

## Biblical Communication with Your Kids

*The following material is a summary on communication from some of the chapters in Tedd Tripp's excellent book entitled *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. We highly recommend it for your reading.*

Biblical discipline addresses behavior through addressing the heart. Superficial parenting that never addresses the heart produces superficial children who do not understand what makes them tick. If you address only behavior in your children, you never get to the cross of Christ. It is impossible to get from preoccupation with behavior to the gospel. The gospel is not a message about doing new things. It is a message about being a new creature.

A Biblical approach to children involves two elements that you weave together. One element is rich, full communication. The other is the rod of correction. The use of the rod preserves biblically-rooted parental authority. The emphasis on rich communication prohibits cold, tyrannical discipline.

### **Communication is Dialogue, Not Monologue**

Communication is not the ability to express yourself. Communication is not monologue. It is dialogue. You should seek to talk *with* your children.

Proverbs 18:2 *A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.*

Proverbs 18:13 *He who answers before listening?that is his folly and his shame.*

The finest art of communication is not learning how to express your thoughts. It is learning how to draw out the thoughts of another. Unfortunately, most children learn that a "good talk" for us is a "good listen" for them.

### **Focus on Understanding**

What is important is understanding the "why" of what has been done or said. You need to understand not just what has happened, but what is going on in your child's heart.

If you are going to understand and help your child to understand himself, there are

skills you must develop. You must learn to help your child express themselves.

*Proverbs 20:5 The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.*

Here are some productive questions to help your child get to the "why" of their heart:

1. What were you feeling when you hit your sister?
2. What did your sister do to make you mad?
3. Help me understand how hitting her seemed to make things better.
4. What was the problem with what she was doing to you? (You need not deny the fact your child has been sinned against. Of course, he was sinned against. Let him tell you about it.)
5. In what other ways could you have responded?
6. How do you think your response reflected trust or lack of trust in God's ability to provide for you?

There are four issues you must walk your child through: 1) the nature of temptation, 2) the possible responses to this temptation, 3) his own sinful responses, 4) the application of God's grace.

Your child must understand what it means to repent, not just "of all my sins" in some generalized way, but of specific sins. Repentance and faith are not rites of initiation into Christianity. Repentance and faith are the way we and our children relate to God. If we fail to help our children relate to God from their heart through repentance and faith, then we have failed to teach them to relate AT ALL.

### **Communication in Most Families**

This is the extent of communication that occurs in most families:

1. The parent gives the child the rules.
2. When the child breaks the rules, parent finds out what happened and reannounces the rules.

3. Parent then announces the price the child will pay for breaking the rules.

## **Rich, Multi-faceted Biblical Communication**

Communication with your child must be diverse and richly textured. Differing conditions in the hearer require differing forms of speaking. Here are some Biblical types of communication with simple definitions:

### **1. Encouragement**

Communication that is designed to inspire and fill with hope and courage.

### **2. Correction**

Correction gives your children insight into what is wrong and what may be done to correct the problem.

### **3. Rebuke**

Communication that sends a sense of alarm, shock and dismay at what your child has done or said

### **4. Entreaty**

This is a special kind of communication that is reserved for use in cases of great import. Proverbs 23:26 *My son, give me your heart. . . .*

### **5. Instruction**

The process of providing a lesson, a precept, or information that will help your children to understand their world.

### **6. Warning**

Communication that is the equivalent of posting a sign informing motorists that a bridge is out. A warning is simply a statement that A leads to B. It is acquainting them with the sowing and reaping principle.

### **7. Teaching**

Teaching is causing someone to know something, imparting knowledge.

### **8. Listening**

This is a form of communication best accomplished with mouth shut, ears open, and brain disengaged from thinking about what you are going to say next. James 1:19 *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow*

*to speak and slow to become angry.*

### **9. Prayer**

While prayer is not communication directly with the child, nevertheless, your prayer will communicate your faith in God to your child. Your most penetrating insights into your child will often come as they pray and in the same manner, the parent's prayer provides insight into their heart.

### **Application Questions**

1. When you find problems at home, do you expect to solve them with a new set of rules and punishments, or with richer forms of communication?
2. Outline how you would talk to your teen who seemed to have stolen money from you but would not admit it.
3. Of the nine types of communication mentioned, at which ones are you most proficient? At which ones are you least proficient?