

How to Pass Your Faith to Your Children

Making a heart connection with a child is a special part of parenting. One reason connecting emotionally is so important is that the heart is a person's spiritual center; that's why God chooses to live there. It's also where parents can impact their kids spiritually. When you connect with your children on an emotional level, they're more willing to listen to spiritual truth and less resistant to your leadership.

Relationship Is the Vehicle through Which Values are Passed

Also, it's through relationship that values and convictions are passed on to kids. So having an open relationship with your child is a strategic part of parenting. When we ask children to whom they talk when they're upset, answers vary greatly. Children and teens talk to their friends, their parents, other family members, youth leaders or teachers. And some children don't feel comfortable talking about their problems with anyone.

Most children lack emotional coordination and are awkward about their feelings. It takes a patient parent or grandparent to work with a child who's inexperienced in the emotion department. These kids need someone willing to draw them out and pursue greater understanding. Listening is a great way to gain insight, but reflecting back what a child is saying using emotional words can also be helpful. "It sounds like you're feeling frustrated." Or "I'd be disappointed too if my friend did that." These kinds of statements help kids understand that their issues are compounded by how they are reacting in their hearts to the situation.

In 1 Peter 1:22, Peter tells believers how to have closer relationships, "Since your souls have been purified by

obedience to the truth through the Spirit unto a genuine brotherly love, love one another deeply with a pure heart.” That’s a helpful command for parents too. Sometimes moms and dads tend to want to keep things moving forward with the day organized and on track. Parents must continually evaluate their choices and decide what’s most important in family life.

Be Careful of the Relationship Trade-Off

As you make those tough trade-offs, be careful not to minimize the value of time spent on relationship with your kids. Connecting emotionally takes time, but the reward of closer family relationships is great.

*To learn more about emotionally connecting with kids, consider the book **Parenting Is Heart Work** by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN.*