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Working on Trust (4): “Can I go out tonight?”

“Can I go out tonight?” is one of the most feared questions for parents of adolescents. But as children grow up, the need for space to exercise their freedom becomes increasingly evident. Fourth video in the series “Working on Trust.”

07/02/2018

"Working on Trust" is a series of videos that draw upon the teachings

of Saint Josemaria, who was passionate about freedom and the educational role of parents. The videos suggest topics for conversation between spouses and with other families. Each one is accompanied by a selection of texts for reflection, questions for discussion, and links to further material.

“Can I go out tonight?” is one of the most feared questions for parents of adolescents. But as children grow up, the need for space to exercise their freedom becomes increasingly evident, where young people can develop and learn to relate to a wide variety of people. For adolescents the chance to go out in the evening has always been especially attractive.

Facing this issue can be a good opportunity for parents to teach their children how to manage their freedom. As in all topics that have to do with education, there are no magic formulas and the measures of prudence vary depending on the social and cultural environment in which each family is immersed.

Below are some questions that can help you take advantage of this video, when you see it with friends, at school or in the parish:

Questions for dialogue:

- How can parents begin to allow for their children's evening activities, in a progressive way? How can they assess the suitability of these plans, taking into account all the factors that come into play (age, schedule,

personal responsibility, money, etc.)?

- Should parents establish some fixed conditions regarding permission, arrival times, etc., or should they be open to dialogue with their children?
- How should parents deal with the small or big lies of their children regarding their plans and evening activities?

Some suggested action-steps:

- Before speaking with a child, it is best that parents agree with each other and can give good reasons, consistent with the values they seek to transmit to their children. And to make correct decisions, they need to know the environment their children are in and how it affects them, and not get carried away by the emotional

blackmail of “that’s what all my friends do.”

- Get to know the details of the plans that your children have or want to make and the expectations they have; above all, by talking to them. Listen to your children rather than “interrogating” them. Encourage them to talk and help them reflect on their own ideas, without imposing your own.
- Adolescents need time to mull over and assimilate their parents’ viewpoint. Give reasons when you say “no” and explain them.
- It is important to talk about the risks (the abuse of alcohol, drugs, sex), but always do so from a position of dialogue. Try not to just lay down laws (“don’t

drink,” “don’t arrive late”) or give extreme examples.

Quotes from Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church for reflection:

- Listen, children, to fatherly instruction, listen to discernment; because I give you good training, do not abandon my teaching. I am also my father’s son, endearing and unrepeatable to my mother. He taught me saying: ‘May your heart retain my words; keep my commands and you will live. Acquire wisdom, acquire discernment’ (*Prov* 4 1:5).
- Home is thus the first school of Christian life and ‘school of the richest humanism.’ Here one learns patience and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous—even repeated—forgiveness, and above all, divine worship in

prayer and the offering of one's life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1657).

- God has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power. He entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1884).
- It is incumbent on those who exercise authority to strengthen the values that inspire the confidence of the members of

the group and encourage them to put themselves at the service of others. Participation begins with education and culture.

‘One is entitled to think that the future of humanity is in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and optimism’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1917)

Quotes from Pope Francis for reflection:

- The same distractions that are omnipresent in today’s world also make us tend to absolutize our free time, so that we can give ourselves over completely to the devices that provide us with entertainment or ephemeral pleasures. As a result, we come to resent our mission, our commitment grows slack, and our generous

and ready spirit of service begins to flag (*Gaudete et Exultate*, 30).

- The world tells us exactly the opposite: entertainment, pleasure, diversion and escape make for the good life. The worldly person ignores problems of sickness or sorrow in the family or all around him; he averts his gaze. The world has no desire to mourn; it would rather disregard painful situations, cover them up or hide them. Much energy is expended on fleeing from situations of suffering in the belief that reality can be concealed. But the cross can never be absent (*Gaudete et Exultate*, 75).
- In our own day, dominated by stress and rapid technological advances, one of the most

important tasks of families is to provide an education in hope. This does not mean preventing children from playing with electronic devices, but rather finding ways to help them develop their critical abilities and not to think that digital speed can apply to everything in life (*Amoris Laetitia*, 275)

Quotes from Saint Josemaría for reflection:

- Parents should find time to spend with their children, to talk with them. They are the most important thing—more important than business or work or rest. In their conversations, parents should make an effort to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to recognize the fact that their children are sometimes partly right—or even completely right

—in some of their rebellious attitudes. At the same time, they should help their children to direct their efforts and to carry out their projects properly, teaching them to consider things and to reason them out. It is not a matter of imposing a line of conduct, but rather of showing the human and supernatural motives for it. In a word, parents have to respect their children's freedom, because there is no real education without personal responsibility, and there is no responsibility without freedom (*Christ is Passing By*, 27).

- Try to get the children to learn to ask themselves what their actions mean in God's eyes. Give them supernatural reasons to ponder on, so that they feel responsible. And don't show mistrust. It's better to let them

deceive you on occasion than to destroy the affection and union they have with you.

(Guadalquivir, Valencia,
November 17, 1972)

- You need to keep an eye on your children's freedom according to how old they are. You can't treat them all the same. Justice demands that you treat unequal children unequally, but in a way that doesn't provoke jealousy. They are unequal by age, temperament, health, intellectual abilities... Thus, with your help, they will become equal, loving each other a lot, behaving well, having their parents' virtues, and being good children of our

Lady. (Guadalquivir, Valencia,
November 17, 1972)

- “Do the same with your children. Don’t let on that you’ve found them out, if they deceive you on some occasion. Understand them, find excuses for them. Haven’t you and I done the same with our Lord, and we’ve come back? May your children realise that you are their best friend; that no one loves them as much as their father and mother. You will see how proud your children are of that. But don’t expect them to be head-to-toe saints. No one is a saint in this life. (El Prado, Madrid, November 18, 1972)

For further reflection:

Leisure and Free Time (3)

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