

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHILD



Instilling a Sense of Identity

It's vital for every Dad and every Mom to teach their kids who they are and why they are on the planet.

A parent has the important job of affirming the identity of the child God has given them. A strong, positive identity comes from understanding and experiencing the truth about ourselves. Therefore, children need a parent to create experiences that affirm their true identity.

An important part of shaping your child's identity involves helping them to discover that they are more than the child of their parents. As parents we have the awesome responsibility — and privilege — of walking with them as they discover who they are created to be and how they impact the world around them.

Here are three practical ways to affirm the God-given identity in your children:

1 Enter their world. Take out a piece of paper and list each child's name; next to each name list the child's hobbies or areas of interest.

Now take out your calendar and schedule play time with your children. Enter their world. Is your son interested in soccer, cars, baseball cards, video games? Then find a place and a time when the two of you can play together. Let him teach you, if your skill level or knowledge isn't up to par. Is your daughter interested in Girl Scouts, drill team, basketball, or art? Then enjoy these events together. Go with her to sell cookies, shoot baskets at the gym, or make chalk drawings on the sidewalk.

Does your child sense your interest in what's important to her? Does she have memories of times when you have played together? Or does she only have memories of doing things the *adults* thought were fun? Is the *only* time spent together in discipline, chores, or housework?

2 Dream together. Carve out a few minutes with each child during the next few weeks and dream with him/her.

What do they dream about? Becoming a professional baseball player? Going to Disneyland? Finding a hidden treasure? Take off your adult "hat" and adult thinking and just dream with her. Listen carefully and rediscover the joy of dreaming. Pretend with your child. You may discover things you never knew. What do their dreams communicate? Can you tell what's important to them? What dreams make them happy? Does anything make them afraid?

3 Provide security. Make it a priority to provide security to each of your children.

A child feels secure when he knows he belongs. Let your child know that they are an important part of your family. Here are some practical ideas:

- Make a special place for family photos and display individual as well as family snapshots.
- Take your child with you to the office one afternoon and show him the family mementos on your desk.
- Take turns preparing favorite meals — every family member gets to choose the dinner menu for a particular night.
- Encourage all family members to attend events that are important to individuals. It communicates a message of security when all siblings attend the grade schooler's choir performance — not just the parents.