have been a Christian for 18 years and I have never figured out how I hear God. But maybe my problem was that I have always categorized hearing God and feeling God as 2 separate things. It wasn't until talking with my mom that I realized feeling God can be the same thing as hearing God. So, now that I have been opened to a new line of thinking, How do I hear God? My immediate thought is through music. At Quest, on the last night Heather Henson (the camp director) asked us a couple of questions, one of those being, what are three ways you hear God. Autumn and I both agreed on music. But why, Connie, did you not just say that before? Music is an auditory experience. Well, for me, music has always been something I feel more than I hear. More than once have I been struggling and music is the only thing to have kept me going. Because I love it throughout my soul and I feel it everywhere.



At Quest, one song that has been repeated over the last several years is "Reckless love". It's one of the songs that always hits me hard and where I hear, but more importantly I feel God and his love for me. I have also learned over time that God presents himself to us in multiple ways. During Quest this year in our small groups we talked about how he shows up through others. In times of loss, during difficult decisions, when we make mistakes, and when others need our help. I have realized that I hear and feel God through my friends and my support system. Quest has been

a place where I have not only been able to learn about this but a place where I have been able to make those connections. This year and last year I have grown closer and created new friendships with some of the people from a church in Greenwood, Indiana. Thomas is one of those people. We ended up becoming much better friends, talking, giving each other advice, and competing with each other literally whenever we were given the chance (to the point where we would ask Greg – the games director - to be on different teams during evening games). He was probably the reason why I got so far on the leap of faith this year. My goal initially had been to just not fall, but on Monday he had been the only person to not slip off right away. And because of my pretty strong competitive nature, I simply had to beat him. Unfortunately, I only ended up tying him, but during the whole thing Thomas had more faith than I did that I would beat him. It's moments like these that I have started to realize that this is where I hear God. Through the encouragement of friends. Hearing God is like being wrapped up in one big hug and feeling him say you will be ok. That is how Music and my friends are the ways I hear God.

Abby Grummon – 2026 Graduate

I don't remember how young I was when I began reading through the Bible myself, but I was instantly awed by the countless examples of God being there for his people, whether it was as a burning bush, a pillar of clouds, or a commanding voice. When I put it down and returned to the present day, the lack of such obvious displays of power was perplexing, to say the least. What could have possibly caused this entity of unmeasurable power, one so vast that infinite would be an understatement, to hide from us? Over time, however, through further readings and reflection, I realized that God doesn't want to use more power than necessary, simply because he usually doesn't need to. The Bible's most dramatic moments often occurred because the people of that time often tended to willfully ignore the more subtle attempts to communicate. Even today, it's very easy for people to brush aside that little voice in their heads. Nevertheless, it quietly prods and steers us towards the right thing.



I would be lying if I said that I had never shut that voice out before. Not too long after last year's Quest, I broke off a relationship that had been declining for a long time. Despite how easy it should have been, I went into my senior year feeling like a failure who had wasted 8 months of my life ignoring the obvious signs that it wouldn't last. I was desperate to get rid of my guilt, so I committed every fiber of my being to establishing connections, friendships, anything that could possibly make the hole inside of me go away. Unfortunately, my renewed enthusiasm turned out to be too much of a good thing. Most of the people around me became put off by my desperation, and trying to fix it only made it worse. The voice was there the whole time, trying to get me to slow down, but I barely acknowledged it until I finally ran out of options and tried to heed its advice, but then it was too little too late. I left high school with a deeper hole than ever before, and I was continuously reminded of how badly I had ruined everything.

About a month later, I arrived at Quest again carrying more of the same guilt, but this time I wouldn't leave with it. On Wednesday night, Rev Heather Henson gave a sermon that felt as if it was written specifically for me and my experiences. At first, it started off with an entertaining anecdote about a road trip mishap that would have fit in perfectly on the radio show *Snap Judgment*. Soon enough, however, she connected her story (and mine by extension) to the three-time denial of Jesus by his own disciple Peter. This story is commonly referenced in

connection with the events preceding the crucifixion of Jesus, but this time it was taken in a different direction. It's less well known that after the disciples reunited with Jesus when he rose, he took Peter to the side and asked "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter responded "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus then said "Feed my sheep." They had this exchange three times.

Heather's point was that no matter how badly someone messes up, God will never stop loving them and will always have a purpose for them. Three times Peter denied Jesus, three times he was forgiven, and three times he was set on his mission. I left that evening service feeling more at peace than I had felt in a long time.



David Grummon – Youth Leader

Our annual trip to Quest in Green Lake offers a multitude of ways to see and hear God: moving music, the natural beauty of the campus, and the artifacts of past generations' faithfulness found in old buildings, monuments, poetry and art. One way in which I heard God this year was community—the gathering of fellow seekers of Christ achieves things that just hanging out by oneself cannot.

This made me think about part of a biography about 1930s German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who, in the face of National Socialists co-opting and controlling most German Christian churches, helped birth "the Confessing Church" for those who did not want to be associated with Nazis and anti-Jewish practices. To that end, Bonhoeffer also founded a new seminary in Finkenwalde, in an old, rustic, countryside school campus. Students and pastors who were used to a more urban life in spacious and well-equipped structures instead found themselves all sleeping in one large room with minimal furnishings, unpredictable food, very little privacy and not many personal belongings. Despite the more rustic setting, the practices Bonhoeffer established helped create a community which later inspired his two most famous books, *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*. Bonhoeffer wasn't just concerned with the intellectual and academic development of students, but wanted to cultivate their spiritual disciplines at Finkenwalde.

To be clear, Quest is not nearly as rustic as Finkenwalde. There's plenty of food at the cafeteria, and dorms accommodate up to three people per room. But like Finkenwalde, the day begins with silent Bible study and meditation on a single passage, and everyone shares meals and worship together. Group recreation is open to everyone. Relationships and connections formed within the youth group and with people in other churches, and those connections are deepened, year after year.



This year, I heard God at Quest loud and clear: Spiritual formation in Christ is an act of worship and obedience, both individually and within community.

Autumn Anderson – Incoming Senior

Recently I was asked the question “How do you hear God?”. It took me a while to think about it because it hadn’t been until recent years that I really grew my faith and developed a relationship with God. Once I thought about it though, I remembered that God does everything for a reason and everything I have God has placed in my life. Now I have a question for you all. How many of you listen to music at least once a week, maybe even once a day? Now here's another question. How many of you have ever played a musical



instrument or sung in a choir? Almost everyone is impacted by music. To me music isn't random, it isn't a simple hobby, but a way I can connect and hear God. Studies have shown that music actually benefits the health of our brain and I think God did that on purpose. I really got into music about 3 years ago, and yes, I've always listened to music and I have been in band classes longer than that but 3 years ago is when I connected to it on a deeper level and also began to connect to my faith. To me, this was never a coincidence. At camp this can be different but yet so similar. When I'm at Quest, I hear him all around me. Whether is be in the wind blowing the leaves or the chimes of Judson Tower. During worship services Is when I hear him most prominently when we sing. And that is how I hear God.

Audrey Lennard – 2026 Graduate

I hear God in the people I am around, and the way God is working through everyone. During the week at Quest, we would hear sermons every night about the scripture that we had spent the morning studying. During two particular sermons, it really felt that God was talking to me.



On Monday at Quest, we looked at Ruth 1:6-18, which is when Ruth stayed with her mother-in-law Naomi even after Naomi told her to leave. The staffer, Jordan, gave a sermon over this scripture and talked about how big of a sacrifice this was for Ruth as she would have been nothing in the eyes of the world without leaving to find another husband. Jordan asked us the question of where can we be Ruth's in the world? That has stuck with me. I know I hear God in the people around me that are my Ruth, but how can I be a

Ruth for someone else? How can I stick in someone's life and make that sacrifice because it is what God is calling me to?

The next day, we focused on the story in Exodus 18:7-17 where Jethro and Moses are talking. Owen, one of the other staffers, gave a sermon about seeking wise counsel. He talked about how Jethro provided counsel for Moses. What I took away from the scripture was how Jethro doesn't just agree with what Moses is doing. He doesn't let Moses continue to take on too much, which was just hurting him and his people, instead he provides solid advice. This day not only asked the question of where can I provide wise counsel for others but also how are the people around me giving me advice and am I listening to it or not.

In conclusion, I hear God in the Ruth's in my life. The people that physically stick in my life through everything. For me, the Ruths are people like my brother, Turner, and my cousin, Newt. And the Jethro's are the ones that provide advice, the ones that seem to always know what's best for me even if that's not what I want to hear. Those are people like my sister, Kenzie, and my coaches. I know God is working through all those people. I hope to grow into a person that God can use to be someone's Ruth or someone's Jethro.

Isaiah Grummon – Incoming Freshman

I haven't been to Quest since I was in 7th grade so I was excited to see how I would view it differently. While I was there, I heard God through all of the connections people made in only a week. It was very different from my normal life where it might take months for people to build a connection. It felt like God's presence at Quest brought everyone together in a way that can't be replicated anywhere else.



This is where I saw Quest differently than I did in previous years, in the past I thought Quest was all about self-reflection and while that still may be true I also learned that Quest is about building relationships with other people even if you may never see them again and that is where I truly heard God at Quest this year.



Micah Smith – Incoming Senior

I hear God in personal reflection time but also when I am with the people I love and my friends. He is always influencing me to make the right choices and support the people around me when times are tough for them. I hear God when I'm doing the things I like to do and that he allows me to do. I hear him when I mess up and when he forgives me.



I heard God at Quest in the time we all have together whether it's in worship or small group time. When we are all together as one, that is when I hear him the most. During game time bringing us joy, or at meals blessing the hands that made it. Quest is just an overall fun experience to help everyone there find their connection to God.

Regan Jones – Youth Leader

Like many of our students, I hear God most often through music. My very first trip to Green Lake Conference Center was for the Fellowship of American Baptist Musicians (FABM) conference, where I sang in the youth choir alongside friends from FBC Topeka. I attended FABM for eight years, and during that time, I also began bringing students from Topeka to Quest. To this day, the choral pieces we sang during those weeks in the summer still roll through my mind—Robert Hobby's "I've Just Come From The Fountain" in particular. We also sang worship and camp songs led by incredible leaders: Joel Fredrickson my first year, and Jeff and Katie Rector in the years that followed.

One special tradition for the music conference youth was climbing the steps of Judson Tower on the last night of camp. Navigating 121 steps is no easy feat, and it is *especially* daunting in the dark while trying to sing, yes, sing. At the time, it terrified me. Looking back, though, I can still hear God in the voices of those teenagers as they wobbled up the steps to worship together at the top.

In the years since my days as a FABM camper, I have come to hear God in a different way at Green Lake. At Quest, we have wonderful, moving worship music—as many of our students have shared—but that is no longer where I hear God loudest.

Now, I hear God most clearly in our students:

- In their encouragement: Cheering each other on at the high ropes, shouting words of bravery to tackle seemingly impossible challenges.



- In their joy: Laughing together in the dining hall or playing late-night board games in the dorms.
- In their energy: Expounding on the glory of the Rock Room to anyone who will listen, or quoting the vintage recording of James Kraft talking about being a reflective light of Christ.
- In their futures: Chatting with the Quest staff about their life plans and proclaiming with pure excitement that they, too, will be on staff next summer.
- In their mischief: Screaming each other's names to flawlessly execute a well-thought-out plan to dump a trash can full of water over Greg Henson's head.
- In their vulnerability: The chance to quietly share a personal testimony with me, written after being inspired by Director Heather Henson's sermon.

It is easy to hear the voices of our students on the days they are given the floor to speak in worship. But to truly hear God speak through our young people, you have to listen to them in the monotonous moments, not just the mountaintop ones. Hear them when their voices are wobbling, not just when they are strong.



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