

TEENAGE FAITH



Brett loved God. . . as a child. Then, according to his concerned parents, Brett became a teenager and his interest in spiritual things seemed to fade. What was happening to Brett?

Children from birth to age ten have a blind-faith tendency to accept without question the values and beliefs of parents. While they don't have a deep knowledge of biblical facts and theological truth, they do believe in the simple facts and truths which are taught by Mom and Dad, then reinforced at church. But it won't necessarily stay that way in adolescence. Armed with a newfound ability to think, evaluate, and solve problems, teenagers oftentimes begin to question the values and beliefs they have previously accepted. They will

take what you have painstakingly and faithfully handed down to them and put it to the test.

The questioning attitude of a teenage child who has been raised and instructed in the faith can be the most challenging and disheartening aspect of parenting for Christian parents. I know several parents who have weathered this storm to watch their children grow up with a faith that has become their own. In fact, many of them have embraced the storm knowing that in the long run, their child will be better for having gone through the difficulty. When I ask them how they got through it, they consistently offer these simple and valuable suggestions to parents who are still facing this challenge:

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Jennifer Katzenstein, PhD, Director of Psychology, Neuropsychology, and Social Work at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, in reference to the online trend of using the slang word 'chopped' to put down someone's appearance or picture online, Parents.com, August 28, 2025.

"Unfortunately, appearance-based insults are a fast, visible way to establish dominance or align with peers, even though they are deeply harmful when on a social media platform... Those who engage in using dismissive slang can become desensitized to cruelty, which can blunt empathy and increase tolerance for bullying behaviors."



"THE QUESTIONING ATTITUDE OF A TEENAGE CHILD WHO HAS BEEN RAISED AND INSTRUCTED IN THE FAITH CAN BE THE MOST CHALLENGING AND DISHEARTENING ASPECT OF PARENTING FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS."



- Be diligent in teaching young children by precept and example. Talk about your faith. Spend time together learning to understand God's Word. By doing so you will help your children build a strong foundation.
- Don't be upset when your children start to ask questions. Rejecting the faith of your childhood is very different from asking honest questions and expressing doubt. A teen's struggle to find answers is a step on the road to spiritual growth.
- Encourage your teen to be a vital part of your church. Teens benefit from interaction with older Christians who in the context of a loving relationship, freely share with vulnerability and honesty the Godly wisdom that comes with advanced years and spiritual maturity.
- Openly share your own doubts and struggles. Teenagers value authenticity and vulnerability in parents and other adults. Sharing our doubts with our children allows them to see us in our full humanity and dependence on God.
- Never, ever forget that spiritual growth is a process. If you are a Christian parent, your level of faith, spiritual maturity, and understanding is not the same as when you were a teenager. You've gone through a long process of growth that is still continuing.
- Remember that spiritual maturity is born out of struggle. God always redeems horrible situations to bring His good out of our rebellious bad.
- Never stop praying for your kids. We can never be successful in force-feeding faith to our kids. We can only teach them and answer their questions. The rest is in God's hands.

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

CHATBOTS AND SUICIDE

Listen to these heartfelt words of warning from Megan Garcia, the mother of a fourteen year-old boy who died by suicide in February:

"There is a platform out there you might not have heard about, but you need to know about it because, in my opinion, we are behind the eight ball here. A child is gone. My child is gone." Her son, Sewell, had logged on to a site known as Character.AI. The site allows users to create and interact with fictional chatbot characters. Kids who are lonely are especially vulnerable to going deep into these so-called relationships with chatbots. But the risks are many, including exposure to hate speech, sexually explicit content, security issues, and privacy violations. In Garcia's case, she is now suing the company, since in a conversation where he said he was considering suicide, the chatbot did not dissuade him. Parents, shield your kids from these Artificial Intelligence companion sites. What our kids really need are healthy real-life relationships with family and friends.



TRENDS:



Surveillance Capitalism

Here's a new term that all of us must be aware of: "surveillance capitalism". The term and the practice is one that is especially prominent in our current online digital age. Simply stated, surveillance capitalism is about monitoring people's online behavior, including that of our kids, in order to capture data about one's preferences and habits. This data is then used to target that person with carefully curated marketing and advertising, all in the name of getting that person to buy, buy, and buy some more. The data that's collected is personal info, personal interests, the websites you visit, and your social preferences and lifestyle habits. Recently, Facebook was accused of tracking when adolescent girls deleted their selfies. Believing that these girls were emotionally vulnerable in that moment, Facebook then fed them a beauty ad. All marketing targets our hopes for redemption. Help your kids see that buying stuff doesn't meet their need for Jesus.



LATEST RESEARCH:

Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid drug that is approved by the FDA for use as a pain reliever and anesthetic. It is approximately 100x more potent than morphine, and 50x more potent than heroin. It carries with it a high risk for addiction and dependence. When taken in high doses or when combined with other substances like alcohol or heroin, it is known to cause

respiratory distress and death. Chances are, all of us know of a family that's been impacted by fentanyl addiction and or overdose. These stories are alarming enough, but adding to our concerns over Fentanyl is the fact that fentanyl poisonings among teens ages 13-19 were up over 1500% between 2015 and 2023. In 2023, 45% of these

poisonings were life-threatening, meaning that these kids could have died without treatment and 66% of these occurred when kids were using the drug to get high. Parents, this is a drug use trend we need to notice and address.



QUICKSTATS



Verbal abuse increased a child's likelihood of low mental well-being as an adult by 64%, while physical abuse increased odds by 52%. Around 12% of children born before 1950 experienced verbal abuse, while nearly 20% of those born after 1999 have experienced verbal abuse.

(BMJ Open)

About 48% of young women who had smartphones by 5 or 6 years old reported having severe suicidal thoughts, compared to 28% of females who had smartphones by 13 or older. In young men, 31% of those who had smartphones by 5 or 6 years old reported having severe suicidal thoughts and 20% of males who had smartphones by 13 or older reported having severe suicidal thoughts.

(Journal of Human Development and Capabilities)

III TOP III

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STREAMING MOVIES ON NETFLIX

*In The United States,
week of 8/18-8/24/2025*

Source:
Netflix

1. KPop Demon Hunters
2. Night Always Comes
3. Fast & Furious Presents:
Hobbs & Shaw
4. Fall for Me
5. Happy Gilmore 2
6. Hotel Transylvania 3:
Summer Vacation
7. Broke
8. Furious 7
9. Despicable Me 2
10. The Fast and the Furious



CARELESS WORDS

by WALT MUELLER

As a dad, I've learned over and over that I need to choose my words carefully. I'm usually reminded after moments of being very careless with my words.

Proverbs 12:18 tells us that "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." I read that and can only respond with one word. . . . "Guilty!" I've thrown reckless words around my relationships, especially with those who live under my roof.

Reckless words are not only harmful to our communication, but to our relationships with our kids. Stuff that mindlessly rolls off our tongues in a rage-filled or careless moment can stick with them forever.

Taking the time to habitually think before we speak is an investment that will pay great dividends in strengthened parent/teen relationships and positive parental influence. A necessary mark of healthy relationships is that we are dads and moms who always take the time to think before we speak.

FROM THE WORD

he reality is that in spite of your hopes and dreams for a pain-free and smooth-sailing new school year, the next twelve months will be much like all the months you've already experienced over the course of your life. There will

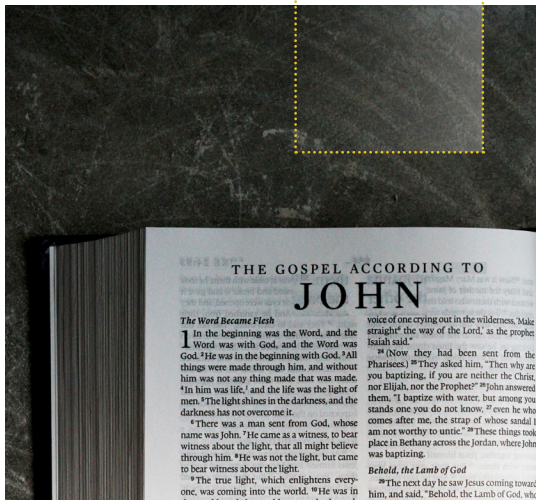
be days filled with joy and gladness, and there will be days when you have to work through heartache and difficulty. We live in a broken world and we can expect trouble.

But the good news is that the story does not stop there, leaving us hopeless. Instead, we can celebrate the coming of Christ into this broken world to make all things new. Through his life, death, and resurrection, we can know that the trials and sorrows that we experience in this life are limited to this earth only. In John 16:33, Jesus tells us that trials and sorrows are to be expected. But he follows those words up with a powerful "but"! He tells us that we can "take heart" in the knowledge that he has overcome the world.

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

As a parent, you will experience your own trials and sorrows. You will also live through the trials and sorrows of your kids. Read and meditate on John 16:33. Ask the Lord to grant you the peace to endure the trials and sorrows you will face this school year. Ask him to help you see beyond those things into the hope of eternal glory that he has promised.



PODCAST



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is a one-minute daily radio show
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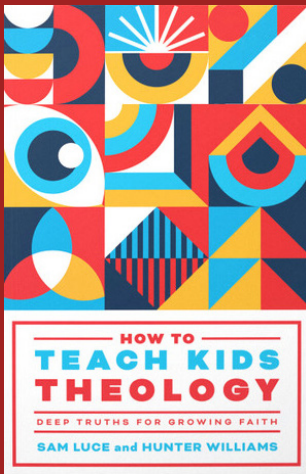
THEOLOGY MADE SIMPLE

HELP KIDS BUILD A STRONG
FOUNDATION OF FAITH



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HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

How to Teach Kids Theology: Deep Truths for Growing Faith by Sam Luce and Hunter Williams takes the deep truths of the Christian faith and gives practical, actionable direction for sharing them with children.

What comes to mind when you think about teaching theological truths to children? Glazed eyes? Over-their-head discussions? Theology doesn't have to be "too deep for kids." For kids to stand firm in a culture that suppresses the truth of Christianity, we need to give them a grand view of God that overwhelms their hearts and fills them with wonder.

A child's faith is only as strong as the God they believe in. For their faith to be great, they need to learn about their great God. In each chapter, the authors diagnose problems that hinder leaders from teaching kids theology, explain principles to combat these problems, and suggest practices for applying these principles to your ministry.

The authors' many years of experience in pastoring children help bring a fresh approach to teaching important timeless truths. *How to Teach Kids Theology* demystifies theology so readers are equipped to pass on these truths to the next generation. Sunday School teachers, children's ministry leaders, and parents will learn how to pass on the theological truths that will be a strong foundation for a child's growing faith in age-appropriate ways.