

## Finding and Keeping Your Faith



Has your teen questioned their faith in God lately? For almost all parents, the answer is a resounding YES! This might surprise you, but these questions and feelings are actually good things. Teens may not listen to a story about Jesus or biblical advice from a parent and take it at face value. They start asking questions like "Why?", "Why not?", or "How can this be?" This can be overwhelming to any parent, especially when you just don't feel equipped to help, answer, or guide in your teen's spiritual development. But these questions and doubts cannot be just left alone for your teen to figure out for themselves. Parents cannot lean only on the church to give the right answers. Parents must fight at all cost to wrestle, challenge, and encourage their teens in their faith. To begin, allow and welcome your teen to talk through their questions. Believe me, you will NOT know all the answers. That is God's job. The greatest way to encourage your teen during these times is to let them know you had (or have) questions as well. This will model your dependence on God and how you have worked through your feelings of doubt. After you find out about their questions, help them find the answers. Don't just tell them. Your teen does not want to be told what to believe. With your help, let them find the answers. If you do not know the answer, do some research with your teen. A good website to start your research is [www.carm.org](http://www.carm.org). It has great biblically-based information that you can trust. Make an appointment with a member of the youth ministry staff for additional dialogue and help. The bottom line is to not leave these questions alone for your teen to find just any answer all on their own. Your heart's desire is for your teen to find THE answer. Pray, encourage, and equip your teen in their spiritual development.

***Helping your teen have a consistent time with God is so important for their personal relationship with Christ. Here are some tips to help you start that process:***

- 1. Schedule a time with God.** Plan a specific time and location for your time with God. If you wait until you have time, you never will. You must make it a priority.
- 2. Choose the right tools.** Having the right translation of the Bible is very important in helping your teen better understand God's Word. Ask a member of your student ministry staff which translation they recommend. Also, having a devotional book helps in the process of studying the Bible.
- 3. Prayer is KEY!** There are three parts to teach your teens about prayer. First, begin by focusing on who God is. Second, surrender to God's will, not your own will. Third, ask for daily needs.
- 4. Don't just read the Bible—do what it says (James 1:22).** Make a list of personal traits (patience, kindness) or spiritual goals (witnessing, prayer) you'd like to work on.



***Here are some interesting findings obtained by [harrisinteractive.com](http://harrisinteractive.com) on the views and beliefs teens have about God:***

**How important would you say your faith "religion" is in your own life?**

- 51% - Extremely/Very important
- 26% - Somewhat important
- 23% - Not Very/Not at all important

**Which of the statements below is closest to expressing what you believe about God?**

- 51% - I know God really exists, and I have no doubts about it.
- 19% - While I have doubts, I feel I do believe in God.
- 10% - I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power.
- 6% - I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others.
- 14% - I don't believe in God/I don't know.

**It might be difficult for your teen to talk to you about their questions and doubts. Here are some questions to start an important conversation about their faith in God.**

1. If you could ask God a question right now, what would that question be?
2. Do you think it's OK to question God? Why or why not? What if there is not a specific answer to your question?
3. How important is it for you to spend time with God? Based on your answer, does your answer match up with how much time you spend with Him? Why or why not?
4. Is there someone you trust to ask your questions and/or doubts about God? If yes, who is it? How often do you talk to him/her about these things?



## Focus on Prayer

### PRAY THAT:

1. God will give your teen a great desire to know Him more intimately every day.
2. God will help and equip you when your teen asks questions about their faith.
3. God will protect your family from any plans the enemy has to raise questions, cause fear, or shake your family's faith in our awesome God.
4. God will help your teen understand their time with God is NOT something to check off their list, but a crucial time to learn, wrestle, and understand their total dependence on Him.

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### Verse of the month

**"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."  
Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV)**

While writing to the church in Philippi, Paul had just discussed that the people were to imitate and follow Christ's humility and love. He now called the church in Philippi to action, but tempers his exhortation in love. He calls them to work out their salvation. Note that Paul does not say work for salvation, but we are to work out salvation. There will be times when we will wrestle with the things of God. But it is so true that in those times, we learn so much about God and about ourselves. Paul also reminds them that they were to do this "working out" with fear and trembling, with a complete trust in God and not in themselves. Our total dependence on Him is crucial to see Him work in us.



\* The latest Gallup poll found that 86 percent of American adults believe in God which is a drop from 90 percent in 2004 and in 2001. (galluppoll.com)

\* Six out of 10 teens involved in a church will probably not continue their spiritual commitment into early adulthood, according to a Sept. 11 study by the Barna Group. (apbnews.com)

\* The National Study of Youth and Religion, described as the most comprehensive research ever done on faith and adolescence, revealed that teens well grounded in their faith are more likely to do better in school, shun drugs and alcohol, and feel better about themselves. (beliefnet.com)

- Approximately 28 percent of American teenagers trust only in Jesus Christ as their way to heaven. (christianpost.com)

