

How to Talk to Your Kids About the Pandemic

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Reading Time: 5 minutes

Children, including teenagers, magnify and exaggerate just about everything in life. Things that are small, they make big in their head. Children and teens don't have the brain development to categorize and evaluate reality yet. So, their reality is usually outrageous and overliteral. Now think with me about our children internalizing this 24-hour, every-changing news about COVID-19 that is sweeping our world. This sort of fast-moving change can easily produce fear, anxiety, and difficult questions for our children.

A few parents have shared statements with me that their children have made this past week:

- One parent said, "I have a child who keeps asking me, 'If God knows everything, He knows who will get infected and I can't change that so why are we even trying?'"
- One little 6-year-old overheard her parents talking about the virus and she said, "You mean we can't go to church anymore!?" And then later she simply asked, "What if WE

get the coronavirus?”

- One 7-year-old girl said, “Mommy, why does the mean ole devil keep doing such bad things? Is it because God fired him?” (I must admit this one made me laugh a little.)
- One 9-year-old, after finding out her grandmother could not come to her house to visit due to being quarantined, responded while crying, “I hate the corovirus! I hate that I can’t see my family!”

There are lots of feelings inside of a child that they don’t even know how to express, which is why their moods and behaviors will change during difficult times like we are having. Difficult times are good for us so long as we focus on growing in our faith and continuing to train our children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6). So, I would like to provide you with some thoughts that we have tried to implement in our family to help us be strong and courageous during unsure and unsteady times:

1. Only tell them what they need to know when they need to know it.

In other words, we don’t lie to our children (ever), but we also did not always give them unnecessary details (or use scary terms like ‘pandemic’). If your children are little and they inquire (no need to randomly bring up the situation if they are not asking), phrases like, “Some people are getting sick and the leaders of our country are asking us to stay together as a family and keep our hands clean. God is taking good care of us!” is sufficient. If they keep asking, your answers can be short, but positive statements while always re-affirming that God is in control and taking good care of us. If they are teenagers, take this time to talk about the reality of the situation, what God is doing in all of this and then have a dialogue about things we can do to let our lights shine to others in our church and community.

2. Guard your conversations, reactions and the news.

As you well know, your children feed off of your statements and reactions. When you panic, they panic. This is going on in their heads much more than you think! Somehow children hear everything. Please, be intentional about the stuff you are letting into your home and the conversations you are having. They need to overhear you speaking and praying your faith, not your doubts and fears. Talk to your spouse, elder, or preacher in private about your doubts, but make your home a place where God is present and active.

3. Talk a lot about the FACTS of God.

The facts (truths) of God are His characteristics. Remind everyone in your home daily that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, and at work in our lives. Do Bible studies and devotionals on the fact that God is in total control - the Old Testament is valuable during these times. His will is being done in our lives, even during times of uncertainty.

Have the family recite specific Scripture like:

- “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).
- “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” (Psalm 23:1)
- “But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hand.” (Psalm 31:14, 15a)

4. Talk a lot about the ACTS of God.

Remember how He saved Daniel’s good friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah from the fire? Remember how He took care of Daniel while in a lion’s den? Remember how God brought His people across the Red Sea while they were running from the Egyptians? Remember how God saved the prophet, Jonah, from the great fish? Remember how Jesus took care of His disciples in the boat when the storm was raging? Remember how Jesus healed the man named Legion who was demon-possessed and out of his mind? Remember how God allowed Jesus to be crucified for us and He raised Him from the dead? Remember how God answered our prayers when.... (talk about things in your own past). Your family needs to look back at the way God has always been faithful to His people. He has a track record with all of us! Praise God!

5. Sing and pray a lot.

Singing and praying is putting words to your faith! Sing and pray when someone is sad. Sing and pray when someone is happy. These two acts are found in James 5:13-16 “Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” This is what Paul and Silas were doing in the middle of the night in the city of

Philippi while sitting in a cold, dark prison cell (Acts 16:25). Something amazing happens when we do these two things in the middle of a crisis! We are encouraged, our minds are renewed, and things become clearer through singing praises and talking to our Heavenly Father.

6. Do things to keep everyone engaged in something fun or productive.

Read a good book out loud to the family. Do puzzles. Play board games. Do a craft. Build something in the garage. Go for walks or hikes. Do a scavenger hunt. Go fishing or camping. Create a garden. Work together in the yard. Work on the car together. Take on a much-needed project. Paint a bedroom. Clean out closets together and take toys and clothes to the local charity. There are lots of things to do together to build memories and have conversions. Sitting around watching TV or playing on a device can prove to be hurtful in the long run.

Conclusion

I will leave the reader with this. Do not wish this time away. Embrace it and let God do His good work in your family. Life is about learning to trust and obey God during the difficult, uncertain times. Today is one of those times. Rejoice in it... not in the crisis itself, but in the God who is in control during the crisis. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).