

Helping Kids Make Wise Choices

I remember an evening a long time ago arriving home from work and sorting through my middle child's backpack and coming across the dreaded yellow note, reminding me of my daughter's gravitational pull to conversing in class. She earned an after-school detention

As a parent, there are worse situations to experience. This circumstance is minor in the grand scheme of things. It's difficult to remember this fact when it seems as if your eleven-year-old believes the very purpose of school is to talk with your friends. How do I help her understand the ramifications of her choices?

One year, I frequently heard an elementary child state this phrase, "I can make the wise choice." The simplicity of this phrase struck me. It speaks to our capability, and to the freedom we each have to pursue what is best. Wisdom is not simply accessible to us, it is imbedded within us.

According to what we learn from God's Word, our kids are created in God's image and are designed to reflect His character. God indwells us with the Holy Spirit. *The Holy Spirit is given to us to guide, to teach, to help us remember what God has told us (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit is also given so Truth can be revealed through us (John 15:26).* This means that our kids are not only designed to be wise, but with the Holy Spirit, they have the very source of Wisdom within them. The phrase "I can make a wise choice" is not a patronizing statement meant to coerce good behavior. It's a call to press into the very core of who kids are in Christ.

I talked to my eleven-year-old daughter about making choices. I reminded her of what a wonderful kid, student and friend she is and of the many opportunities she has today to put that on display. To make the wise choice because with God, she's got all the wisdom she needs. It's her job to listen and do. It wasn't the last time she made a poor choice. It wasn't the last time we had a conversation about the concept of making wise decisions. I just became better prepared for those future conversations.

Words matter, and how we deliver words matters. Knowing how to phrase an important lesson in simple terms is the parenting tool we each need to teach and guide our kids through everyday circumstances. "I can make the wise choice" is one we can have in our back pocket.