

Biblical Parenting Essentials, Phase 4 | methods

The following are the notes AMBrewster created for a workshop called “How Much Should a Counselee Talk during a Session?” and have been updated for parenting.

I. The Three Most Important Things to Talk about in all Parenting Sessions

- A. Truth about God
- B. Truth about Ourselves
- C. Truth about Change

II. Gathering Fruit

- A. It's good for children to talk.
 - 1. It is vitally important for biblical parents to listen to their children so that they can learn as much as possible about them and the situation. Proverbs 20:5; James 1:19; Proverbs 18:17; Luke 14:28-32
 - 2. Therefore, we parents should utilize various forms of information gathering.
 - 3. We need to do everything we can to get our children to open up and share with us the specific details of their pain, their deepest secrets, and their most uncomfortable questions.
 - 4. For these reasons and more, it's exceptionally important to allow our children to talk and talk and talk during our initial sessions. The more they say, the more they reveal their thoughts, and the more fruit we can gather the better as we try to determine which truth in love they need the most right now.
 - 5. And regardless of how long we have been parenting our kids, this process remains important.
- B. But what about after you've gathered enough fruit to proceed to the topics of God, Ourselves, and Change?
- C. We've all either parented children (or will parent children in the future) who—after detailing their current struggle and questions—stop talking while others won't stop.
 - 1. With the silent types . . .
 - a) Some parents feel the need to fill the time because no one is talking.
 - b) Others try the tough love approach and sit quietly waiting for them to engage.
 - (1) Sometimes this approach works, and the parent's patience wins out.
 - (2) Other times hours are wasted.
 - 2. With the children who won't stop talking . . .
 - a) Most parents are content to let them talk the whole time.
 - b) Others do their best to break in, but—quite often—the children view it as an interruption that's counterproductive.
- D. So, after the fruit has been gathered, we need to ask the question, “Is there a biblical standard by which the parent can gauge a child's input and also with which they can help the child grow in their maturity?”
- E. Parents who have been taught that you need to talk, but not too much, might wonder how to judge the right balance.
- F. Other parents may give preference to listening while others only ever lecture.

III. How Children Talk

A. The Silent Children

- 1. They may not know the truth about God, themselves, or how they need to change.
 - a) This is understandable because—if they did—they wouldn't be in this situation anyway.
 - b) And it is also potentially their learned habit to remain silent in confrontation.

2. The Silent Ones may also simply not want to talk about the truth they know about God, themselves, and the process of change.
 - a) This may be a result of discomfort.
 - b) It is often a result of defiance.

B. The Dishonest Children

1. This child's issue is that they're believing lies and therefore communicating things that are not true about God, themselves, and their need for change.
2. It's also possible that they're purposefully lying.

C. The Curious Children

1. These kids recognize that they don't have the answers and ask questions in order to find the answers.
2. This is valuable talking and should be encouraged.

D. The Mature Children

1. These kids talk honestly about God, themselves, and change.
2. They know truth, understand truth, and are speaking wisely. They are self-parenting. This is the goal toward which we are working with all kids.
3. This should be encouraged as much as possible.

IV. How to Help Children Talk the Right Way

A. The Silent Children

1. If the child doesn't know the truth, we need to teach them how to ask the right questions of us and the Bible.
2. Whether they're ignorant of the truth or not, if they don't want to talk about it because they're *uncomfortable*, then there are a couple courses of action.
 - a) Ask if having another person in the conversation would help.
 - b) Ask if removing someone from the conversation would help.
 - c) Identify with the discomfort.
 - d) Explain the hope that can come from dealing with the issue in a Christ-honoring way.
 - e) Ask questions that don't seem related to the main issue, but that will help the child feel more comfortable and still reveal important information.
 - f) Use any and all of the available tactics to get them to interact well.
3. Whether they are ignorant of the truth or not, if they don't want to talk about it because they are *defiant*, then there are a couple courses of action.
 - a) We want to get them interacting, so it's extremely important to . . .
 - (1) Ask good questions.
 - (2) Tell good stories.
 - (3) Roll play.
 - (4) Speak the choices and ask them to pick the one with which they most agree.
 - b) If they are so rebellious that they absolutely refuse to engage with our attempts . . .
 - (1) Take that time to speak the truth in love.
 - (a) Sow the truth about God—speak well of Him.
 - (b) Sow the truth about us—include yourself in the examples identifying that this is not you versus them, but you and them both needing help.
 - (c) Sow the truth about the necessity for and the process of change—again, include yourself.
 - c) You need to be very careful about giving up on a child who refuses to participate.
 - (1) That may be exactly what they want.
 - (2) However, not removing a scorner could be detrimental to them, the family, and you.

- (3) If the child needs to mature spiritually but is refusing to engage, follow Christ's plan for reproof and reconciliation.
4. But what about "shy" people and others whose silence is a learned habit?
 - a) Though personality is a wondrously complicated mix of a person's actions, words, feelings, desires, and beliefs, one's personality is not inherently acceptable simply because it's their personality.
 - b) Maturity is—by definition—the changing of one's personality.
 - c) Don't allow yourself or your child to function off the lie that they don't need to engage and participate because they aren't "talkers." This kind of thinking is moving into the next category.
 5. Though we desire our Silent Children to become Curious and eventually Mature, sometimes it's good just to get them to be Dishonest.
 - a) In situations where someone refuses to engage, if you can get them to at least get their lips moving, be thankful for whatever comes out.
 - b) Though we should address deliberate deception, it's actually okay—for now—if their dishonesty merely exposes their own self-deception. At least they're participating, and you're learning a lot about them and their need.

B. The Dishonest Children

1. The issue with these kids is that they're believing lies
2. If this is a regular occurrence—meaning that they're not just Silent Children whose dishonesty may help us better understand them, and instead they are habitual self-deceivers and liars—we must not allow them to waste our precious parenting time on lies, hatred, and idolatry.
 - a) They need to be taught the expectations for their communication.
 - b) They need to be shown how what they're saying isn't true according to God's Word.
 - c) They need to submit to God's perspective on the issue.
3. When challenged in this way. . .
 - a) Some will shut down and refuse to talk. In those cases, use the appropriate tactics.
 - b) Some will ask questions. Answer them and encourage them to interact with the truth. Encourage them to compare and contrast the truth with that which they believe.
4. The key is that you don't want to sacrifice valuable, God-centered parenting listening to a barrage of lies. In these situations, the children should remain quiet as they listen to truth in love unless they are going to speak the truth in love themselves.

C. The Curious Children

1. These kids recognize that they don't have the answers.
2. This is a valuable kind of talking and should be encouraged.
3. However, the child shouldn't view this as an opportunity to wax eloquent all the time. Some people like to pontificate on their philosophical quandaries and instead of really asking a question, they use their question to focus on how deep and introspective they are for asking it.
4. Answer their question from the Scriptures and give them opportunities to show that they are understanding the answer by explaining it in their own words. As long as they are understanding the answers, move on to new questions. If there is still misunderstanding and ignorance, dig deeper. And finally . . .

D. The Mature Children

1. By their talk these children show that they know, understand, and are living wisely. They are self-parenting.
2. This is the goal toward which we are working with all our children.
3. This should be encouraged as much as possible.