

A Culture-Shaping Moment: How To Talk To Your Kids About the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

It seems like life has been turned upside down for us all. We are facing sudden changes to our routines, constant information from the media, mandated social distancing, and hand washing – lots of hand washing. We are well aware of the steps necessary to prevent the spread of this virus. But as a parent, how do we talk to our kids? How do we help them cope with the fear that might result as a response to the panic they are witnessing around them?

Full disclosure, I'm not a child psychologist. Just a pastor and father who is dealing with the current situation as you are. Here are a few things that I find helpful....

1. **Communicate:** Talk to your kids about what they saw on TV or maybe heard at school. They need you to help them process. Don't over communicate or give them unnecessary information. Simply stick to the questions and comments that they bring up. Also, be mindful of your kids' listening ears as you talk with other adults and listen to the news yourself.
2. **Stay Calm:** Your kids copy you, for better or for worse. Model for them what it looks like to have peace in a very anxious culture. This is a walk the talk moment. Show your kids that they can be calm because you are calm. Use this as an opportunity to discuss where this peace comes from...the power of the Holy Spirit. (Philippians 4:6-7)
3. **Be Careful:** This is a great moment to discuss the importance of care, caution, and wisdom. We are not called to lead reckless lives. God has given us a spirit of discernment. We need to know the facts, listen to those that have been placed as authorities over us, and have a plan. Leading responsible lives is a great virtue for kids and parents.
4. **Be Hopeful:** This an incredible time to be a Christian. While the world is gripped by fear, we are driven by faith. We need to remind our kids that our hope is based on the truth that God is always in control. God is sovereign over everything, even the coronavirus. Take them to passages in the Bible, like Romans 8, that speak to the reality that God is for us and not against us. Challenge them to share Bible stories that they already know in which God's perfect plan is revealed in the midst of man's chaos, or how things "worked out" in ways we never could have imagined (e.g., baby Moses, Joseph and his brothers, David and Goliath). World history also provides phenomenal lessons for older kids to see the fingerprints of God even in seemingly hopeless situations (e.g., medical discoveries).
5. **Enlist Them:** Kids need to know that the adults are taking steps to keep everyone safe and healthy. Let them know their helping role in not spreading the disease. Have fun reminding one another to bump elbows or other

creative ways that kids are finding to greet one another without touching hands.

6. **Routines Even in the Uncertainty:** Although they won't admit it, school routines lay a healthy foundation for kids. Certainly having an extended school break because of the coronavirus should be enjoyed, but after a few days you and your kids will fare better with some routine in the home. For example, even with more leniency than usual, maintain a set bed time, school/work time, and supper time.
7. **Enjoy Time Together:** Turn off the news and put down the phones. We live busy lives. Use this time to your advantage. Play, read, pray, and talk often together as a family. Don't waste this moment!

Please know that at Coral Ridge we value our families. We know that parenting is a high and difficult calling. Hopefully some of these items above will help in a small way to remind us of the opportunity we have to lead our kids well through every situation in life.

My prayer is that the coronavirus would be used by God to affirm this beautiful truth for your family, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." – Romans 8:38-39

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Rob". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent initial 'P'.

Pastor Rob