

Faith

Conversation Guide

for Parents of Middle Schoolers

Faith. Middle School is a new and exciting time for kids, accompanied by lots of change. And with all that change comes the opportunity for a lot of growth in key areas, including faith. As kids make their way through the middle school years, they are transitioning from a time where their faith has primarily been a by-product of their parent's faith and mostly reactive, rather than proactive. But these are the years when they take initiative and create a faith of their own. The best thing you can do is be a coach, not a teacher. Encourage and affirm them in their personal faith journey. In this phase your role is to . . .

Provoke Discovery →

So they will OWN THEIR OWN FAITH
AND VALUE A FAITH COMMUNITY.

This guide is designed to help you connect with your middle school student in the phase they are in, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of faith. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

Authentic Faith

Trusting Jesus in a way that transforms how I love God, myself, and the rest of the world.

To sixth graders, say things like . . .

"God will never stop loving you."

"Have you read anything in the Bible that means a lot to you right now?"

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139:14 (Repeat simple Bible verses.)

"Can we pray about this together?"

To seventh graders, say things like . . .

"When do you feel closest to God?"

"I have questions, too. What other things do you wonder about?"

"I don't know why . . . but I do know God is good. But that doesn't mean we'll understand everything."

"How can I pray for you today/this week?"

"What would be a fun way we could serve others together?"

To eighth graders, say things like . . .

"God made you, He knows you, and He loves you."

"That's a great question. I don't know the answer, but we can find out."

"The way you live can show others who Jesus is."

"When do you feel closest to God?"

"What's something new that you're learning about God?"

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It!

Just Remember . . . Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. In this phase, your middle schooler may be asking some hard questions. Don't be shocked (at least not visibly). Doubt isn't toxic to your middle schooler's faith; it's part of the process of personalizing what they believe. Make your home a safe place for them to ask questions, and show interest in what they are learning. .

To enhance the conversation,
here are a few activities your family can try:

Serve. Few things grow a person's maturity or faith better than serving others. If your middle schooler has a cause or passion that they've expressed interest in, research ways your entire family can get involved. Or, empower your middle schooler to figure out how they can get connected to a cause themselves. You may have to provide consistent encouragement, but let them take the first step to engaging with a charity, ministry, or organization.

Get connected. Get your middle schooler connected in a student ministry or youth group they can attend regularly. But don't just drop them off and pick them up, engage in what they're learning as much as you can. Connect with their small group leader right away and often, but only as a means to offer support and help. What your student discusses with their small group leader should remain private unless the leader initiates a conversation with you. Read the ministry's emails, newsletters, or website. Volunteer on the Host Team or Food Team so you're familiar with the environment and its leaders, but still give your student space to create their own spiritual community.

Help your middle schooler discover the way they're uniquely wired to connect with God. For example, is it when they see something beautiful, when they listen to worship music, read their Bible, or when they are serving others? Encourage them to pursue worship and connect with Him in a way that feels meaningful and comfortable for them—even if it's a different style than your own.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.

To discover more ways to understand this phase, check out the Parenting Your . . . book series at parentcuestore.org.


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The Phase Project and other great
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