

IDEAS FOR GETTING THE CONVERSATION GOING WITH YOUR KIDS

First and foremost, it is important to make sure that your children understand they have a safe place and person who is always willing to take the time, or make the time, to sit down and “listen” to every “happening” in their lives.

It is then our job to sift through their “*reportings*” and discern what is important and what is not, all the time making the child feel like every word they share has value. It will be in these discussions that your child will get comfortable in sharing “their world” with you.

In order to create a safe environment, remember to remain calm and don’t overreact to anything that is said. This will enable you to teach right from wrong, good from evil, grace and forgiveness and even begin the process of helping your child develop the life boundaries that will shape the decisions they will make for the rest of their lives.

This is the place where they will come to know God’s great love for them and the protection that He has for them in the instructions we find in His Word.

But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.”

—Matthew 19:14 (NLT)

Secondly, let’s talk about how to start a conversation.

One thing we can do is to use Jesus’s example of taking things that are currently happening around you and talking with your children to help them think about and properly process the situations. Ask questions and listen to their responses, then guide them to thinking about them as God does.

Some examples of questions you could ask:

1. Did you think that was right or wrong? Why?
2. What would you have done?
3. How do you think that person felt?
4. How did it make you feel?
5. How do you think God feels when He sees something like that?

Another idea for using “real life” to gain insight into their lives and begin a conversation is the “Worst thing/Best thing” discussion. Here you simply ask them two questions.

1. What was the worst thing that happened to you today?
2. What was the best thing that happened to you today?

This is a great “debrief” technique to use toward the end of the day, but can be used anytime of the day by just adding the words, “so far?” Basically anytime there is “dead air” to be filled. (Remember, your child values your attention more than anything and would much rather be having a meaningful, engaging, bonding conversation with you, than be “bonding” with an electronic screen of some sort.)

The next idea requires that you create and share a fictitious scenario to help them to think about how they would feel and respond when confronted by particular situations. The idea of this activity is to keep them from being caught off guard and help them be better prepared with a proper response should the situation ever present itself in real life.

We call this the “What if...? Game”. Kids love games, so make it fun! You could even flip a coin or guess a number to see who goes first.

This game takes a little preparation on your part. In advance, prepare a list of scenarios that would be appropriate for the things that your child might encounter (or may have already encountered) and write them out on separate pieces of paper.

Fold and place them in a container where they can be shaken up and have whoever goes first select one from the container. Read the selected scenario aloud and select people to “role play” the scenario. This should be fun for the kids. After a couple of minutes of role playing (and hopefully some laughter and silliness) move to asking questions to get them thinking about the situation they just acted out.

Ask lots of questions to get them to really think about how they feel. Listen to understand (and to help them understand). Guide them toward thinking about it

the way God does, to think about the situation in terms of truth, grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness...and the importance of always protecting their hearts.

Examples of “What if...? Game” questions and some follow-up questions that you might ask:

What if a kid knocked your books off of your desk?
(Role play this scenario.)

How would that make you feel?
Who would you tell about what happened?
What would you do?
Why do you think someone would be mean to you like this?
How do you think God feels when He see us being mean?
(NOTE: These are just suggestions. Let your child’s responses guide your follow up questions.)

What if someone shows you a bad picture on their cell phone?
(Role play this scenario.)

What would you do first?
Who would you tell about what happen?
How would that make you feel?
What makes it a “bad” picture?
Why is it not okay to look at bad pictures?
How do you think God feels when we look bad pictures?
(NOTE: These are just suggestions. Let your child’s responses guide your follow up questions.)

We realize that this takes a good bit of preparation and time to put together, but where better to invest your time and energy?

Be sure that your children know they need to “*protect their hearts*” (to be careful about what they choose to think about, see, hear and experience) and to “*run away from sin!*”

*Guard your heart above all else,
for it determines the course of your life.—Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)*

*Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and
peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.—2
Timothy 2:22 (NIV)*

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