

first steps

HOW TO HAVE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILD

*HOW DO I HAVE
SPIRITUAL
CONVERSATIONS
WITH MY CHILD?*

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We Need A Revolution

I have worked as the children's pastor in the same church for over 14 years and it has afforded me perspective that many kids pastors don't get. I have seen kids that were in our preschool program get married. When you work at a church that long you see trends come and go you see things you like and don't like you see end result of parenting styles and theories.

One of the more sobering realities for me is to see kids that I poured my heart and life into walk away from their faith. I still think and pray for many of them. I have been thinking about why this happens for years. I graduated from a Christian school out of the 30 kids in my senior class to my knowledge only about 5 are still serving God. For

years after college I would wonder think about and ask God why this happened. Fast forward 10 years and you read books and go to conferences everyone is talking about the epidemic effecting a whole generations of kids. **We need a revolution.**

Art Not a Science

Having spiritual conversations with your kids is not an exact science it's more of an art. There is no do this then do this and the result will be this. I wish it were that simple. Spiritual conversations are messy. They are not neat and often you leave wondering what if anything come of it especially when talking to kids. It's much easier to avoid them but the result of avoiding tough conversations with your kids is weak immature powerless faith.

Focus on what is true

In our Christian culture we so easily get this wrong we expend all of our energy in listing out for our kids what shows, books, music are so evil that we never get to the part where we describe the attractiveness of Christ to our kids. Our job as parents and leaders is to protect our children from harm and from the evil that clearly exists but above and beyond that our primary job is make Gospel attractive to our kids.

How do you focus on what is true? Spend time with your kids and ask them questions. When your kids are watching TV ask them about the choices people in the cartoon are making and how those things line up with the truth in Gods word. As you go through the bible and read the bible to them at night ask them questions from the bible. In doing so you will teach them how to ask questions about the bible and where to find the answers.

John 8:31,32

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. **32** Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

If you want kids who hate evil you need to teach your kids to love and recognize truth.

Worldview

One of the scariest things for me as a parent is realizing that I am creating a world view in my kids. How they view faith, problems, joys, defeats are all a direct result of what they see in me and where I point them when life happens. There is something powerful about a moment when you nail it as a parent. When your kids ask what a rainbow is and you can retell the story of the sinfulness of man and the Redemptive greatness of our God. That we serve a God who hates sin but loves us so much he put a plan in motion before the world was created to rescue us and restore us.

There is also something equally amazing when we mess up. When we are to harsh near bed time when we jump to conclusions and blame our kids yell at them for something we did. Then come back, humble ourselves and ask our own kids for forgiveness. There is nothing more humbling and amazing than a parent modeling to their kids their need for grace, forgiveness and

redemption. When we demonstrate humility in asking for forgiveness we show them we always need God's help and in doing that we form within them the powerful perspective of our world through the lens of the Gospel.

You need to recognize when kids ask questions and are looking for spiritual conversations and engage them even when it's inconvenient.

Distill Truth Don't Simplify It

To have spiritual conversations is an understanding that our job is to be distillers of truth and not simplifiers of truth. The temptation we have when talking about spiritual things with our kids is we lean toward simplifying ideas for them rather than distilling truth behind those ideas. It is by far easier to simplify truth it is much more impacting to distill it. The problem with simplifying truth is it makes truth confining in a nice neat box. Truth is always true but rarely fits neatly in a box.

To distill truth for our kids we need to:

1. Ask God for wisdom rather than just answering questions how we

have always heard questions answered.

2. Be prepared ahead of time.
3. Understand the Gospel enough to be able to point our kids continually back to Christ.
4. Write down your answers.
5. Ask someone who is smart than you are.

Direct Answers for Direct Questions

When kids ask you a question give them an answer. If they understand enough to ask tough questions than chances are that they are old enough to hear tough answers.

If we tell our kids half truths they will find out once they discover our half truths we have used to deflect or delay from tough conversations our kids will begin to wonder which half of everything we say is untrue. When you answer a question with age appropriate directness you remove the power of curiosity. Kids have always been curious the only things that has changed is the internet allows our kids to not only satisfy any curiosity but it feeds their curiosity.

Direct Answers for Direct Questions

Don't Lie- say you don't know but you will find out

To give your kids direct answers to their questions you need do 4 things.

1. Know your kids - Pat answers frustrate kids because they know you are just trying to get out of a conversation that you are either too busy for or frustrated with.
2. Talk when they are ready not when it's convenient for you
3. Give them as much information as they can handle - satisfy their curiosity. This is huge. Parents if you don't satisfy your child's curiosity something else will.
4. Listen better than you speak. - This is a big one because many times parents feel their role is to tell their kids everything. Sometimes when kids ask a question they are wanting to talk rather than looking for answers.

Love The Bible

Our kids need to understand that the Bible is more than a tool, prop or answer book. It's not primarily about us. It's not even primarily about what we should do and shouldn't do it's a letter, a story, a true fairy tale. It's the unfolding story of a God who at great cost to himself lived a life we couldn't live and died a death we should have died. After three days he came back to life to defeat our two greatest enemies fear and death. He now lives for us interceding for us and is one day coming back to as JRR Tolkien says to make all the sad things about world untrue. The bible is God's word. The bible is our external source of truth. Where you find a light view of scripture in the life of a christian you often have a christian who doesn't understand what has been done for them.



BIBLE & PRAYER

Love The Bible Cont...

The bible like all tools only works if you use it. Part of the problem that parents have is they don't read their own bibles. You don't need to use a reading plan if it works for you do it. Reading plans stress me out more than move me to worship. I remember at times in my life being more excited to check a box done than to read and appreciate the bible as what it is. The bible is not a box to be checked it's the unfolding love story of a King for his Kingdom and those who inhabit it.

Prayer

"I have a question to offer you. It is contained in three words, DO YOU PRAY? The question is one that none but you can answer. Whether you attend public worship or not, your minister knows. Whether you have family prayers or not your relations know. But whether you pray in private or not, is a matter between yourself and God.

All the children of God on earth are alike in this respect. From the moment there is any life and reality about their religion, they pray. Just as the first sign of the life of an infant when born into the world is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women when they are born again is praying.

This is one of the common marks of all the elect of God, "They cry unto him day and night." Luke 18:1. The Holy Spirit who makes them new creatures, works in them a feeling of adoption, and makes the cry, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15. The Lord Jesus, when he quickens them, gives them a voice and a tongue, and says to them, "Be dumb no more." God has no dumb children. It is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to cry. They see their need of mercy and grace. They feel their emptiness and weakness. They cannot do other wise than they do. They must pray." - JC Ryle

Prayer is not simply a good Idea for parents it's absolutely essential. Bishop Ryle's point is well taken. Kids instinctively cry when they need mercy. When we are in need of mercy we

stubbornly exercise our well used muscle of self will and self reliance. We pray far too often as a means of last resort. I have read countless books over the years that deal with practical how to's when it comes to parenting. These are helpful and essential but out of those books I have read precious few mention our need to call out to God for daily guidance and intervention. Our kids see what's valuable to us. When pain enters our life it tells our kids who are watching carefully what we value most. Pain enters our life through the disappointments of the things we value most so what causes us pain in our true treasure no matter what we say. The response that pain elicits reveals who we serve. Where you turn or what you turn to when life gets difficult reveals what we trust to fix our situation. When you face difficulty do you turn to the Lord in prayer as a matter of instinct or as a matter of last resort.

For us to be prepared for spiritual conversations we have to be people of prayer. We need to pray for revelation, for mercy and out of an understanding of our complete dependance. On Christ.

How To pray

1. Be short. With few exceptions, don't pray for more than five minutes. Tedious prayers do more harm than good.
2. Don't teach in your prayer; God doesn't need the instruction. Be simple without being shallow.
3. Pray for things that your children know something about, but don't allow your prayers to become trivial.
4. Don't reduce your prayers to self-centered, shallow petitions. Be direct. Spread your needs before God, plead your case, and ask for mercy.
5. Name your teenagers and children and their needs one by one on a daily basis. Be natural yet solemn. Speak clearly and reverently.
6. Be varied. Don't pray the same thing every day; that becomes tedious.

HOLY SPIRIT

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Of all the tools I have listed so far the Holy Spirit is the most misunderstood and sadly the least employed. The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is absolutely vital. I firmly believe that without a constant reliance on the person of the Holy Spirit our words as parents and teachers will have little effect on the heart of the kids in our lives.

We minimize the Holy Spirit because we have seen or heard of excesses in certain denominational experiences. The Holy Spirit is on the three members of the Trinity. We ignore him and his work to our own detriment. One of the greatest testaments to his importance in our life is what Jesus himself said to his disciples before he ascended. In John chapters 15 and 16 we see that Jesus told the disciples it was actually good that he was going back to the father because He would send another helper. (John 15:26, John 16:5-7). We minimize the Holy Spirit to our own peril. We as parents need the person of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives and in our families.

Why the Holy Spirit Matters?

If ever kids needed a helper to live out a radical faith it's now. If we believe that the Holy Spirit is invaluable, if we believe that The Holy Spirit of God was sent to us to help, lead us guide us in our lives? If we believe that the Holy Spirit gives us power to be a witness why would we not want kids to be filled with the Holy Spirit? If we believe that the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to live a life of love, joy and peace why wouldn't we want our kids to experience this?

Why would we not want our kids to do these things to have these things as part of their faith. I believe that we have in many ways removed the power and mystery of the Gospel when we ignore the Holy Spirit. I am all for partnering with parents and strive to come up with more ideas to do so but let's not forget our most strategic partner in ministry to kids the Holy Spirit of God. (Galatians 5:22-26)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Everyday Talk](#) - John Younts

[Everything a Child Should Know About God.](#)

[The Radical Book For Kids](#) -
Champ Thornton

[The Ology: Ancient Truths, Ever New](#)

[One Year of Dinner Table Devotions and Discussion Starters: 365 Opportunities to Grow Closer to God as a Family](#)

[Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God](#)

