

## Parenting Tools: **Relationships**



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Building a positive relationship between a parent and child requires time and prayer. Parenting is a tough job, but maintaining a close relationship through open communication helps ensure parents stay connected to their children through all ages. Staying in the Word and building your relationship with the Lord is the key to developing the relationship with your child that will foster spiritual growth.

### Communication tips

1. Be available for your child. “Direct my steps by Your word...” says Psalm 119:133. As this verse explains, we can always look to God’s Word to show us the ways we can be available to our children. Here are some other ideas that you can use to communicate availability to your child:

- Notice times when your child is most likely to talk—for example, at mealtimes, in the car, or at bedtime. Parents spend a lot of time in the car with their children, so this is a natural place to start conversations.
- Start a conversation—this lets your child know you care about what is happening in his or her life.
- Know your child’s interests—be aware of what’s happening at school, or of what sports, music, etc. they like.
- Find time during the week for a one-on-one activity with your child; avoid scheduling anything else during this time.

2. Be attentive; make sure your child knows you are listening. “How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of

them,” says Psalm 139:17. In the same way that you find it comforting to know that God is listening to your prayers, your child needs to know that you are listening to and thinking of them. When your child wants to talk, stop whatever you are doing and listen; express interest in what he or she says. Through words, facial expressions, and body language, let your child know you care about what he or she is saying to you!

3. Respond in a loving and caring voice. Ephesians 4:29 instructs us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” Your children will know if you are angry or do not care about what they are trying to tell you. Always express your words in a positive way, even if you disagree with them. Resist arguing and instead say, “I know you may disagree, but this is what I think.” Remember to focus on your child’s feelings instead of your own.

## Reminders for building a relationship with your child

- Play with your child. Play builds memories and provides a time when you can have fun and interesting conversations.
- Respond in a godly manner. Kids learn by imitating, so they will most likely follow your lead in dealing with anger or frustration in their lives.
- Reinforce positive, not negative, thoughts when you talk to your child.
- Respect your child’s choices. You may not like it when he or she picks out a mismatched outfit, but allowing your child to wear his or her choice shows your respect.
- Listen to what your child says, and encourage him or her to talk.

- Let your child help you. Parents miss out on opportunities to build closer relationships with their children by not allowing their child to help them with simple tasks and chores.

- Eat meals together. Eating sets the stage for conversation and sharing. Be sure to turn off the TV!

Your children need to know they are a priority in your life. They know when you are not paying attention to them. Enjoy your children, and engage in conversation. Kids grow up so fast, which makes every day special. Take advantage of your precious time together! Reflect on Matthew 18:3, which tells us how we can grow closer to God: “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”