

# *Conversation with Character*

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A home-based language arts curriculum

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# Conversation with Character

## Introduction

**Conversation is becoming a lost art** in today's culture. Families sit side-by-side watching television, teenagers can do little more than "grunt" and spouses quickly share pertinent information before falling off to an exhausted sleep. Yet relationships are, most would agree, what life is all about. And conversation is the primary tool we are given to develop those relationships past the level of business partnerships, past superficial banalities and into the deep and beautiful sharing of lives for which we long.

**Our goal as Christian parents** is to help our children learn to relate to people as Jesus did. We want them to have the mind of Christ and see people as He does. We want them to have his heart for the unlovely, the socially inept, and the lonely, as well as for friends and family. Studying the scriptures together helps. See how Jesus spoke to lepers, to sinners, and to His Father.

**The Golden Rule** sums up the type of conversation we desire for our families. Listen the way you want to be listened to. Talk about others and to others the way you want them to talk about/to you. Consider ways to bless your conversational partner, rather than focusing solely on your own interests.

As with most things, exercising good conversation skills comes down to a matter of the heart. It is our hope that this book will help you work with your child to weed out bad habits that hinder loving communication and to cultivate those good habits that make it easier for excellent fruit to grow.

## Meet Character



Hello! My name is "Character."

*Sweet Home Press* recruited me to encourage you and your children toward conversation with good character. We will be seeing each other along the way.

It is my hope, and certainly the hopes and prayers of everyone at *Sweet Home Press*, that your children will be like shining stars that "appear as lights in the world." (Philippians 2: 15)

## Conversation with Character



### **Ideal conversation**

should be a matter of equal give and take, but too often it is all "take."

### **A man will be satisfied**

with good by the fruit of his words...  
—Proverbs 12:14

**Words are powerful.** They can tear down or build up. They can destroy relationships or deepen them. Wisely chosen words can bring us satisfaction while foolish ones can bring years of regret. How important it is, then, for us as parents to train our children in their proper use! May the Lord richly bless your efforts as you help your children learn and practice the art of effective communication.

## How to Use this Book

**This book supplies organized, bite-sized concepts, easily taught.** Simply reading the lesson to children will not, however, change their communication habits. Like playing an instrument or cooking, knowledge comes first, but PRACTICE makes perfect! That is why we include one or more activities with each lesson.

**Adapt the lessons to your teaching style** and to the learning style of your children. Our suggestions, however, are:

- Tackle no more than one lesson per week. Take two weeks on lessons needing extra attention in your home.
- Practice the current week's skill at the dinner table and in other family discussions.
- Play **brief** rounds of the "Ahh" and "Uh-oh" game. (see right column). Do it with humor and grace. Keep the focus on love. In the car on the way to visit someone, review the skills being taught and discuss how they might be best applied in the upcoming visit.
- Each lesson includes a Bible verse. Have your children memorize the verse to reinforce the lesson.

Note: To add to your child's reservoir of wisdom from which conversation is enriched, use **Quotes with Character**, also available from Sweet Home Press.

- Before a family visit, review skills taught in the lessons and discuss how they might be



applied in the upcoming situation.

Notes added for your information, only, are preceded with "Parents:" and often appear in [brackets].

## A Few Supplies

You will find the following supplies helpful for the activities in some lessons:

- A ball
- Drawing paper
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Large safety pins—one for each family member
- Notebook or section of notebook

All other supplies needed are provided in the back of the book in the **Supplemental Materials** section.

### Watch It, Now!

The flock of one American church culture gives the preacher instant, ongoing sermon feedback with frequent interjections like "Amen," "Preach it," and "Watch it, now!"

When your family practices good conversation, try giving feedback. You might use a simple "Ahh," when someone demonstrates good conversation skills and "Uh-oh," when the opposite is true. Or select your own signals.

You will be amazed what good listeners children become, and how quickly lessons are put into practice.

Making a good conversationalist is like making honey. It takes patience, perseverance and a plan.



...and the results are sweet.







# 14 Be Loyal

What could be more loyal than a dog? Dogs removed from home have been known to walk hundreds of miles to get back to where they feel they belong. A dog well trained and cared for will do nearly anything for its owner. And never in recorded history has a dog ever told anyone about its owner's shortcomings.

This lesson encourages loyalty in conversation.

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**Proverbs 11:29**

He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.

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## Be Loyal to Friends and Family

Never betray a confidence or tell anything that could embarrass another.

Think of one thing that your family knows about you that you would not want repeated to others. There are probably many things you don't want repeated outside your own family or circle of close friends.

Now think of how you would feel if everyone knew about that one thing. That is exactly how your brother or sister or parent or friend might feel if you told something personal and private about them.

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**Better Left Unsaid**

One of the very best rules of conversation is to never say anything which any of the company wish had been left unsaid.

- Jonathan Swift

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Do not contradict a parent or older sibling while in conversation with a third person about some factual detail. For example, your sister might be telling a visitor about the six giraffes she saw at the zoo. There is no reason for you to interrupt her just to point out that it was only five giraffes.

If it is something important, ask your parent or sibling later about a possible error—



maybe you are wrong. In any case, don't embarrass a family member or friend. Don't make them look bad in front of others. Instead, protect them and show them respect in conversation with others.

Consider, too, what topics you select or steer the conversation toward. Some topics are sure to lead to embarrassment or awkwardness for another person. Think before you talk.

## Suggested Activity

**1.** [Parent: Read a book that illustrates loyalty or discuss that character quality as illustrated in a book you have already read. A few of the many possibilities follow:]

- Beauty and the Beast
- Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel
- The Whipping Boy
- Frog and Toad are Friends
- Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
- The Giving Tree
- The Velveteen Rabbit
- The Puppy Who Wanted a Boy
- The Biggest Bear
- The Lion, the Witch and The Wardrobe

**2.** *Our daughters say some people ask them questions that threaten to "sabotage" loyalty to family. How does a child answer such questions?*

See **Supplemental Materials S-14** for a list of awkward questions and possible answers.

## A Matter of Attitude

[Parent: Read and discuss this section if conversation in your house is hindered by bad attitudes.]

Once we accept that disloyalty is wrong and see how it influences our conversation, it should not take long to develop habits of loyalty—unless, of course, there is another problem that first needs correction. That problem would be *attitude*.

If you have a bad attitude about family or friends, or even if you have a bad attitude about this lesson or the person teaching the lesson, you may find yourself being disloyal even when you know not to.

The best advice is change your attitude. The next best advice is commit to be loyal even when you don't feel like it. Either way, you will be better off and those around you will appreciate your effort.

If you struggle with a bad attitude, humbly confess it to your parent(s). Ask God for help.