



# Family Matters

A Christ-center resource for families and teachers

## Helping Your Child to "C"

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

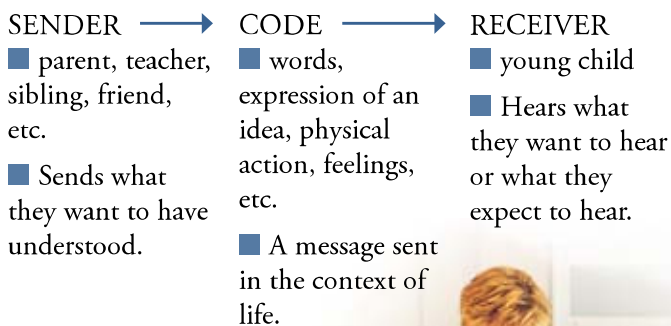
### Communication

*One of the finest expressions of respect and care that parents can show their child is not to give them praise or status, but be willing to listen to them and speak with them in an open and honest way.*

Most parents would agree with the above statement and also agree that it is more easily said than done! No getting around it — communication is complicated, no matter what the age. So, how do you communicate in an open and honest way with children — young children?

First, it's helpful to identify the three main ingredients and the process of communication: the **sender**, the **code** and the **receiver**.

The chart below may help us better understand how effective communication can take place.



This may look simple until you begin to think about all the types of **senders** in the communication process with young children. It starts with parents, but we can add teachers, caregivers, extended family members, the media, siblings, baby-sitters and even friends.

With young children, the **code** can be spoken words, non-verbal messages, physical interventions and written words, as they begin to learn how to read.

This chart describes only the initial communication of a thought from the sender to the receiver. Add in the initial response of the receiver, the follow-up responses, along with the pressure of time, mix of emotion, levels of fear and anxiety, and you can have a very complicated exchange just on the topic of what to eat for dinner!

Communication is a means by which we can share information as well as meaning, with our child and other family members. Clear communication can help our child make wise choices and carry out responsible actions. It is shared interaction, balanced with listening and affirming the other person, not always about giving orders, insisting on our ideas, or creating an atmosphere of demand.

Yes, communication is complicated, and it is work. But it's worth the work! Little is more satisfying for parents than to experience a deep level of understanding with their child on matters of importance in their lives.



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

*Sit down as a family, make sure you have a Bible, and follow the outline below.*

**Communication with God:** Have someone open with prayer.

**Misunderstandings:** Have family members share a time when they felt they were misunderstood, when miscommunication took place recently.

**Understanding God's Word:** Read the story of Moses in Exodus 3, and discuss the following the questions.

Read Exodus 3:1–4

1. What was Moses doing? (Looking after sheep.)
2. What suddenly happened (An angel of God appeared to Moses.)
3. What did Moses do? (He went over to see what was happening.)

Read Exodus 3:7–8a

1. What did the Lord say? (I've seen the misery of my people and heard their cry for help.)

2. What is God's plan? (To take them to a land filled with milk and honey.)

Read Exodus 3:10–11

1. What is God asking of Moses? (To go and bring his people out of Egypt.)
2. How does Moses react? (He doesn't think he is the one to do this job.)
3. What does God say to Moses? ("I will be with you.")

**Summary Question:** What does this story have to say to us about the topic of talking and communicating with each other?

*Summary statement read by a parent or older child.*

God wants us to hear His voice and to do what He asks. He will never ask us to do something we cannot do or something that is wrong. God wants us to follow His voice and promises to be with us wherever He leads us. He always is there for us to talk to and wants to hear from us in prayer. God wants us to listen and talk to each other in loving ways, just as He speaks to us.

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

*Here are 10 tips for parents to develop effective communication within their families.*

1. Establish a time and place for speaking to your children. (Regular talk times.)
2. If it's important, say it twice — but nice.
3. Listen in active ways, paying close attention to the response of your child.
4. Note the tone in which you speak, for it sends a message as well as your words.
5. Respond quickly regarding situations with young children; speak with them right away about things that happen.
6. Don't go into details with young children — get to the point quickly.
7. Face good and bad situations with equal emotion.
8. Express anger in constructive ways.
9. If at first you don't communicate, try, try again.
10. Maintain regular communication with each other as parents and with God the Father.

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