



Spirit Inspired  
Worship



### **Babbling**

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My husband is an avid birdwatcher. He can detect the slightest hint of color in tail feathers or the distinguishing shape of a beak. He's also good at listening to songs and identifying birds without seeing them. At 4:45 am on Tuesday, an unfamiliar, loud song just outside our window woke him from a deep sleep. After a moment, he got up and shut the window. He grumbled that it was a young robin, "learning how to sing." The slight variations in pitch and cadence threw him off for a moment. This youngster had an immature song, to be perfected only through practice.



My granddaughter is also practicing her linguistics. At two, she understands most words and is getting better at stringing them together. "I-anna-ee-i-aww!" She protested when we tried to take away the cherry popsicle dripping down her chin, hands, and arms. "I want to eat it all!" Sometimes I have no idea what she's saying, and I try to repeat the sound just to make her feel heard. Her four-year-old brother is the best interpreter; he seems to understand her without much confusion.

The familiar words of 1 Corinthians 13 come to mind as I pay attention to the sounds of my granddaughter and the young robin: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love."

When we hear the babble of those who are immature, we might feel that we've now advanced in our speech. We use fancy words to express complex ideas. We use logic and draw connections. To God's ears, however, our speech remains childlike. We still know only in part; we see only a reflection of what is and what will be. We speak, reason, and think like children when it comes to the knowledge of God. We test out words and ideas and don't always get them right. We attribute actions and intentions to God that don't necessarily withstand biblical scrutiny.

So, like baby robins and toddlers, we must practice. These verses from 1 Corinthians root us in the ways we are to live out our – albeit limited – understanding of God: through faith, hope, and love.

We practice our faith together as a community. We practice hope in our prayers and our testimonies. We practice love through our acts of caring, compassion, and charity. With practice, our voices grow stronger and more mature. Our babbling becomes more coherent and a deeper reflection of God's intentions. "Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."

We welcome the day when we see and understand clearly...when we see God face-to-face. Until then, we practice, infant tongues learning the language of faith, hope, and love. We give thanks for the One who fully knows us, who affirms us in our learning, and who understands us when no one else does.