

169 01/20/03 Take time to ensure a safe relationship

Many years ago I read something that I found very interesting. It said that people say what is really important right before they part company. For instance, after a visit over coffee with a friend, the really deep sharing comes just as the friend is ready to leave. I began to notice that this observation was true almost always—in a long visit with family, in a short visit with a friend, in a counseling session or when a couple spends an evening on a date.

It would seem that it would be best to approach a subject early so that there would be time to discuss it fully. The reason that people wait is that the topic is sensitive and they need small talk to make the environment comfortable. They need to know that the other person will be receptive to what they have to say.

To be successful in the spiritual training of a child we must take the time to create a relationship that ensures safety when a child wants to talk about a sensitive issue. The only way to do that is to spend time together. That might seem obvious, but many hurried parents want the relationship without the time investment.

If a dad and son have an agreed-upon date for breakfast every other Saturday morning, they might talk about sports, cars and hobbies. If however, he wants to talk about the feelings that he is having toward the girl in his math class, the relationship is already in place to provide safety in that discussion. An unhurried, casual time together builds the relationship. Dad's ability to listen rather than lecture secures the relationship.

Once the son realizes that his shared confidence to his dad did not cause Dad to tease him or “go ballistic,” he will be open to hear more from his dad about girls, dating and sexuality. That will be the time that Dad can bring into the discussion the Biblical perspective.

For the person who feels inadequate bringing in Scripture, remember that topical Bibles will help you find the Scriptures that apply to the issue.

Relationship is the most important part of the spiritual training of children. Two different families can provide exactly the same information to their children. The child who respects, honors and enjoys the company of his parents will be the one likely to accept the training.

