known &loved

A Twelve Day Journey of Life Giving Conversations for Parents and Teens

Family relationships matter to God.

Overview & Instructions

This resource is designed to help parents and teens engage in meaningful and intentional conversations together. Review the details and plan below.

The Plan

One parent and one teenager will spend 15-30 minutes together sharing in 12 unique conversations. Each day you will read scripture together and ask each other a question or complete a statement.

Be Intentional

Taking time to have some consistent and meaningful conversations will pay off now and in the future. Resist the temptation to skip days or cut short a conversation that can be life giving for both parent and son/daughter. Promising to spend time with another family member sends a powerful message. Make every effort to have these conversations in close timeframe ranging from daily to at least once a week. If you have not scheduled out all the conversations we recommend scheduling the next one within a week so you have it on the calendar.

Be Present

This is not meant to be done over text or a phone call. Presence will make a difference in meaningful conversations. Your setting will also determine your focus and engagement during these moments

together. Do what works best for you but ensure you are giving this adequate time and attention. As you go through the conversations you will want to have space and time to be more still and focused. For example, while conversations 1-3 may be work on the go together driving down the road. Conversations 4-12 would likely work best sitting on a couch together or in face to face conversation.

Note: If there are multiple teenagers in the home, determine a random order (or birth order) to have one parent begin with one son/daughter at a time.

Be Focused

Agree that screens will not be present for this conversation and that you will protect 30 minutes of uninterrupted time together. Take the time to give meaningful responses to the questions and fill your time without cutting it short. Ask follow up questions for clarity when it is helpful to do so. Remember, the goal is understanding and connection.

Acknowledgments and Further Resources

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Concepts of this resource are adapted from the book 30 Days: Turning the Hearts of Parents and Teenagers Toward Each Other by Richard Ross and Gus Reyes. Used by permission for Carmel Baptist Church

The Five Love Languages of Teenagers by Gary Chapman. Nashville, LifeWay, 2003.

Hutchins, David. *Courageous Parenting: The Passionate Pursuit of Your Student's Heart* by David Hutchins. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2000.

The Blessing by Gary Smalley, New York: Pocket Books, 1986.

Shepherding Your Child's Heart by Ted Tripp. Shepherd Press, 1995.

INTRODUCTION

We all want to be known and we all want to be loved. God designed the family for both of these realities but often pressures from outside or even inside our home can cause families to act and feel as though to be known or loved are no longer possible. The goal of these twelve days of conversation is to engage in what God has placed right before us by His good design for our family.

Before beginning this journey together, there are a few up front commitments that need to be made.

1) We commit to having all conversations together.
2) We will do our absolute best to engage in the twelve consecutively, but if it is necessary to miss a day we will make it up and keep going.
3) We will both make time for these conversations and will create margin for at least 15-30 minutes together each day. We will have at least one of these conversations a week and complete in under twelve weeks.
4) We will be honest with each other. We will not simply go through the motions, giving short answers or saying "I don't know", but will give real thought to our responses while showing respect for one another.
5) If we both are followers of Christ, we will commit to praying for each other daily throughout our time together.

Signed (Parent) _____

Signed (Son or Daughter) _____

"And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children
and the hearts of children to their fathers..." Malachi 4:6

Day 1 - Memories

Our first day is going to be about memories. Our memories help tell the story of our lives and our relationship.

We will take a moment to reflect on some of the moments that are most meaningful to us.

Today the parent will read the scripture and the son/daughter will answer the questions first.

"Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them."

Psalm 111:1-2

Discussion

What has been, so far, one of the happiest days of your life?

What has been one of your favorite memories in our family?

What is one moment we have experienced together that will always mean a lot to you?

Imagine we are talking a decade from now. What is something that we hope to be able to say about our life together now and in the coming years?

Day 2 - Understanding

Today we want to better understand a part of each other's daily lives. As families, we can often see the best and worst moments in each other, but that does not mean that we are being understanding about the pressures and struggles others deal with any given day. The Bible speaks of how these things cause a groaning and longing for everything to be made right. Today the son/daughter will read the scripture and the parent will be the first to answer the question.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."
Romans 8:18-23

Discussion

What is the hardest part of your typical day and why?

What helps you through that particular challenge each day?

What do you wish others better understood about you or about something happening in your life?

Is there any way I can show better understanding in the challenging moments of your life?

Is there any way I can be praying for you this week?

Day 3 - Known

Author and counselor Gary Chapman writes how we all have a “love language”, which is a way we can most easily tell someone is showing love to us.

We can love others well when we know how it is best communicated to them. Today the son/daughter will read the scripture and the parent will be the first to answer the question.

The five kinds of ways someone receives love are:

1) Someone gives them a gift
2) Someone gives them a hug (physical touch)
3) Someone chooses to spend time with them
4) Someone says words of love and appreciation
5) Someone serves them by doing something for them

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”
1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Discussion

What would you say is your primary love language(s)? Can you explain what you mean by that?

We tend to show love to another by using our favorite love language. Do you see the challenge in that approach?

Do you think you knew my primary love language(s) or did you learn anything new?

One way I will try to be more intentional in showing love is...

Prayer

Give God thanks for His love and ask that you reflect it to others in your family.

Day 4 - Loved

We have all received something before that felt like it had strings attached. Any gift is going to be better given and received when it is done so freely and without conditions.

Today we will talk about unconditional love in our relationship and in our home. Today the son/daughter will read the scripture and the parent will answer the questions first.

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."
1 Corinthians 13:4-7

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8

Discussion

Parent reads and finishes the following:
I'm sure you can tell when I'm feeling disappointed, hurt, or even mad when you do something wrong. I guess that's pretty normal. But sometimes I wonder if you think my love for you changes depending on how good or bad you act.

For example, I wonder if you thought I lost love for you the time you . . .

Son/Daughter reads and finishes the following:
If I'm being honest, there are probably areas in my life that I think people care for me based on the things I do rather than who I am. Today's scripture reminds how God's love is constant and that makes me feel...

Son/Daughter ask parent:
Did you ever wonder about love seeming conditional or unconditional in your home growing up?

Parent ask son/daughter:
What difference does it make to know your parent loves you no matter what?

Prayer

Give God thanks for His unconditional love in your life and ask for God's help to reflect it to one another in your home.

Day 5 - Acceptance

Every parent has things he or she wants their kids to be good at as they grow up. For example, some parents really want their students to make the best grades. Others want their students to be popular or achieve athletically.

Parents, likewise can feel pressure to compare themselves to what other parents are doing and achieving. In other words, everyone in your family can struggle at times feeling like they measure up.

Let's have an honest conversation about the hopes we have. As with every day, speaking honestly and listening graciously will be important. Today the parent will read the scripture and the son/daughter will finish the statements first.

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."
Romans 15:5-7

Discussion

Son/Daughter read and finish the following:
If this were a perfect world, I think you would enjoy my being very good at...

One area I fear I can't measure up to you is...

Parent read and finish the following:
Parents can sometimes struggle with being enough for their families. We are people who have challenges like everyone else, one area in my life I wonder if you may struggle with accepting is...

Both parent and son/daughter finish the following:
Something I see different or want to be mindful of in our relationship now is...

Prayer

Take a moment and pray giving thanks for our acceptance in Christ and asking for grace to accept one another in our home.

Day 6 - Discipline

Today we will have an honest conversation about discipline in our home. Just the word may bring strong feelings and uneasiness for one or both of us. We both sin and that can often effect how we deal with rules and consequences in our homes. Often the best times to think through these conversations are when you are not in the heat of the moment. Today we want to talk about moments of disagreement that come in every family so that they can still end in a place of peace and unity.

For the Parent

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1

For the Son/Daughter

"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."
Hebrews 12:11

Discussion

Parent read and finish the following:

I have rules in our house and try my best to enforce them because I care about...

Carrying out consistent discipline in our home is important, but it isn't always easy. It would help me to carry out that part of my role if you...

Son/Daughter read and finish the following:

When I do wrong, some of the things you do in response help me change and some of the things you do don't help that much. If you want to see me change for the better, one of the best things you can do when I mess up is...

One thing I can appreciate about your rules or when you discipline me is...

Prayer

Give thanks to God for caring enough about us to discipline us as His children and ask for wisdom in how we reflect and receive discipline at home.

Day 7 - Wounds

Today we will talk about those challenging moments we have faced alone or together. Our wounds from painful moments can impact our lives for many years.

While we cannot change those moments for one another, we can live with understanding and compassion. Not only that, we can be voices that speak life and identity toward one another.

This will be a step in both honesty and vulnerability. Today the parent will read the scripture and the son/daughter will answer the questions first.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep."
Romans 12:15

Discussion

What has been one of the most painful days of your life so far - and what were you feeling that day?

Do you think that moment or season of life still has an effect on your life today? How so?

Was there anything about what I shared that surprised you or you didn't know?

Prayer

Have a brief moment of prayer thanking God for his faithfulness and care in our lives in moments of pain and suffering.

Day 8 - Forgiveness

Today we will talk about the hurt we all experience in our lives. Hurt occurs in every home in some way, but how we handle that hurt will better determine what kind of life we live.

We want to both be fully honest and be good listeners for this conversation to matter. Today the son/daughter will read the scripture and the parent will be the first to begin reading the discussion questions.

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."
Colossians 3:13

Discussion

Parent reads the following and elaborates if desired:
It would be so sad if you or I spent months or even years holding inside a hurt the other had caused. Our time together tonight may help ensure that doesn't happen. I want the opportunity to make right any hurt you may be carrying. I give you my word I'll not try to defend my actions or punish you for being open. Will you tell me of a time I've wounded or hurt you that's never been made right?

If needed, begin the process by asking forgiveness for something you believe did cause pain. Ex: "I'm guessing that my missing your performance hurt you. I want to know if you will forgive me?

Son/Daughter reads:
I, too, want the opportunity to make right any hurt you may be carrying. I give you my word I'll not try to defend my actions or attack you for being open. Will you tell me of a time I've wounded or hurt you that's never been made right?

Together ask:
Would we be willing to lay aside pride as we ask for and give forgiveness for the things we have shared today?

If you have taken a step in showing forgiveness or in commitment to practice it together, it is important that God is at the center of those moments. Being open and giving forgiveness won't come naturally, so we need God's help.

Prayer

Take a moment to ask for God's help in freely offering forgiveness and pursuing reconciliation with one another whenever needed.

Day 9 - Faith

All throughout Scripture, God ties the parent-child relationship as being important to passing on and growing in the faith. Many parents did not grow up with meaningful faith conversations or families that prayed together.

Similarly, many teenagers on this journey may feel it is awkward to begin these conversations at first, but most likely both of you would like to see faith play a larger role in daily life. Today the parent will read the scripture and the son/daughter will answer the questions first.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."
3 John 4

Discussion

How would your describe your relationship with God right now? In other words, where do you see Him, or want to see Him, at work in your life? *(both answer)*

Student ask Parent: Did faith matter much in your home growing up? How did you know?

Parent to Student: What place or importance do you think faith in Jesus will have when you have a family of your own one day? Why do you think that?

What does/would it look like to get the most out of worshipping together as a family each Sunday?

What does/would it look like to pray for one another or together as a family consistently?

Prayer

Take a moment to pray that Jesus will truly reign over your home, your relationship, and your daily life.

Day 10 - Rhythms

Today we will take an honest look at our pace of life and priorities of time.

Every family feels busy in certain seasons, but sometimes we allow our schedules to control us rather than taking control of them.

Our rhythm of life reflects our priorities and effects our health and our relationships. Today the son/daughter will read the scripture and you will take turns answering first on the questions beginning with the parent.

"All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established."
Proverbs 16:2-3

Discussion

What are some things you like about our family's rhythm or pace of life? What are some things you dislike or think we need to consider changing?

When you look at your life and rhythm, do you feel like you are too busy?

Do you feel like we are too busy as a family?

On a scale of 1-10, how are we doing when it comes to making spiritual growth a focus in our weekly rhythm? What is one thing that we could do that would raise that number?

Do you sometimes wish we had more time together? What is one thing we can do to create space for time together?

Prayer

Join together in prayer to commit any changes in direction to God. Ask for strength and wisdom to make the right choices in your life and with your family.

Day 11 - Words

Our words are powerful and no words carry weight like those from members of our family who know us best. The words we say matter. They can build others up or tear them down. Sometimes the challenge is not only saying the right words but leaving things unsaid or assuming others in our family know. At a person's funeral, there are often a number of kind words spoken about them, but many times we withhold that blessing when those we love are around us every day, which can lead to feelings of regret.

We want our words to reflect our hearts. Today's conversation provides an important opportunity for life giving words. The parent will read the scripture and the son/daughter will answer the questions first.

"Gracious words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body."
Proverbs 18:24

"Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."
Luke 6:45b

Discussion

(Ask Student) Words can no doubt be harmful, but what was/is one of the more encouraging things someone has said to you recently?

(Ask Parent) Was it common for your parent(s) to tell you that they loved you when you were growing up?

What are two or three encouraging words you would use to describe each other?
(Example: kind, thoughtful, etc.)

Activity

Each of these days have helped guide us to the words that matter, but we don't always say them. Even though we can recognize life is like a vapor (James 4:14), sometimes the most important words can be left unsaid. If the unthinkable happened and one of us is told of the others untimely passing, what words would you wish you had said to them? Look at them now and share what you would want them to know.

Prayer

Give God thanks for each moment you have together as father/mother and son/daughter. Ask God to help you to see each day as a gift with one another and to not take your moments for granted.

Day 12 - Dedication

As we finish our twelve days of intentional conversations, remember our goal is to be known and loved. As you reflect on the conversations and prayers you have had along the way, stop to think about what is next. In your relationship, you can go back to old habits or continue to grow together. For this conversation, the son/daughter will read the scripture and the parent will be the first to answer the question.

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:12-14

Discussion

Looking back, is there a particular day that was especially helpful or encouraging to you?

Finish the statement: One thing you said that I always will remember is . .

Are there any other things you want to remember from our time together?

Prayer

To finish this final day, there is not better way to move forward together than to pray for each other. We will begin with the parent praying for their son/daughter.

Step 1: The son/daughter sits in a chair and the parent walks behind behind them, places hands on their shoulders, and prays for them.

Suggested Prayer Points:

- Give thanks for their life
- Pray that they know and follow Jesus always
- Pray for wisdom in their decisions
- Pray for your continued relationship with them

Step 2: Now switch places with the parent sitting and the son/daughter placing hands on their shoulders and praying for them. You can use the same prayer points and add in your own words.

Thank you for your time and investment in these moments together.

We pray that these conversations continue as you walk in relationship with God and each other.