



Family Matters



A Christ-center resource for families and teachers

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Helping Your Child to “C”

Discovering ways to impart critical skills and values in your child’s life and family setting.

Connections

You might say it started with letters and the postal service. The telegraph made it more immediate. The telephone brought it into our homes and workplaces. Now with the Internet, we have email, instant messaging, Twitter and, of course, Facebook. The advent of the mobile phone put all kinds of communication resources literally at our fingertips.

In this high-tech world, we have discovered many ways to enhance the connection between human beings using a multitude of resources. We may feel that we are now more effective at communication than previous generations. However, one thing holds true — we must pass along the value of interpersonal connections to the next generation.

Where do we start as parents? How can we impart this value to children who sometimes can’t yet speak and to others who are yet unaware of their social surroundings? It seems that a place to begin is with the idea of *settings*. We can set the tone for the people our children value by placing them in *settings* where they positively encounter the following:

Extended Family

Sometimes we don’t live near extended family, but it is vital that children make these family connections early and regularly. Grandparents will make themselves known to their grandchildren (it’s just what they do), but there is a wealth of connections from which children benefit as they get to know uncles and aunts, cousins and second cousins, and other relatives in the family tree.

Close Neighbors

For young children, their world is the people they see around them. Whether your neighbors are across the sidewalk, in an apartment complex or down a dirt road, it is important that you know them and that your children know them as well. Take time to get to know them personally,

share conversations with them and support each other in tasks and projects. Connect their children with your children for play dates. We can get so busy with other things of value that we miss the treasures that live next door.

Faith Community

The people connections that come from regularly attending church can last a lifetime. Seeing others on a week-to-week basis strengthens our support systems. The faith component that is central to the Christian church community gives a spiritual connection with our Lord Jesus Christ that binds us together for eternity.

Hometown

You can build an identity with your community even if you live in a nondescript suburb. Pointing out local landmarks and going to parks and special events in your area builds a connection with others and with a location that can give children strength of identity and positive memories.

So, let’s be intentional as parents to place our children in settings that will nurture and grow healthy connections. It will serve them well now and for years to come.



FAMILY LINKS: Activities for families to reinforce Bible story truths in the home.

Get a Bible, sit with the entire family and follow the outline below.

Opening: Open with a prayer said by a child.

Starting Question: Who are some people you really like? Why do you like them?

Bible Story: Read the following Scripture passages and discuss the related questions.

Luke 2:25–27 Who is making a connection in these verses? (*Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus and Simeon.*)

Luke 2:28–32 What did Simeon do when he saw Jesus? (*Simeon took him in his arms and sang a song!*) Why did he do this? (*He was happy to see the Savior that had been promised to the people of Israel.*)

Luke 2:33 What was the reaction of Mary and Joseph? (*They marveled at what was said about their child.*)

Luke 2:36–38 Who makes a connection with Jesus in these verses? (*Anna*) What does she do? (*Anna gives thanks to God for this special child who would be the redemption of Israel.*)

Summary Statement (*read by an adult*): Mary and Joseph followed the custom of the day and brought Jesus to the temple for a special ceremony. Once there, they made a special connection with a man named Simeon, who was blessed to see the Baby Jesus, and an old woman named Anna, who spoke highly about this baby and all He would do for the people of Israel. Other people saw these connections as well. God blesses us through other people and uses us to be a blessing to others too. May we always appreciate the many connections that God has provided!

Tips for helping your children make meaningful connections in their lives:

1. Take time to stop and speak with friends you see unexpectedly.
2. Enroll your children in various programs and activities where they will meet other children with similar interests.
3. Get to know the names of the other children in your child's class, on his or her teams and in the various activities in which your child participates.
4. Take time to introduce yourself to parents at the various functions your child attends. Spend time with others afterward, such as getting pizza or ice cream following an event.
5. Take vacations and trips to visit extended family members so that you can stay in touch with them.
6. Volunteer in programs at your child's school, and get to know not just the teacher but others members of the staff as well.
7. Explore new stores and shops in your community with your children, and model interest in supporting your local merchants.
8. Pay attention to the calendar of events in your church and community, and plan for your family to participate.
9. Host an open house or barbeque for your friends and neighbors, so your families can just spend time together.
10. Take time to remember and do something special for people on birthdays and other important occasions.

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