7 Tips for Building Better Relationships with Your Kids
By Jim Burns, Ph.D.

Our kids are looking for a relationship with the Lord – something they can count on. It's up to us as parents to show our kids what that relationship with God really looks like. The best way we can do this is to model a healthy, accepting, God-honoring relationship between them and us. Recently, I sat down with Josh McDowell, to talk about his recent book, *Beyond Belief to Convictions*, and he shared seven principles for helping parents do just that – and I just can't agree more with these principles.

Let me share with you these 7 Tips for Building Better Relationships with Your Kids.

1. Affirmation
When we affirm our kids' emotions, it gives them a sense of authenticity. See Romans 12:15.Sharing their joys as well as their sorrows; their successes and their failures, conveys the message that you really care and are doing your best to understand!

2. Acceptance
Your unconditional acceptance of your child provides them with a strong sense of security. See Romans 15:7. Without realizing it, too many parents send the message that acceptance is based on performance (like when we praise our kids when they get A's in school and withhold praise(or even criticize) when they get B's or C's). Unfortunately, many of our own parents used shame-based parenting when we were growing up – and so we use the same kind of parenting style with our kids. If you use shame-based parenting with your kids, I want to challenge you with the truth – it simply doesn't work!

3. Appreciation
When parents express appreciation to their kids, they communicate that their kids are significant. See Romans 1:8 – where the Apostle Paul essentially says, "I appreciate you." Rather than taking your kids and their contributions on behalf of your family for granted, look for times to express authentic appreciation. For some, it may take work, but catching your kids in the act of doing something good – and recognizing them for it will help to build an importance sense of self-worth in their lives.

4. Availability
When parents are available to their own children, they gain a sense that they are important. Your presence in their lives is one of the most significant ways that you can communicate your love and care. I call it the "Power of Being There"! Remember, kids spell love, T-I-M-E.

5. Affection
When parents give their kids affection, it sends them the message that they are lovable. Everyone wants to feel that they are lovable! Your kids are no different. They need to know they are loved both by your words, through your actions and through appropriate touch! Dads – particularly – never underestimate the power of a well-timed hug! Bless your kids with the gift of affection!

6. Approach Their World
When parents approach their kids' world, it tells them that what is important to them is also important to you. Sometimes, this means moving out of your own comfort zones – in order to enter their world. You may not be thrilled by watching your kids participate in a certain sport or activity. But, remember that 1 Corinthians 12 says that "love does not seek it's own." When you show up at your kids' events, it sends the all-important message that they really matter!

7. Accountability
Parents must set reasonable limits and boundaries for their kids. See the discussion about the value of discipline in Hebrews 12. Consistent discipline by parents teaches kids the skills of responsibility and self-control that they need to live a successful adult life. In fact, I don't believe that parents can be sure they are sending the message that their kids are loved without providing consistent discipline.

To order Josh McDowell's book, Beyond Belief to Convictions, click here.