

Parenting Tools:

Building Trust In My Child



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Building Trustworthiness in Your Child

1. Build trustworthiness in your child to help him or her grow into a faithful servant in God's kingdom

As parents, one of your goals is that you would raise trustworthy children. Building trustworthiness in your children is ultimately about them growing into faithful servants in God's kingdom. Yet, more than the goal that your children are able to perform simple tasks at home within a deadline, the ultimate goal is that they are joyfully trustworthy and watchful with the kingdom of God. As parents, our goal is not simply to prepare our children to be faithful in earthly matters, but in matters of the eternal kingdom. (Matthew 25:14–30)

2. Build trust in your child by testing with little things first, according to ability

Trustworthiness is not something that you can verbally teach or simply model and then expect your child to get. A child develops trustworthiness by being given the opportunity to show it. In other words, trustworthiness is learned by trial and error. To build trust in your teens, you must be willing to give opportunities for your children to prove themselves.

As you give your children opportunities to prove trustworthiness, take into account their abilities. Ask yourself questions such as what are my child's passions? What are his strengths? What are her weaknesses? When is a good deadline? How much responsibility can she handle? Is it within his ability to succeed? In order to teach your child trustworthiness, parents should carefully think through these questions, as avoiding these considerations may lead parents to give their child an opportunity that is out of line with the abilities.

When a child is given an opportunity that exceeds his or her ability, it cannot only be frustrating to the child, but the demonstration can fail to teach trustworthiness.

After taking into account your child's abilities, start with something small. In the same way as the biblical example, allow your children to prove themselves faithful in the little things before they advance to being trusted with the bigger things. For example, you can teach your child to be trustworthy with a toy car, so that one day he or she might be trusted with a real car. In an exercise such as this, remember to focus on the kingdom of God and the ultimate aim of teaching your child to be trustworthy. Keep in mind that beyond just teaching your child how to keep a car (toy or real) clean, accounted for, and safely maintained, it is your job to explain how cars—both toys and real ones—are resources meant to be used for the kingdom of God. Teach your child to be trustworthy in kingdom matters, whether that means helping your 5-year-old share a toy car or demonstrating to your 15-year-old how you can use your car to offer rides to others.

(Matthew 25:14–15, Matthew 25:21)

3. Measure your child's faithfulness by his or her urgency and watchfulness

Since we are viewing trustworthiness ultimately in the context of the kingdom of God, our earthly tasks should be a reflection of our heavenly tasks. As believers in God's kingdom, we know our Master will return at any moment, and we are expected to approach our faithfulness with a sense of urgency and watchfulness.

Trustworthiness does not procrastinate but quickly pursues our Master's task because we do not know when He might return. Procrastination in earthly tasks may reflect a heart that will tend to procrastinate in heavenly tasks.

If parents are wise in giving appropriate opportunities to their children that they can accomplish, then measuring each child's faithfulness is not based so much on whether the task is completed successfully, but rather on if the child had a sense of urgency as he or she completed it.

(Matthew 25: 16–17, 19)

4. Reward your child's faithfulness with more responsibility and your joy

Rewards that result from being trustworthy are not given as gifts, but rather they are earned. Help your child understand this truth. Explain to your children that with their faithfulness in the little things, they can be trusted with greater responsibility. Notice that the master in Jesus' parable rewarded his servants with the same response regardless of if they had earned five talents or two. The master says, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

Rejoice in the faithfulness of your children in the little things. Do as the master in the parable did, and reward them with greater responsibility each time, as doing so ensures that their motives are right. Rather than bribing your children into being responsible with rewards that are not associated with more responsibility, reward your children the way that our heavenly Father will reward His faithful servants.

(Matthew 25:20–23)