

‘Oh Be Careful, Little Ears’: Protecting Your Children From TMI

It was an uncomfortable meal of tacos, enchiladas and far too much information. Around the table we heard an all-too-common story of a bitter church situation. Round eyed and attentive, children listened to the grownups spew. I cringed at a conversation submerged in relationships gone wrong.

We met at a restaurant to catch up, but along with the group, a painful dispute regurgitated.

I shoved myself farther into my seat, uncomfortable with the discussion, uneasy about the tone, and unsure about how to neutralize abrasive words on young ears.

“Why did he do that?” From across the table, a 6-year-old broke into the adult exchange.

It prompted a verbal list of wrongs committed by another parishioner. It felt to me like each offense sat on the little boy’s shoulders like stacked weights, much too heavy for him.

The little boy’s dad turned to my husband and said, “He needs to know how it is. We don’t hide things from our children.”

Sometimes it’s not easy to decipher what our children should know about our situations and what is better that they don’t.

The apostle Paul had good reason to talk negatively about others from prison where he was incarcerated, but instead he penned, “But now you must also put away all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy language out of your mouth” (Col. 3:8).

If Paul wrote this to adults, when he himself had suffered

from the injustices of others, how much more should it be true about the things our children hear from us.

It's helpful to ask some questions before venting in front of little ears.

1. Do they need to know?
2. Is my information truth or assumption?
3. Does knowledge provide safety?
4. Is the information helpful to either the situation or them?
5. Will it cause emotional damage, fear or insecurity?
6. Does bringing them into the story build the body of Christ or divide it?
7. How will it affect their relationship with others?

It is easy to let hurt and frustration splash onto innocent lives, but there is a cost. Children are too young to process adult burdens. Those issues weigh heavy on their minds and hearts. Part of our job as parents is to protect them from petty conflicts, injustices and relational clashes. Share only what is absolutely necessary, and be careful never to cause children to participate in the types of speech or attitude Scripture forbids.

The parents of those children were understandably wounded by events that happened. Unfortunately, their experience bled over onto little listeners, who then experienced unnecessary pain.

From a Roman cell, Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:29; "Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, that it may give grace to the listeners."

How different our restaurant conversation might have been if a plateful of Paul's encouragement had been served that evening.
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