

Communicating with Grace: Shepherding the Heart through Words

Main Passage: Matthew 7:1–5; 18:23–35

Additional Sources: Shepherding a Child's Heart (Ch. 8), Instructing a Child's Heart (Ch. 14), Parenting with Words of Grace (Ch. 1–2)

Big Idea

God calls parents to communicate with their children as ambassadors of His grace — with gentleness, restraint, and wisdom that aim for heart restoration, not mere behavior control.

1. The Power of Words

"What do your daily conversations with your children reveal about what you believe matters most?"

"God's Word must inform not only our goals, but also our methods." — Tedd Tripp, SCH

- The tone, timing, and truth of your words reveal the theology of your heart.
- If control is your goal, your words will sound demanding.
- If heart shepherding is your goal, your words will sound patient and redemptive.

"Harsh words, yelling, and scolding are part and parcel of parenting approaches that focus on behavior management." — ICH

2. Biblical Foundation: Matthew 7:1–5; 18:23–35

Before we think about how we speak to our children, let's see how Jesus speaks about addressing sin and failure.

Observation Questions:

- How does Jesus describe the right posture for correction?
- How did the king respond to the servant's debt?
- What contrast do you see between received mercy and offered mercy?

The parent who knows his own need for grace will speak in ways that make grace believable to their children.

3. Shepherding Communication (Shepherding a Child's Heart)

"You should seek to talk with your children. Communication is not monologue. It is dialogue."
— SCH

- Communication is not about control; it's about connection and shepherding.
- The finest art of communication is not learning to express your thoughts but to draw out the thoughts of another (Prov. 20:5).
- Ask questions that reveal motives: 'What were you hoping for? What made that hard? What would trusting God look like?'

"When you delight in understanding your children, you are saying, 'I love you enough to care what you think.'" — ICH

Understanding your child's heart is the first act of love. Draw out, don't drive over.

4. Wise and Pleasant Speech (Instructing a Child's Heart)

"Speaking with restraint, employing pleasant words, and delighting to understand are not techniques. They reflect wisdom found in the fear of the Lord." — ICH

- 'A man of knowledge uses words with restraint' (Prov. 17:27).
- 'Pleasant words promote instruction.' (Prov. 16:21)
- Harsh, loud, demanding words make instruction hard to receive (ICH, 172–173).

5. Words of Grace (Parenting with Words of Grace)

"God's words give you reason to trust Him. He doesn't crush, exploit, or push away. His words foster greater relationship." — PWG

Example:

Natural Response: 'You lied again? How many times do I have to tell you to stop lying?'

Grace-Filled Response: 'It sounds like you were afraid to tell the truth. What made that hard? How can we trust God with that fear?'

Reflection & Discussion

- When my child sins, do I pause to examine my heart before correcting them?
- Do my words reflect the mercy I've received from God?
- How does my tone teach my children what God is like?
- What would it look like to correct with gentleness rather than control?

Key Takeaway

Gospel communication aims to shepherd hearts, not control behavior. Our tone and words reveal what we worship — and can make grace believable at home.

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt..." — Colossians 4:6