



FEBRUARY

Know who you are Who am I?



TALK TOPICS:

1. Discovering / Introducing me

- Faith / Beloved son of God.
- Everyone should believe in someone.
- Reflecting who / how I want to be.

2. You are a boy/man

- I am unique.
- Build differently (physical), constructed differently (spiritual).
- Mood swings & controlling emotions.

3. Strength vs. Weakness

- My ability vs. my talents & Learned Skills.
- Applying myself *i.e.* my ability makes all the difference.
- Improving and bettering myself.

4. Like vs. Dislike

- Some things that I don't like are good for me.
- I don't like veggies however they are good for me.
- I like sweets yet they're not good for me.
- I love you, but don't like what you do.

5. My worth

- How I add/find value in my family, society & community.
- I exist as part of something bigger.
- How I lead and follow.
- Ploughing back, volunteerism.
- Giving & Taking - "have to give in order to receive".

6. I am a South African

- What makes me a South African?
- National symbols and traditions.
- What makes a good citizen.
- What should change in South Africa?



IDEAS & TIPS:

Interesting project for the month would be to get each BOY to **create a TCC ID card** and for each BOY to start a **CV**.

Suggest possibly **starting a journal** in which they can share *how am I feeling today, what am I grateful for, what happened that made me mad/sad, can I focus on something this week, can I change something?*

Consider a **"personality test"**.

Emphasize that when it comes to **weaknesses and dislikes** - these are not negative aspects that define who they are, merely **points to work on** and improve.





WEEK 1

Faith - the courage to believe

Many of us have heard the saying 'If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything', at some point in our lives. The context for this well-known phrase, describes how faith centres us and without it we can easily be swept off our feet. It refers to a belief within that demands we reach out for something more meaningful in life.

Before you examine your own faith, let's consider two remarkable men who demonstrated extraordinary faith in spite of the challenges they faced personally... **Martin Luther King** 'had a dream...' a vision of equality that seriously challenged the status quo and threatened the base of power, a dream he died for, and our very own **Nelson Mandela** who understood that 'courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it'. Of course, we can only aspire to being men of such remarkable faith however there are life lessons that Dr King and Madiba leave for us all to learn from.

These two visionaries possessed a solid, unshakeable faith in the belief that good will triumph over evil... that human kind was not created to hate, but to love, and it is in loving one another, that we fulfill our God given destiny. And in the face of violent opposition their profound commitment to a single vision of a unified country where dignity and equality is afforded to every citizen - they sought peace and love with the very people that hated and feared them.

Edmund Burke once stated that 'evil abounds when good men do nothing', being a bystander, simply looking the other way is all too easy - it takes a profound faith and courage to believe that good can and will triumph over evil and take action in accordance with your faith. How do we live as men of faith, men with the courage to bring about the changes our society needs?

Should we not seek out opportunities to courageously confront our fears, with the belief that we were made to love, and thus fulfill our God given destiny? We have to consider the legacy we leave for the next generation... as men we have the power to get involved and help raise a generation of men who are demonstrate the very values our country needs, men who refuse to allow evil to abound, men who have the courage to believe in love.

Only when we are courageous, can we truly love, and thus fulfill our God given destiny!

Get involved and help us raise boys to be good men.

Sean Krige - MENTor





WEEK 2

Values: How do they shape us?

Values are often described in two ways, the first being that a person may have a value of kindness or generosity which describes their nature. The second refers to a set of values that an individual would use to navigate in this world, based their own particular value system. Values are not chosen, they are inherent to each individual. **Values are fundamental, they are beliefs and convictions that support everything you do.**

In our younger years, our parents and close family will become the strongest role models in shaping how we think and behave, and for the most part we will learn through their example and develop a belief system.

Building a value system

The way children learn values is mostly by observing what you do, and drawing conclusions about what you think is important in life. Regardless of what you consciously teach them, your children will emerge from childhood with clear views on what their parents really value.

Parents are not the only source from which children learn values, peers will influence you them, especially as teenagers and it is healthy for young people to think for themselves and develop their own world-view. However, if they have good self-image and a warm home life, they are more likely to pick friends who are more in sync with those values.

Your values define your character and they impact every aspect of your life including:

- **Your interactions with family and friends.**
- **Your decision-making processes.**
- **The direction you take in life.**



As a parent it is important to know what you value, why you value it and what significance it takes in your life, and then to identify how this resonates with your children. By being aware of this, you can also understand that your children will each have their own value system based on their own sense of priorities and experiences.



Some pointers on developing a value system with your children:

Be aware of what you're modelling.

It isn't what you say, it's what you do. If you talk about honesty but lie about their age to get a cheaper ticket to the movies, they learn that cheating is acceptable under certain circumstances.

Help your child develop empathy.

Empathy is the foundation of compassion, which is the foundation of values. The only way children can learn empathy is by being treated empathically, and by watching you respond to others with compassion and kindness.

Talk explicitly about your values and why they are important to you.

What is integrity? Why is respectful behavior important? What do you think of the way the press is covering a particular issue? Helping children interpret the world is a crucial responsibility of parents.

At The Character Company, we reinforce 5 core values that we believe are essential for all children to embrace, namely: *Kindness, Honesty, Self-Discipline, Courage and Respect.*

Jaco van Schalkwyk - Founder, Dad and MENTor



WEEK 3

Knowing yourself & loving you, anyway

Each of us have a unique set of strengths and weaknesses and whilst many of us feel ashamed of our weaknesses, our strengths should not really be a source of pride either. We are often told to work on our weaknesses, improving and overcoming them wherever possible, and whilst growing yourself is never a bad thing the message can be that somehow we aren't good enough.

As parents, we expect to be perfect, the best dad ever - a dad that is strong, fearless and always provides for his family, he protects and defends those he loves. He is a superhero! And that is an overly sentimental notion, something I cannot always live up to. As a man, as a father and as a husband I have let myself down and had lapses in judgement.

Years ago, I was confronted with a crisis after having failed in the first round of a big business deal - my biggest fear was not finding recovery triggers or motivation, but rather what my kids would think of me. *How this would affect their perception of me, their father? What influence might this have on their ideas about being a father?*

If I want my children to share their failures with me, I have to share mine with them and show them what it takes to get up again and keep trying. Life brings us opportunities and challenges and its those challenges that force us to grow. If we hide those battles from our children how do we demonstrate the character it takes to embrace the lessons we are sent. If I give up, I give them permission to do the same - and that is never a lesson I'd want my children to learn.

A great deal of my relationship with my family stems from my relationship with myself, if I cannot be authentic and real about who I am, how can I expect my loved to feel safe enough to be who they truly are.

You do not have to justify your worth. Everyone is worthy of love, respect, and kindness - including you!

Figure out what you enjoy. Try different experiences and keep learning about what you really enjoy doing - you'll have a lot of fun along the way!

Let go of expectations. Drop the should've, could've and I ought to - embrace the challenges as much as the opportunities life sends your way and give it your best.

Look after yourself. It's really hard to always remember to do this, especially when you have children. It's important to practice some self-care.

Fitting in is overrated. Fill your life with people who love your unique qualities rather than the role you play in their lives. Be authentic!

Remember that your life is not set in stone. Avoid focusing on what you have missed out on and get stuck into what's happening right now!





WEEK 4

Personal turned public

Social media has been the single most life altering invention our generation has witnessed, since sliced bread! Many of us can recall a time when chatting to your friends happened at school or if you were really lucky you got to use a landline! Let me not give my age away by talking about pen pals!

Our children are growing up in super connected lives, the world is literally at their fingertips, everything from explicit content to game cheats and celebrity news is a click away! It is all so much more convenient, we email family, we *whatsapp* colleagues, and text friends - we are more connected than ever before.

Studies show that more and more tweens are feeling isolated and lonely, and admit that social media helps them develop friendships. Being online allows them connect with others and gives them a sense of belonging - it's a tool of self-expression. And one can easily be lured into thinking that social media is serendipitous.

However one has to ask if all the connectedness is such a good thing? When talking to a screen name its easy to disconnect emotionally from the other person, to misunderstand or misinterpret what's being said and in many instances one can over-share personal information. And once you've posted content or images online, its permanent - the impact of which can last for years. Sadly this has lead to cyber bullying, where children have been targeted online with spiteful, demeaning messages - resulting in a number of these children taking their own lives.

Much of our communication relies on social cues and body language, none of which is present online, and our tweens are having thousands of mini-real-life interactions on a daily basis. Online conversations give them time to measure a response and at the same time not see the impact a statement has on the other person. These 'remote' friendships can make real-life interactions seem daunting and 'too-intense'.

We've all heard the horror stories of online predators using chat rooms to lure vulnerable children into meeting with them in real life. And whilst this may be a risk one can mitigate by monitoring your child's online life, the greater risk is that social media promotes a superficial socialization that seems narcissistic at its core. Whilst we message, blog, tweet and post about everything we do, how often do we truly understand the impact of putting our personal lives on such a public platform?

As parents I think we should switch off the wifi, get our kids outdoors again and encourage them to connect with others through a hobby, a sport or social occasion and help them build strong, authentic relationships with others and more importantly with themselves.



DISCOVERING ME INTRODUCING ME

Faith / Beloved son of God.

Everyone should believe in something.

Reflecting who / how I want to be.

It is important for every boy to know that God loves him and that he is a beloved son of God. Some boys might feel that God does not care about them or their family because of the pain that they have been through.

Even Jesus needed to hear certain things from His Dad, so in Matthew 17 verse 5 God said; "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased; listen to him."

In that one moment Jesus' identity (this is my Son), His emotional security (whom I love), His need to be affirmed (with Him I am well pleased) and his moral authority (listen to him) all got dealt with. How more so do our boys need to be helped to figure out who they are.

Talk on a regular basis to the boys about what kind of men they want to be now and when they are grown up.

YOU ARE A BOY/MAN

I am unique.

Build differently (physical), constructed differently (emotional).

Mood swings & controlling emotions.

Talk to our boys about their uniqueness and the qualities that make them special. Challenge them to look for qualities in others.

Talk to them about the physical differences between boys and girls in an age appropriate manner and explain the less obvious differences when it comes to things like the fact that girls are generally more emotional creatures than boys, etc.

Help them to understand that it is natural and normal to experience different emotions but more important what we DO when we feel this way. We cannot always help to feel a certain way but we can always control our actions. For example, it is normal to feel frustrated with the current educational system but not acceptable to burn down your school.

Give them examples on how to deal with different emotions like anger, sadness, frustration, etc. For example, when you feel depressed, fresh air, exercise and sunshine is good medicine (walk around the block if it is safe) even if you feel like just lying on the couch and watching TV. When you are frustrated, verbalise how you feel, etc.

Boys need to learn what works for them.



STRENGTHS vs WEAKNESSES

My abilities vs. my talents & learned skills.

Applying myself i.e. my ability makes all the difference.

Improving and bettering myself.

Discuss with your group their talents, abilities and skills. Make them aware of the fact that although they were born a certain way, they also have the ability to grow and improve themselves. Please note to emphasize to our boys that when it come to weaknesses these are not negative aspects that define who they are, merely points to work on and improve.

LIKES vs DISLIKES

There are things that I don't like that are good for me. For example - I don't like veggies however they are good for me.

There are things that I like that are not good for me. For example - I like sweets yet they are not good for me.

I love you, but I don't like what you do.

It is important that our boys know that there are things that they don't like that are good for them (like eating veggies) and things they really like that is NOT good for them (like too much chocolates). Our boys must also know that we/their moms won't always like what they do but it doesn't take away how much we love them.

MY WORTH

How I contribute/find value in my family, society & community.

I exist as part of something bigger.

How I lead and follow.

Ploughing back, volunteerism.

Giving & Taking - I have to give in order to receive.

Talk about the different members of their families, the roles they play and where in the family they fit in. It is important for them to know that they exist as part of something bigger around them (family, community etc.).

It is important for our boys to understand the concept of servant leadership - we lead by example. We are not more important than other people, we are different and have different talents and purposes in life but we are all equal in God's eyes.

Discuss the importance of giving and taking - that they need to give in order to receive.

As an individual I have certain rights but it is important to understand that every right comes with a responsibility. For example, I have the right to good education but it is my responsibility to study and do my best at school and to respect my schooling environment (classrooms, books, teacher, etc.)

Also - having a TV or the latest gaming console is not a right, it is a privilege.

I AM A SOUTH AFRICAN

What makes me a South African?

National Symbols and Traditions.

What makes a good citizen?

What should change in South Africa?

Part of raising boys to be good men is about raising our country's future leaders, decision-makers and captains of industry. Understanding their role as citizens of our country and the part they should play in ensuring that South Africa fulfills its potential as a leader on the African continent.

A strong South African society can only be built when its men and women take active roles as citizens, participating national elections, holding our government to the principles that underpin our nation's constitution.

In a country that appears divided and scarred by poor leadership and corruption, our boys should understand how powerful citizenship can be.

Part of being South African is about discovering the symbols and traditions that connect us rather than divide.

South Africa is home to one of the most diverse landscapes, abundant wildlife and world-renowned cities. And its no wonder why our country remains the adventure capital of the world.

Sadly South Africa is has also earned a notorious reputation for poor leadership, weak governance and staggering crime levels fuelled by growing poverty and the highest unemployment levels in decades.

Talk to your boys about what could be potential solutions to some of our country's biggest challenges. And what they can do in their schools and communities to affect the changes they see are necessary.