

What Messages Are Our Kids Getting?

A Godly Model for Communication

Today's Focus: Communication is one of the most overused words and underused tools of our time. Today we will explore God's model of communication with us. We'll conclude with practical "how to" handles for improving communication with our kids.

I. What Does God Communicate to Us?

- A. Love—unconditional, not based on performance or response
- B. Worth—value as a person with a purpose
- C. Potential—picture of what they/we can become
- D. Choices and Consequences—responsibility for choices that have consequences

II. How Does God Communicate to Us? How Can We Pass It On?

- A. God: through His **world**. Us: our **milieu**—the environment we create in our homes.
 - 1. A safe haven
 - 2. A place where we're free to fail
 - 3. A place where we're freely forgiven
 - 4. A place where we can be honest about ourselves, our doubts, our questions

- B. God: **through His Word**. Us: our **message**—words we use as weapons or healers.
From His Word: “Life and death are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21).

Communication Killers

Beware of words that:

- wound (blow them away)
- discourage (wear them down)
- are not heard anyway (nag them or bore them to death)

Communication Builders

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs”
(Ephesians 4:29, NIV).

Is it helpful? Does it build up or tear down? Is it geared to the child’s need?

- C. God: **through His Son**. Us: our **model**—what our actions say.

1. Jesus, our model
2. Actions do speak louder than words. (See 1 Timothy 4:12, TLB.)

III. How-To’s: Creative Communication Tips

(Adapted from *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish)¹

- A. Hints for helpful listening—so they’ll talk!

- Take time to listen. (Read and heed—Proverbs 18:13.)
- Make eye contact and focus.
- Say a word to let them know you’re listening.
- Reflect feelings by giving them a name.

- B. Tips for targeting talk—so they’ll listen!

1. Describe what you see; simply give information.
2. Say it short.
3. Describe what you feel.
4. Be creative: write a note; use humor.
5. Brainstorm cooperative solutions.
6. Let consequences do the talking.

Discussion Questions

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Report Time: Exchange ideas concerning your purpose and priorities as a mom. Share any pictures, diagrams, or written statements you've developed during the week.

1. Today we reflected on what God has communicated to us. Which "messages" do you feel you are currently communicating effectively to your children?
 - Love
 - Worth
 - Potential
 - Choices and consequences

Which areas need building up so that your children can get the message more clearly?

2. Consider your "world"—the environment you create in your home and what it communicates to your children.
 - A. What are you pleased with?
 - B. What would you most like to modify?

3. Consider the words you use with your children.
 - A. Which of the “Communication Killers” come most naturally to you?

 - B. Share one way in which you will begin to reshape those words into “Communication Builders.”

4. In what ways do you see your children already modeling after or mimicking your words or actions?

5. What do you think your children would say if they were able to respond to the question: “What’s most important to your mother?”

6. Identify some specific strategies you’d like to try this week to improve communication in your family.

For Next Week: Try using the Ephesians 4:29 test in your communication: Is it helpful? Does it build up? Is it geared to the child’s need? Be ready to report to your group how it worked.

1. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publishers, 1980).

Reflections 10

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What: God communicates to us:

Unconditional love (for who we are, not what we do)
Worth and value (as a person with a purpose)
Potential (seeing in us what we can become)
Choices and consequences (choose life!)

How: God communicates through:

His world—what does the atmosphere in our homes
say to our children?
His Word—are our words life-giving or death-blow words?
His Son—what do our lives say to our children?

How-to's: Let's learn to listen well and talk in ways they can hear!

“The walks and talks we have with our two-year-olds in red boots have a great deal to do with the values they will cherish as adults.” Edith F. Hunter¹

God sees in each of us the “Peter-potential.” Do you see that in your husband? your children?

Remember, your kids are under construction—the Lord is still at work!

Read and Grow: Reflect on these verses this week: “Life and death are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21). “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV). “Be their ideal; let them follow the way you teach and live; be a pattern for them in your love, your faith, and your clean thoughts” (1 Timothy 4:12, TLB). For more encouragement on communicating helpful messages to your children, listen to Devotion 10 on the CD in the back of this book.

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1. Edith F. Hunter. Retrieved October 31, 2005 from http://www.appleseeds.org/Oct_2000.htm

