

Communication with our Children

Dear Susan,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You stated that your eleven-year-old daughter has a boy friend that gave her candy and a stuffed animal for Valentine's Day. You wanted to know how you could tell her of your disapproval without cutting off communication with her in the future. You also said that there has been awkwardness when you have discussed her boy friend or sex with her in the past. She has said that she knows and does not want to discuss it.

A parent's job has never been an easy one and the times in which we live exacerbate an already difficult task. But, daunting as it may be, we are responsible for all aspects of our children's training and welfare. The Bible gives us some good advice. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1-4)

In these scriptures God is admonishing us as parents to set rules for our children that are reasonable and moral. A parent should explain the reason that the rules are important for the child's well being. A child needs to feel that the parent cares enough to supervise his comings and goings. Your daughter is an eleven year-old child who needs boundaries. She is just entering puberty and is still years away from high school. She will have plenty of time to have boy friends when she is older and has internalized the moral responsibility needed when dating. To prepare her for that time, you need to talk with her about what she can and cannot do and why. Explain to her that she is not mature enough to date, even though she thinks she is. Also tell her that she cannot date until she has permission from you, and that will be when she is older. Once you have done this, you need to have consequences for violation of your rules. Even though she may complain, she will respect you. At her young age, you are responsible for your daughter's actions, not her.

Although disciplining a child is hard on both the parent and the child, it is necessary and worthwhile. Your child will thank you later. As the Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 12:7-9 and 11, "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

We hope we have helped you. Please write us again with further comments or questions.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio