



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.

Calling

Will Rogers once said, “If you want to be successful, it’s just this simple: know what you are doing, love what you are doing and believe in what you are doing. It’s just that simple.”

If only it was as simple for parents!

As parents, we expend a lot of energy in guiding our children to find something they love, leading them in a positive direction and helping them to discover their dreams. This is the big picture of what parenting is all about, although we don’t always see it as the big picture because of so many distractions.

This big picture also is termed our “calling.” It is about helping children get a sense of the future. It is about helping them understand their eternal purpose as guided by God. It is more than just helping our kids find out what they want to do when they grow up. It is helping them listen to God’s voice! It is helping children discover a positive response to what they hear, and it is assisting them to realize that they can pursue their passion in real and tangible ways. It is the dream of all parents to help their children find their calling in life.

Contemporary culture would have us believe that a sense of calling is all about a position of prominence or earning potential. Current trends would say, “Kids need to be on track for their future at an early age — so that opportunities are not missed.” This creates a lot of pressure to make decisions prematurely and not really absorb all the possibilities.

We can help our children discover their sense of calling by supporting them in these key areas:

■ **Personal Interests and Strengths:** This first area tells us to pay attention to what our children like and the things they are interested in doing. (Yes, it’s that

simple.) We can encourage and support them as we see their interests surface. God made us all with free will, which allows us to make personal choices and enjoy the unique preferences we have in this life. Parental observation skills need to be honed and tuned in to what the child prefers so that we can reasonably support such interests.

■ **Purposeful Activities and Interactions:** The next step is to support a variety of ways to pursue the child’s interests through meaningful, structured activities. (Not very hard.) In whatever area the child shows interest, there likely are classes, groups and programs that encourage continued growth and skill development beyond what they would do on their own at home. Seek special teachers or find mentors to help lead and guide children in these various pursuits.

■ **Patience, Patience, Patience:** The journey to discover meaningful direction can take a long time. It can involve trial and error for years and years. It requires much prayer on the part of parents, as they support their child’s journey. To short-circuit the testing process or to demand a certain outcome contributes to anxiety and uncertainty. While it may seem never-ending to parents, there is no set timetable for discovering one’s calling.

Parents want their children to grow up confident in what they want to do, to enjoy what they are doing and to know that what they are doing is of value for them and in the lives of others.

This is our calling as parents — to guide our kids as they discover their calling.

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

Gather the family together for a time of Bible study and discussion using the outline below.

Opening Prayer: Spoken by a family member.

Beginning Questions: What are some things you like doing? What are other jobs that you might like?

Bible Reading: Jer. 1:4–10

1. When did God know Jeremiah? (Before he was even born.)
2. What did God have in mind for Jeremiah? (He was to be a prophet.)
3. What do you think God may have in mind for you to do during your life? (Answers will vary.)

4. How did Jeremiah respond to God's calling? (He didn't want to do it. He said he didn't know how to speak and that he was too young.)
5. How did God respond? (He told Jeremiah that he must go and do what God commands.)
6. What is God's promise to Jeremiah? (That He will be with him and that he should not be afraid.)

Closing Echo Prayer: Spoken a phrase at a time by a parent, then repeated by the other family members.

Dear God,
Thank You for such a great world!
Help us to find ways to serve others.
Help us to find ways to serve You.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tips for Parents in Helping Children Grow in Competency:

1. Build a foundation of communication with your child, talking often about the possibilities for his or her future.
2. Pray about your child's future and ask for a willingness to listen to the Word of God for his or her life.
3. Create multiple opportunities for your child to explore and experience activities in the arts, sports, recreation, the sciences and service.
4. Read the biblical accounts of those who followed God's calling of service. Find age-appropriate stories about Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Esther, Samuel, Ruth, Paul and others.
5. Find positive examples of people within your family or in your community who live out their calling of faith in a variety of ways. Allow them to mentor and influence your child as often as possible.
6. Avoid "pigeon-holing" your child into one particular area of interest or activity at an early age.
7. Support your child when she wants to go in a new or different direction — as long as it's healthy and reasonable.
8. Read good books and watch movies of how people have grown in a variety of ways to find a sense of purpose and calling.
9. Remind yourself often that the greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.
10. Talk about not only what your child wants to *do* when he grows up, but also about the kind of person he wants to *be*.

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