

MODULE 1: THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE

SESSION 3: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Key Ideas for This Session:

- The patterns of behaviour and attitudes we learn from influencers, during our early years, become ingrained in how we respond to the world as we grow up and mature.
- We also influence those around us.
- Habits are hard (but not impossible) to change. God has the power to transform us and equip us for good.
- Key verse: Galatians 2:20:
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

We're All in This Together!

People are social beings. That means we are connected to other people in relationships and those relationships influence our development and our story.

Our life experiences from early childhood and beyond have a shaping effect on our stories and how we see ourselves as well as the world around us. Beginning in early childhood, we learn how to respond to the people and the environment we grow up in. Our style of interaction and behaviour are reflected in our personality and values. Often, we mimic the behaviours and attitudes of people who most influence us, especially people we look up to or admire.

What do the expressions, “a chip off the old block,” “like father like son” or “like mother like daughter,” mean?

While these descriptions do not tell the whole story of who a person is as a son or a daughter, they are partly true. From early on we learn to see and respond to people and the world like our parents or the people who raised us do—especially if we have a good and positive relationship with them. If our relationship with them is negative because of how they treat us, we may react by doing things opposite to them, or doing things we know will hurt them.

Learning How to Live in The Community:

Read Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.

Explain in your own words what you think this means?

Who had the biggest influence on you in your family?

What’s the most important thing you learned from that person?

Not everyone has parents who have made a positive impact on their lives. All parents make mistakes and in varying degrees. The Bible characterizes God as a parent, but in the most perfect sense:

Psalm 68:5

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling.

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

2 Corinthians 1:3,4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Proverbs 3: 11,12

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son He delights in.

Which parenting qualities of God, described in the above verses, are comforting to you?

Role Models:

Because we are social beings, we learn a lot through imitation. We learn to walk and talk largely through imitation. Our values and attitudes, likes and dislikes, and how we respond to people, and situations are also shaped by the role models in our lives. Initially those role models are family members, but as we mature and form relationships with people beyond our own families, we find other people to look up to.

Growing up, can you think of any people in your life whom you wanted to be like? It may have not been someone you knew well, but it could have been someone you found interesting or inspiring (E.g., the way they dress, their ability to do something). Describe what you admired in them and what you did to become like them.

Looking back, was their influence on you positive or negative? Explain.

Read Proverbs 13:20

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

What do you think this verse means?

Influencing Others:

You influence others in ways you may or may not be aware of. There are things you learn from others and things they learn from you. Often you don't realize that you are influencing someone or the kind of impact you are having, especially where you are a role model.

Are there specific people in your life on whom you have an influence? Yes/No (Explain)

How do you think you influence them?

What positive influence would you like to have on people who look up to you?

The Bible story of Daniel describes a person that had a positive influence on many.

Daniel 1:1-14

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favour and compassion to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers in his whole kingdom. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

What was the situation that Daniel found himself in?

What important decision did Daniel make that his friends followed?

What characteristics did Daniel have that made him a positive influence on those around him?

Where was Daniel's loyalty?

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The Bible expresses the idea of transformation. Regardless of the society we grew up in, through the power of God, every person has the opportunity to turn his or her life around for the good. They in turn can also positively influence others. Do you believe this is possible? Why or why not?

Break into small groups and discuss the following if there is time, or think about these topics this week:

- *There are more stories involving Daniel in the Bible. Read Daniel 1-6 to learn more about his positive influence, example, and trust in God, especially in times of hardship.*
- *The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, directly below, reflects the power of God to transform a person into a positive support in the lives of others. Read it and reflect on it—it is also a song you can sing:*

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.*