

CHILL OUT:

L - Listen to Your Kids

Philippians 2:4

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

As we seek to tune the world out and tune in to God, we begin to experience the peace He promises. We don't have to listen to the shouts of the culture or be distracted by its values. We can seek to listen to God's voice, His purposes and promises. God wants our attention, our complete attention. When we spend time with Him worshiping, praying, and reading His word, His voice seems clear, His confidence is ours.

When we don't listen, when we don't practice Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God,” then His voice seems distant and maybe even silent. God desires a relationship with us such that He is able to use other means to communicate to us. He may reveal His glory through His creation, through some personal provision, or through a friend. As a mother, I have experienced God's pursuit of my heart's attention through my children.

When they were younger, I did most of the talking to my children. I spoke and I expected them to listen and do what I said. I especially liked that part. When they didn't pay attention or listen, I would get discouraged because I had something that I wanted to communicate to them that they couldn't hear unless they listened.

As the children have grown up, it has become necessary for me to invite them into the discussion, to consider them. This is part of the maturing process for both of us. Parents need not be dictators. Parents should be the authorities, and there should be lots of conversations about life with its various choices and decisions.

God sovereignly knits our families together. The perfect Father places us with just the right parents, the right siblings, the right extended family. And it's not in an effort to drive us crazy, but rather to drive us toward Him. It's all about His molding us into the image of His Son Jesus.

This means we have to start listening to Him and to each other. Not simply nod our heads, but actually engage in the exchange of ideas and thoughts and insights. It's through these talks, these debates, that we learn more about each other. As parents, these are opportunities wherein we can assess our child's spiritual growth and maturity.

These conversations, when we dare to have them, when we dare to ask the hard questions, when we dare to listen and not panic, these conversations are connection points and teaching moments. When we dare to listen, really listen, we are being the mothers that our children need for us to be. They need us to care. They need us to pray. They need us to listen. They need to be heard. If we don't listen to them, they will find someone who will. Let's be the one who looks them in the eyes and listens.

What about listening is hard for me? Looking in the eyes? Stopping what I'm doing? Engaging? Listening and not talking? Knowing a weakness is the first step toward improving on it. Pray that the Lord will help you learn and practice better listening.

What are my strengths and weaknesses?

What are strengths and weakness of each of my children? Is there any overlap with my personal list?

Identify your love language, your husband's, and your children's from the options below. (The Five Love Languages, Dr Gary Chapman)

1. Words of affirmation
2. Acts of Service
3. Receiving Gifts
4. Spending Quality Time
5. Physical Touch

It is easy to get upset with others when they do not meet our needs. We can forget that they have needs too. How can you meet the needs of another family member this week? Could you do it anonymously?

Plan to spend some time with each of your children. Here are some things to consider as you plan:

Date:

Time:

Where:

Duration:

Questions/Topics to discuss:

Here are some possible questions/topics:

Who is God?

How has He shown Himself to be real?

Which Bible character do you like best?

What is your favorite Bible verse?

What would you like to do when you grow up?

How do you think that God has blessed you?

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses?

Where do you think you are doing well?

Where would you like to improve?

What could I (Mom) do better?

What are some dreams/interests/hopes/ideas of each your children? Which ones cause you to pause? Why?

Read the whole passage in Philippians 2:1-18. What is the theme? Who is to be our example? How did He humble Himself?

Read John 13:1-20. How was washing their feet a consideration of their need? What did it represent? Did Jesus wash all of the disciples' feet? Who objected to his feet being washed? Why? How did Jesus respond to his concern?

Why is humility and service so challenging? What aspect of Christ's example inspires you? What was His focus when He was serving the disciples?

We have the opportunity to serve our families. Look to their needs before your own. Our principle need is to honor and glorify our heavenly Father. When we serve others with pure hearts, when we submit our will to His, others' needs are met and we are a good reflection of His love. May we choose the joy of the Lord to be our strength as we serve our families.