

CONVERSATION KIT



HELPING FAMILIES CREATE
connection in the **home**





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ABOUT EMPOWERED HOMES

WHO WE ARE:

The primary purpose of Empowered Homes is to connect church and home by equipping families, leaders and ministries to grow in the areas of marriage, parenting, personal growth, discipleship strategy, family ministry, and leadership development. We value the family as the first institution designed by God for spiritual formation, relationships, and reflecting His image. We seek to ensure that every element of church life supports and equips that essential role.

WHAT WE DO:

Empowered Homes Ministry provides practical, gospel-based resources to connect church and home. The majority of our resources are offered online through our website empoweredhomes.org. We also partner with churches and ministries to provide equipping conferences and family ministry training.

WHY WE DO IT:

At the very foundations of the Church, the followers of Jesus were called to fellowship. Their fellowship included gathering together, breaking bread and sharing materials. Therefore, our desire is to be open-handed with our resources because we believe that God wants to empower every home, everywhere. We invite everyone to use, reproduce and share any of our online resources for FREE. May God and His Kingdom be given all the glory!

*Resources are not meant to be sold or used for profit making purposes

INTRODUCTION

Communicating with our family can be challenging. Why is it so important for spouses, moms, dads, and kids to talk with one another? First, a theological reason. Speech is a divine gift. It's a vital part of what makes us human. God created us with language and the ability to communicate unlike any other created being. Through deep and meaningful talk, we become bonded at a level that simply isn't accessible to creatures of any other species.

Deep down inside we all want to know and be known by others, and communication is absolutely crucial to healthy relationships. Conversation is the glue that cements connection and makes it happen.

So in a world where emojis and text messages have replaced real words and expressions, how can we connect through conversations in our home?

In this Conversation Kit, you will find a number of tools and resources to better help you engage with your family. You will find a brief purpose and summary of the resource and tips on how to use it. Remember the key is to connect.

Our prayer is that your family will use this kit to bolster a sense of trust and security, creating an environment of love, acceptance and belonging. Ultimately, we hope your family will grow into a beautiful reflection of God's image in all that you say and do.

-The Empowered Homes Team



PART ONE:
A FRAMEWORK FOR
CONVERSATION

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

**DO YOU DESIRE FOR YOUR CHILDREN TO
HAVE A REAL AND VIBRANT FAITH?**

Most parents would say yes!

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO HELP YOUR KID GROW THEIR FAITH?

Many parents might say no. In fact, many admit they have a difficult time helping their children "own their own faith."

In her book *Sticky Faith*, author Kara Powell provides insight to what makes our faith stick. What Dr. Powell discovered was that although there are no guarantees, a key component of faith transference and faith development is having spiritual conversations in the home.

In these homes, parents typically discuss their own faith journeys. They frequently share organically about their relationship with Jesus and how it continues to impact and influence their life. These parents also have spiritual conversations during everyday life with their kids. They provide insight to everyday moments and ask questions that allow their kids space to wrestle with the answers.

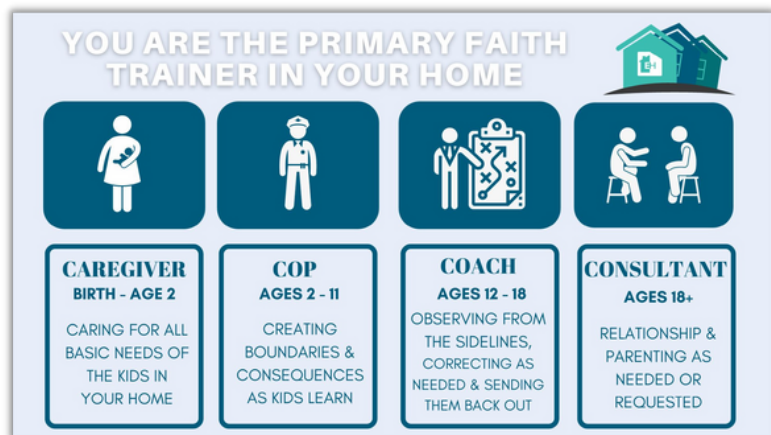
Spiritual roots don't grow deep by accident. God is the ultimate gardener, and He often works through parents to prepare the soil, remove creeping weeds and make sure kids have the spiritual nutrients they need to flourish.

PRIMARY FAITH TRAINER

The Bible is clear that parents play the primary role in speaking the truths of God's works and word to their children. We call that role *Primary Faith Trainers*. As a Primary Faith Trainer, a parent's ability to build communication and conversation in the home are vitally important. Growing in communication and the ability to have healthy conversation cultivates a space to engage in discipleship conversations.

Communication with your family will often change as your children grow and develop. Understanding your role as a parent throughout the various stages of child development is crucial to laying the foundation for effective and connective communication.





The image below gives a simple explanation of your role at four key stages in the life of a child. Refer to this resource as you practice and build healthy conversation in your home. Download this resource at empoweredhomes.org.




EVERYDAY RHYTHMS

Building healthy communication with your family takes intentionality and initiative on your part. Life already has natural, everyday rhythms built into it that can be used to spark intentional conversation. Simply put -- eating, driving, bedtime and morning time present opportunities to be intentional. These everyday rhythms can be used to establish values, interpret life, build intimacy and instill purpose in your family.

Use the Everyday Rhythms Card to guide you as you seek to build healthy communication and conversation. A free download of this card is available at empoweredhomes.org.

<i>EVERYDAY RHYTHMS</i>				
	<i>TIMES</i>	<i>COMMUNICATION</i>	<i>ROLE</i>	<i>GOAL</i>
	<i>MEAL TIME</i>	<i>FORMAL DISCUSSION</i>	<i>TEACHER</i>	<i>ESTABLISH VALUES</i>
	<i>DRIVE TIME</i>	<i>INFORMAL DIALOGUE</i>	<i>FRIEND</i>	<i>INTERPRET LIFE</i>
	<i>BED TIME</i>	<i>INTIMATE CONVERSATIONS</i>	<i>COUNSELOR</i>	<i>BUILD INTIMACY</i>
	<i>MORNING TIME</i>	<i>ENCOURAGING WORDS</i>	<i>COACH</i>	<i>INSTILL PURPOSE</i>



The power of **EVERYDAY WORDS**

“**Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.**
— **Mother Teresa**”

As children we all heard the rhetoric, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Really? Let’s not kid ourselves. Words are potent. They can build and they can destroy. I once read that a word is like a living organism, capable of growing, changing, spreading, and influencing your family and friends, directly and indirectly.

As a parent, the power to build up or tear down a child’s heart is often connected to the words of their parents. Just like the angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon about who he was to become, we as parents get the choice to speak life into our children as well.

So how do we use our words to build up our children? First, we ensure we Connect more than we Correct. Yes, we must discipline our children and yes, we must provide Biblical instruction; however, we must also use our words to shepherd their hearts during these moments. When children feel loved, valued, and understood, they are more open to your influence and instruction. Connect more than Correct!

Second, we use our words to bless them. Specifically, we bless who they are, not what they do. As parents, one of our most important duties is to ensure our children undoubtedly know that their Mom & Dad’s love is in no way tied to performance. Whether that’s performance in a classroom, performance on a ball field, or performance in life.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN
SIMPLE YET POWERFUL WORDS TO
BLESS YOUR CHILD AND CREATE
CONNECTION IN YOUR HOME.

SIMPLE WORDS & PHRASES

THANK YOU

It's important to acknowledge your child's efforts to help you or others. You might say: "Thanks for helping me look for that missing sock" or "Thanks for helping take responsibility to keep our house orderly."

TELL ME MORE

Words like these show your child that you are listening and that you would like to hear more about what's on her mind. "Tell me more" encourages conversation without passing judgment or giving immediate advice.

YOU CAN DO IT.

Your expression of confidence in your child's ability to do many things without your help is important. As your child grows older, there will be many times when your encouragement will mean the difference between his giving up on a challenging task or seeing it through.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Let your child know you are willing and available to help her accomplish a particular task that may be difficult for her to manage on her own. You might say: "I think you can read that story by yourself now. Let me know if you need help with a new word." As your child takes on projects in school, encourage her to think of specific steps that are necessary to complete a project. You both can decide which tasks your child can handle on her own and which ones she'll need help with.

LET'S DO IT TOGETHER.

A child is never too young to learn that cooperation and team effort make many jobs easier and faster and often more fun:

"Let's all pitch in and finish raking the leaves so we can go in and bake cookies," or "Let's all pitch in and clean up the kitchen or we'll miss the movie." Family activities and group chores can develop into pleasant rituals that enrich a child's life and create fond memories.

**YOU CAN USE THESE EVERYDAY PHRASES TO
INSTILL CONFIDENCE, SELF-RESPECT &
THOUGHTFULNESS IN YOUR CHILDREN.**

SIMPLE WORDS & PHRASES

PLEASE

After all these years, “please” is still a classic. When you ask a favor of anyone, including children, this “magic word” acknowledges that you are asking for a behavior that will help you and is a way of inviting instead of demanding. (Don’t forget to say thank you when the task is completed!)

GOOD JOB!

Good for you. Self-respect and self-confidence grow when your child’s efforts and performance are rewarded. Whenever possible, give your child lots of praise. Be sure your praise is honest and specific. Focus on your child’s efforts and **progress**, and help him identify his strengths.

HOW ABOUT A HUG?

Don’t just tell your child you love her, show her. Research indicates that young children deprived of physical touch and displays of affection often fail to thrive. As children grow older, they vary in the ways they like us to show affection. Some love to be cuddled, while others prefer a quick hug or pat on the shoulder. It’s important to be aware of what your child enjoys most at a particular age.

IT’S TIME TO...

“It’s time to get ready for bed,” or “do homework,” or “turn off the TV.” Young children need structure in their daily lives to provide a measure of security in an often insecure world. It is up to you as a parent to establish and maintain a workable schedule of activities, always remembering that children benefit from regular mealtimes and bedtimes.

I LOVE YOU.

Everyone needs love and affection and a feeling of acceptance and belonging. We can’t assume that children know and understand our love for them unless we tell them. Letting your child know that you love her (and showing her with countless hugs) is important not only in toddlerhood, but also as she gets older.

I AM SORRY.

Apologizing when you make a mistake as a parent is one of the most powerful acts of kindness you can display. Helping our kids understand that we all make mistakes and it is our responsibility to admit when we have mistreated someone or said something hurtful. Don’t seek to qualify or dismiss your mistake. Just simply say, “Daddy is sorry. I know I hurt you and that is not okay. Please forgive me.” And then give your child time to process and respond.

HAVING HARD CONVERSATIONS

Approaching conversations about sensitive topics with our children can be challenging. Many fears and questions stir when we think about communicating about polarized or tough topics with kids. Questions like: What is an appropriate age to engage my children? OR How do I explain hard or serious subjects without destroying innocence?

Need some help getting started? Here is a helpful way to “HACK” conversations on sensitive topics with your children.

H – Honesty:

You don't have to talk about things that are not age-appropriate, but you need to be honest. For example, in speaking about the transgender issue you might say, “God created us to be either boys or girls. Sometimes people get confused and act like they're someone different than how God made them.” You may also say, “some of this is difficult to explain or understand sometimes but you can always ask me questions and we will figure out the truth about this subject together.”

A – Anticipation:

Consider real-life scenarios where they might encounter some of these issues, and talk about them. Discuss how they might respond so that they can be ready to face that challenge. For example, a young junior high boy came home one day from school and shared with his parents that another student was reading a book that had inappropriate sexual content. The other student was explaining with detail what was happening, which of course sparked a lot of questions for the young boy. His parents were able to talk through that scenario and then walk him through other potential scenarios of seeing or hearing about sensitive or complex subjects. Arming him with ways to navigate difficult scenarios helped his confidence and conviction for God's truth.

C - Conversation:

Don't make it a lecture! Speaking about tough topics becomes less awkward when it's brought up as you're going about life - such as over dinner or while driving. One of the greatest blessings your children will have is an open line of communication to talk to you about anything - big or small - challenging or simple. Keep the conversations going and encourage your children to ask questions about tough topics when they are ready. Give them permission to say anything without fear of you losing your cool or lecturing them. Allow them safe space to process and work through issues with gentle guidance toward the loving truth found in a relationship with Jesus.

K - Kindness:

We want to cultivate an understanding of both grace and truth in our children. When you speak about people who are involved in something with which you disagree, pray for them with your children. Look for opportunities to demonstrate God's love even while you hold firmly to what the Bible says. The best way to lead your children to kindness and truth is to model it yourself, as they are always watching and processing how you respond and treat others.



Don't Freak Out!

We want our kids to come to us on their worst day and their best day. And when they do, we need to remember our reaction in the first 10 seconds will often dictate whether we are a safe place for our kids to come.

Learning to remain calm and reassure your child that you are going to help her when she is struggling with sin or has failed or disobeyed is a powerful way to build trust. It places you in a position to reflect the gentleness and love of Jesus and lead your child toward healing and course correction.

THE POWER OF ACTIVE LISTENING

“

Listening is a very active awareness of the coming together of at least two lives. Listening, as far as I am concerned, is certainly a prerequisite of love. One of the most essential ways of saying “I love you” is being a good listener.

-Fred Rogers

”

A friend recently asked me, “When was the last time someone really listened to you?” It was an interesting question and one I pondered for some time. It made me think of how many times a day we say to our kids, “Are your listening ears on? Are you listening to me?” But how often do we truly, whole-heartedly listen to them? What about others in our lives? Do we truly listen when others are speaking to us?

The ability to listen is a major component of any good relationship. Whether you want to be a good parent, good spouse, or a good friend, listening skills are one of your best relationship investments. The problem is, it is not as easy to listen as we might think. The common misconception is that listening is just passively lending your ear to someone. It is not. In order to be effective, listening must intentional.

People, especially our children, know if we are not listening to them. We must be willing to remove distractions, as well as, resist the temptation to think of how we are going to respond before the other person is done talking.

How can we practice the art of listening, and how can we show our family that we really do want to connect with them? Keep reading for some powerful tips for active listening on the next few pages.

POWERFUL TIPS FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

NON-VERBAL

- A non-verbal listening response involves little or no verbal activity, but you show attentiveness by nodding and making facial expressions in response to your children's statements. Non-verbal responses also include such comments as "I see" or "Uh hum."
- Through body language, you can convey to someone that you are interested in what they have to say and are willing to take the time to listen.
- When you sense that your children want to talk, you set aside what you are doing, establish eye contact or lean forward to indicate you are listening, and don't answer the phone or look at your mobile device.
- Think about when you attend a play or musical. You purchase a ticket with an understanding that you are watching, listening and attending, but not speaking. And what happens when others around you aren't doing the same - it's distracting and disrespectful to those who are performing.

CONTENT RESPONSE

- A content listening response can reflect back to your child what you heard him say. This should be a paraphrase and not a parroting, which can be annoying and can sound false.
- For example, when a child says, "I can't sleep because I think a monster is going to get me," a content listening response would be: "When you think there is a monster who might hurt you, you can't get to sleep."
- These Content Responses are like a mirror helping you reflect back what your child has said to you and confirming that you understand what he is trying to say.

FEELING RESPONSE

- A feeling listening response focuses on identifying the emotions you think your children might be experiencing. Notice the word “think.” The tone for any Active Listening response is usually tentative, almost as if it ended with a question mark, as if you are checking with your children that you accurately picked up the feeling that is beneath the surface of the words.
- A feeling listening response to the child who can't sleep would be: “When you think a monster might get you, you are too scared to go to sleep?”

CLARIFYING RESPONSE

- A clarifying listening response takes a much broader or deeper view of the situation your children are facing, offers other possible reactions and identifies potential needs, values, expectations, wishes, and underlying issues.
- A clarifying listening response to the child worried about the monster would be: “Thinking there is a monster somewhere around makes you feel as though you have to stay awake so he can't get you; if you fall asleep, you are worried you won't be able to protect yourself.”

TRUTH RESPONSE

- When you use a universal truth listening response with your children, you are offering a broad commentary about the situation that reflects their needs, feelings, or experience. Often these responses are ways to teach your children a principle about life that relates to the situation and their reactions to it.
- Such statements can give your children food for thought as far as processing the situation and can help them to feel less alone. After all, you are telling your children that others have walked in their shoes and gone before them. Making your statement in the third person makes it seem more objective.
- A Universal Truth listening response to the frightened child might be: “People can be afraid even if they have been told over and over that there is nothing to be afraid of. The feelings just stay even if the person knows in his head that what he is afraid of really isn't there.”



PART TWO: PRACTICAL TOOLS



PURPOSE

A Faith Talk is a regularly scheduled time when your family gathers to talk about faith and grow in spiritual formation. These intentional times could be family discussions, family devotions, family Bible reading, or conversations after church on Sunday.

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your family as you share in this time. And allow everyone to share and reflect.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Below are a few example questions for your family to use after a Sunday worship gathering. Please adjust and adapt them to the age and maturity of your family members. Remember to share your answers with your kids.

- What did the pastor talk about in today's sermon?
- Do you think our family needed to hear that? Why or why not?
- What was taught today that encouraged you?
- Did you feel God speaking to you today?
- Was there anything you didn't understand?
- What did you learn about God? For example "God is"
- How did you see Jesus in today's passage?
- Does the message today cause you to seek change? In what way?
- What can you do in your life to act on what you learned today?
- How can we as a family apply what we heard today?
- How can I pray for you?

God MOMENTS

PURPOSE

God Moments are the unplanned moments parents can capture to strengthen your relationship as a family and your relationship with Christ. Unlike Faith Talks, these are unexpected and unplanned opportunities that you can use to talk about your faith. These opportunities may arise during positive moments as well as in working through difficult situations.

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of these moments. This may be an event on the news, something that happens at school, or an event within your circle of family and friends.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Below are a few example questions and statements for your family to use. Please adjust and adapt them to the age and maturity of your family members. Be sure to share your answers with your kids.

- Tell me more about that.
- How does that make you feel?
- How can I pray for you?
- Let's invite God into that situation and ask for his help.
- How should we respond?
- What are your friends saying about this situation?
- Can I share with you my thoughts?
- Where do you see Jesus in this story?
- What does God's Word say about this?

AFTER SCHOOL CONVO STARTERS

I am always excited to hear how my kid's day was after school. For families who are schooled outside the home, being away from our kids for 3-10 hours of the day can leave us with hundreds of questions. And often we are met with answers like "fine," "good," "yes." or "no." Ugh!

Remember, not all questions are created equal. Avoid questions that will give you a simple one word answer and try some that give opportunity for more connection. *But always remember, students are tired at the end of a school day. Sometimes you have to be okay with little verbal communication until they have been able to transition from school mindset.



INSTEAD OF ASKING:

How was school?

Did you have fun at school?

Who did you sit with?
Do you like the kids in your class?

Was your teacher nice?

Did you play with anyone
at recess?

How was lunch?



TRY THESE:

Tell me one thing you learned today.
What was the best thing you did at school?
Tell me the names of the kids who sat near you.

What was the silliest thing that happened today?
Tell me about something that surprised you.
Was there anything that confused you today?

Who did you enjoy talking with the most?
Are the kids who sit near you quiet or outgoing?
What was the most interesting thing someone said?

How does your teacher show care for you?
What was something challenging your
teacher said?

What were most kids doing at recess?
What was the best game at recess?
What did you talk about at recess?

Who sat near you at lunch?
What were the other kids eating for lunch?

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use these questions to spark conversation at meal times or before bed.

- **When are you (or have been) most afraid?**
- **When has been the happiest day of your life?**
- **If you could change one thing in the world, what would you change?**
- **What does “being in love” mean?**
- **If you could change one thing about yourself, what would you change?**
- **What is the most important thing in your life?**
- **What is the one thing you couldn't live without?**
- **What is your favorite movie of all time? Why?**
- **What is your favorite book of all time? Why?**
- **What cartoon character would you most like to be?**
- **What is the hardest thing about being the age you are?**
- **What is the best thing about being the age you are?**
- **Describe your perfect day.**
- **What job would you never want to have?**
- **Who is your best friend? Why?**
- **What's your favorite kind of car and why?**
- **Who would you most like to meet?**

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use these questions to spark conversation at meal times or before bed.

- In what other country would you most like to live?
- What things don't boys understand about girls?
- What things don't girls understand about boys?
- Why do you think people use curse words?
- When was the last time you cried? What did you cry about?
- Are you looking forward to the next school year?
- What's the hardest part about going to school?
- What should a parent do when their children don't obey?
- If you could have any animal as a pet which would you choose?
- What embarrasses you the most?
- If you could take a family vacation any place in the world, where would you go?
- Do you think it's more important to be rich or kind?
- If you had three wishes, what would they be? (You're not allowed to wish for money or another wish!)
- Do you know how much your family loves you? How can you tell?

GOING DEEPER- DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Use these questions to spark conversation at meal times, before bed or intentional family times.

- **Where did you experience God's faithfulness this week?**
- **How have you reflected God's love this week?**
- **Have you ever doubted God's love for you?**
- **If you could ask God one question face -to-face what would you ask?**
- **Which book or passage of the Bible is your favorite? Why?**
- **If you could live in the days of Jesus, which miracle would you have wanted to see?**
- **Do you ever struggle being a follower of Jesus?**
- **How do I, as your parent, show that I love Jesus?**
- **What does the word grace mean?**
- **Is there a part of being a Christian that is hard for you?**
- **What is your favorite thing about going to church?**
- **Which of your friends can you talk about faith with?**
- **Where do you feel like you can be completely yourself?**
- **Do you know what the gospel means? Is it good news to you? Why?**
- **Where have you seen creation reflect God?**
- **How do you know God loves you?**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND MORE
FREE RESOURCES
TO HELP YOUR FAMILY HAVE
HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS!**



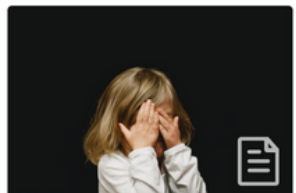
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**8 Tips for Talking to Your
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Starters Download**



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