

CONVERSATION KIT:

HELPING CREATE
Connection
IN YOUR
Home



INTRODUCTION

According to a recent article in Time magazine, when a number of parents were asked what was the number one area they needed help with, the majority of them stated “communication with my family.”

I think many of us would agree! Communicating with our kids and spouses can be challenging!

But why is it so important that moms, dads, and kids talk to one another? First, a theological reason. Speech is a divine gift. It’s a vital aspect of the image of God in man. As such, it’s an important part of what makes us human. Through deep and meaningful talk, we become bonded at a level that simply isn’t accessible to creatures of any other species.

Conversation is the glue that cements the connection and makes it happen. Deep down inside we all want to know and be known by others, and talking is absolutely crucial to healthy relationships.

So, in a world where emojis and texts have replaced real words and expressions, how can we connect through conversations in our home? Thankfully, Empowered Homes is here to help!

In this Communication Kit you will find a number of tools and resources to better help you engage with your family. You will find a brief purpose and summary of the resource and tips to use it. Remember the key is to connect!

Our prayer is that your family will use this kit to bolster a sense of family identity and create an environment of love, acceptance, and belonging.



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SPIRITUAL FORMATION

**DO YOU DESIRE FOR YOUR KID
TO HAVE A REAL AND VIBRANT FAITH?**

**I think if you asked that question to most parents, the
overwhelming majority would say YES!**

**DO YOU KNOW HOW TO
HELP YOUR KID GROW THEIR FAITH?**

**Many parents might say “NO.” In fact, many parents have
a difficult time helping their children “own their faith.”**

In her book *Sticky Faith*, author Kara Powell provides insight to what makes our faith stick. What Dr. Powell discovered was that although there are no guarantees, a key component of faith transference and faith development is having spiritual conversations in the home.

In these homes, parents typically discuss their own faith journeys. They frequently share organically about their relationship with Jesus and how it continues to impact and influence their life.

These parents also have spiritual conversations during everyday life with their kids. They provide insight to everyday moments and ask questions that allow their kids space to wrestle with the answers.

Spiritual roots don't grow deep by accident. God is the ultimate gardener, and He often works through parents to prepare the soil, remove creeping weeds and make sure kids have the spiritual nutrients they need to flourish.

**WE INVITE YOU TO USE THE FOLLOWING FAITH TALK AND
GOD MOMENT RESOURCES TO HELP YOU TALK ABOUT
SPIRITUAL MATTERS IN YOUR HOME.**

FAITH *talk*

The logo features the word "FAITH" in a bold, teal, sans-serif font, followed by "talk" in a white, cursive font inside a teal speech bubble. A teal underline is positioned beneath "FAITH".

PURPOSE:

A Faith Talk is a regularly scheduled time when your family gathers to talk about their faith. This could be family discussions, family devotions, family Bible reading, or conversations after church on Sunday.

PRAY:

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your family as you share in this time.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

Below are a few example questions for your family to use. Please adjust and adapt them to the age and maturity of your family members. Remember to share your answers with your kids.

- What did the pastor talk about in today's sermon?
- Do you think our family needed to hear that? Why or why not?
- What did he say that you needed to hear or encouraged you?
- Did you feel God speaking to you today?
- Was there anything you didn't understand?
- What did you learn about God? For example "God is"
- How did you see Jesus in today's passage?
- Does the message today cause you to seek change? In what way?
- What can you do in your life to act on what you learned today?
- How can we as a family apply what we heard today?
- How can I pray for you?

GOD moments



PURPOSE:

God Moments are the unplanned moments parents can capture to strengthen your relationship as a family and your relationship with Christ. Unlike Faith Talks, these are unexpected and unplanned opportunities that you can use to talk about your faith. These can be for positive moments along with difficult situations.

PRAY:

Ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of these moments. This may be an event on the news, something that happens at school, or an event within your circle of family and friends.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

Below are a few example questions and statements for your family to use. Please adjust and adapt them to the age and maturity of your family members. Be sure to share your answers with your kids.

- Tell me more.
- How does that make you feel?
- How can I pray for you?
- How should we respond?
- What are your friends saying about this situation?
- Can I share with you my thoughts?
- Where do you see Jesus in this story?
- What does Scripture say about this?

THE POWER OF EVERYDAY WORDS

Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

– MOTHER TERESA

As children we all heard the rhetoric, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Really? Let's not kid ourselves. Words are potent. They can build and they can destroy. I once read that a word is like a living organism, capable of growing, changing, spreading, and influencing your family and friends, directly and indirectly.

As a parent, the power to build up or tear down a child's heart is often connected to the words of their parents. Just like the angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon about who he was to become, we as parents get the choice to speak life into our children as well.

So, how do we use our words to build up our children?

First, we ensure we *connect* more than we *correct*. Yes, we must discipline our children and yes, we must provide biblical instruction; however, we must also use our words to shepherd their hearts during these moments. When children feel loved, valued, and understood, they are more open to your influence and instruction. *Connect* more than *correct*!

Second, we use our words to bless them. Specifically, we bless who they are, not what they do. As parents, one of our most important duties is to ensure our children undoubtedly know that their Mom & Dad's love is in no way tied to performance... performance in a class room, performance on a ball field, performance in life.

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES, WE PROVIDE YOU SIMPLE TOOLS TO USE THE POWER OF YOUR WORDS TO BLESS YOUR CHILD AND CREATE CONNECTION IN YOUR HOME.

The Power of Everyday Words

Thank you.

It's important to acknowledge your child's efforts to help you or others. You might say: "Thanks for helping me look for that missing sock," or "Thanks for setting the table; I got the salad made while you were doing that."

Tell me more.

Words like these show your child that you are listening and that you would like to hear more about what's on her mind. "Tell me more" encourages conversation without passing judgment or giving immediate advice

You can do it.

Your expression of confidence in your child's ability to do many things without your help is important. As your child grows older, there will be many times when your encouragement will mean the difference between his giving up on a challenging task or seeing it through.

How can I help?

Let your child know you are willing and available to help her accomplish a particular task that may be difficult for her to manage on her own. You might say: "I think you can read that story by yourself now. Let me know if you need help with a new word." As your child takes on projects in school, encourage her to think of specific steps that are necessary to complete a project. You both can decide which tasks your child can handle on her own and which ones she'll need help with.

Let's all pitch in.

A child is never too young to learn that cooperation and team effort make many jobs easier and faster and often more fun: "Let's all pitch in and finish raking the leaves so we can go in and bake cookies," or "Let's all pitch in and clean up the kitchen or we'll miss the movie." Family activities and group chores can develop into pleasant rituals that enrich a child's life and create fond memories.

YOU CAN USE THESE EVERYDAY PHRASES TO INSTILL CONFIDENCE, SELF-RESPECT, AND THOUGHTFULNESS IN YOUR CHILDREN.

How about a hug?

Don't just tell your child you love him, show him. Research indicates that young children deprived of physical touch and displays of affection often fail to thrive. As children grow older, they vary in the ways they like us to show affection. Some love to be cuddled, while others prefer a quick hug or pat on the shoulder. It's important to be aware of what your child enjoys most at a particular age.

Please.

After all these years, "please" is still a classic. When you ask a favor of anyone, including children, this "magic word" acknowledges that you are asking for a behavior that will help you and/or make you happy. (P.S.: Don't forget to say "thank you" when the job is done.)

Good job!

"Good for you." Self-respect and self-confidence grow when your child's efforts and performance are rewarded. Whenever possible, give your child lots of praise. Be sure your praise is honest and specific. Focus on your child's efforts and progress, and help him identify his strengths.

It's time to...

"It's time to get ready for bed," or "do homework," or "turn off the TV." Young children need structure in their daily lives to provide a measure of security in an often insecure world. It is up to you as a parent to establish and maintain a workable schedule of activities, always remembering that children benefit from regular mealtimes and bedtimes.

I love you.

Everyone needs love and affection and a feeling of acceptance and belonging. We can't assume that children know and understand our love for them unless we tell them. Letting your child know that you love her (and showing her with countless hugs) is important not only in toddlerhood, but also as she gets older.

KID CONVERSATION STARTERS

- **When are you (or have been) most afraid?**
- **What has been the happiest day of your life?**
- **If you could change one thing in the world what would you change?**
- **If you could change one thing about yourself what would you change?**
- **What does “being in love” mean?**
- **What is the most important thing in your life?**
- **What is the one thing you couldn't live without?**
- **What is your favorite movie of all time? Why?**
- **What is your favorite book of all time? Why?**
- **What cartoon character would you most like to be?**
- **What is the hardest thing about being _____ years old?**
- **What is the best thing about being _____ years old?**
- **Describe your perfect day.**
- **What job would you never want to have?**
- **Who is your best friend? Why are they your best friend?**
- **What's your favorite car and why?**
- **Who would you most like to meet?**

KID CONVERSATION STARTERS

- In what other country would you most like to live?
- What things don't boys understand about girls?
- What things don't girls understand about boys?
- Why do you think people use curse words?
- When was the last time you cried? What did you cry about?
- Are you looking forward to the next school year?
Why or why not?
- What's the hardest part about going to school?
- What should a parent do when their children don't obey?
- If you could have any animal as a pet which would you choose?
- What embarrasses you the most?
- If you could take a family vacation any place in the world, where would you go?
- Do you think it's more important to be rich or kind?
- If you had three wishes, what would they be? (You're not allowed to wish for money or another wish!)
- Do you know how much your family loves you?
How can you tell?

Afterschool Conversation Starters



AVOID THESE...

How was school?

Did you have fun at school?

Who did you sit with?

Was your teacher nice?

Were the kids in your class nice?

Did you play with anyone at recess?

How was lunch?

Afterschool Conversation Starters



TRY THESE...

Tell me one thing you learned today!

What was the best thing you did at school?

Tell me the names of the four kids who sat closest to you.

What was the most interesting thing your teacher said today?

What class rules did your teacher say are important?

What was the best thing your teacher asked you to do in class today?

Who did you enjoy talking with the most?

Did anyone have anything fun or interesting to talk about?

What were most kids doing at recess?

What was the best game at recess?

What did you talk about at recess?

Who sat near you at lunch?

What were the other kids eating for lunch?

What was the funniest thing someone said at lunch?

THE POWER OF ACTIVE LISTENING

“Listening is a very active awareness of the coming together of at least two lives. Listening, as far as I am concerned, is certainly a prerequisite of love. One of the most essential ways of saying “I love you” is being a good listener.”

– FRED ROGERS

A friend recently asked me, “When was the last time someone really listened to you?” It was an interesting question and one I pondered for some time. It made me think of how many times a day we say to our kids, “Are your listening ears on? Are you listening to me?” But how often do we truly, whole-heartedly listen to them? What about our spouse? Do we truly listen to them as well?

The ability to listen is a major component of any good relationship. Whether you want to be a good parent, good spouse, or a good friend, listening skills are one of your best relationship investments. The problem is, it is not as easy to listen as we might think. The common misconception is that listening is just passively lending your ear to someone. It is not. In order to be effective, listening must be intentional.

**SO, HOW CAN WE PRACTICE THE ART OF LISTENING,
AND HOW CAN WE SHOW OUR FAMILY THAT WE REALLY
DO WANT TO CONNECT WITH THEM? KEEP READING FOR
SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU BE A BETTER LISTENER.**

ACTIVE *listening*

NON-VERBAL

- A non-verbal listening response involves little or no verbal activity, but you **show attentiveness by nodding and making facial expressions** in response to your children's statements. Non-verbal responses also include such 'comments' as "I see" or "Uh hum."
- Through body language, you can convey to them that you are interested in what they have to say and are willing to take the time to listen.
- When you sense that your children want to talk, you set aside what you are doing, establish eye contact or lean forward to indicate you are listening, and don't answer the phone or look at your mobile device.
- These non-verbal responses can be represented by a ticket to a movie – in which you are watching and listening and attending, but not speaking.

CONTENT RESPONSE

- A content listening response **reflects back to your children the content of what you heard**. This should be a paraphrase and not a parroting, which can be annoying and can sound false.
- For example, when a child says, "I can't sleep because I think a monster is going to get me," a content listening response would be: "When you think there is a monster who might hurt you, you can't get to sleep."
- These content responses can be represented by a mirror because you are reflecting back what your children have said to you.

FEELING RESPONSE

- A feeling listening response **focuses on the emotions you think your children might be experiencing.** Notice the word “think” – the tone for any active listening response is usually tentative, almost as if it ended with a question mark, as if you are checking with your children that you accurately picked up the feeling underlying the words.
- A feeling listening response to the child who can't sleep would be: “When you think a monster might get you, you are too scared to go to sleep.”

CLARIFYING RESPONSE

- A clarifying listening response takes a much **broader or deeper view of the situation** your children are facing, offers other possible reactions and identifies potential needs, values, expectations, wishes, and underlying issues.
- A clarifying listening response to the child worried about the monster would be: “Thinking there is a monster somewhere around makes you feel as though you have to stay awake so he can't get you; if you fall asleep, you worry you won't be able to protect yourself.”

TRUTH RESPONSE

- When you use a universal truth listening response with your children, you are offering a broad commentary about the situation that reflects their needs, feelings, or experience. Often these responses are ways to **teach your children a principle about life that relates to the situation** and their reactions to it.
- Such statements can give your children food for thought as far as processing the situation and can help them to feel less alone. After all, you are telling your children that others have walked in their shoes and gone before them. Making your statement in the third person makes it seem more objective.
- A Universal Truth listening response to the frightened child might be: “People can be afraid even if they have been told over and over that there is nothing to be afraid of. The feelings just stay even if the person knows in his head that what he is afraid of really isn't there.”

THE POWER OF CONVERSATION IN *Marriage*

Dr. Terri Orbuch, a research professor at the University of Michigan, completed a 30-year study of more than 400 couples. After 3 decades and hundreds of couples, she found a common trait present in all the happiest couples ...

Communication!

She discovered that the happiest of these couples spent time every day connecting with each other, talking about meaningful things for at least 10 minutes.

Although topics like health issues, weather, chores, finances, and your kids are necessary and important to talk about, make sure that you **find ways to broaden your conversations to include more than just the practical aspects of your marriage and lives.**

Long-married couples know that intimacy includes so much more than just the physical. The emotional intimacy of being able to share your most private and cherished thoughts is a pre-requisite for a fulfilling marriage.

WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU HAVE ASKED YOUR SPOUSE ABOUT HIS OR HER DAILY ROUTINE, LIKES, DISLIKES, NEEDS, EMOTIONS AND DREAMS?

Marriage Conversation Starters

- If we were to switch places for a day, what do you think I would learn?
- Do you need anything from me/Is there anything I can do for you?
- If you could spend 24 hours doing anything in the world together, what would it be?
- If you could have lived in another time period, which would you choose? Why?
- What's your favorite memory from when we were dating?
- What's your favorite memory from our wedding?
- Do you have any pet peeves that you wish didn't bother you?
- Who in your family do you think you're most like?
- What was the moment that you knew you were in love with me?
- When was the last time you cried? Do you remember what it was about?
- When was the last time you laughed? Do you remember what it was about?

**HERE ARE A FEW MARRIAGE CONVERSATION
STARTERS TO HELP YOU BEGIN!**

- Do you have any dreams or things that you want to accomplish that you've put on the back burner? How can we bring them to life?
- What's one positive change that our marriage has had on you?
- When was the last time I made you feel great about yourself? How can I do that more often?
- If you could go back to when we first started dating, what advice would you give yourself?
- What do you consider your biggest challenge in your life thus far? How did you/will you overcome it?
- When have you felt the most loved by me?
- What's your favorite vacation of the ones we've taken together?
- What's one character trait that you hope your kids don't learn from you?
- What do you consider my greatest attribute? What about my greatest weakness?
- What's one activity that you've always wanted to do together?