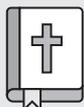


PARENTING MATTERS: SPIRITUAL MILESTONES DEFENDING YOUR FAITH

LIFE LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE...

...a struggle for priorities. Faith is important to you but, to be honest, there are weeks where school events, sports, work, birthday parties, and playdates end up hindering your ability to bring the whole family to church. There are Sunday School handouts that get left in the minivan, coloring sheets that end up in the recycle bin, and emails that are left unread in the busy-ness of life. Then, one day, your child comes home from school and announces that the teacher said the universe is a big, cosmic accident. Your sweet kid is now confused, a little angry, and looking to you for answers. Have they been lied to their whole life? This milestone is about equipping your child with the basics they need to defend their faith and providing a safe environment to process doubts and questions as they wrestle with bringing their faith into the world.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DEFENDING YOUR FAITH

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DEFEND YOUR FAITH?

The ability and practice of defending your faith is referred to as “apologetics”. This means being able to justify something you believe in using reasonable arguments and evidence. Being able to stand up for what you believe in is a key part of your faith because you will inevitably encounter people who believe something different. Defending your faith is about preparing to reflect God’s character by equipping your kids to handle doubt, questions, and attacks in a peaceable and clear way.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT IT?

Jesus himself sets clear examples of how to handle those who question your faith. When Jesus himself is tempted by Satan in the desert, he relies on his knowledge of scripture to thwart each of Satan’s blasphemous attempts (Matthew 4:1-11). This story also points out the idea that people are created not to live on bread alone, but on the words and messages that God has sent (Matthew 4:4). Jesus tells us to always be prepared to make a defense, but to do it in a way that is gentle and respectful (1 Peter 3:15). When you are equipped with an understanding of the Bible and you are connected to God through faith and relationship, you will be far better prepared to defend your faith.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT TO US?

It is inevitable that at some point in your faith walk, you will meet someone who disagrees with what you believe. They may do it subtly, or they may approach you ready to attack. When confronted with a debate like this, it is easy to feel confused, shaken, and doubtful. The earlier in life you can equip your child to handle these situations with grace, love, and knowledge, the more likely they are to stand firm in their faith. Followers of Christ are called to go and make disciples, so when an opportunity presents itself to engage with someone about faith and God, it should be met with enthusiasm.

ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

PREPARING FOR QUESTIONS

With young kids: Establish yourself as a safe person to ask questions to. It will be difficult, especially when your 4 year old asks 5,000 questions a day, but this is how they start to figure out what they believe and how to talk about it. Ask them questions through a faith framework and assure them that asking questions about church, God, and the Bible is a great thing to do. Start off asking things like...

Why do you think God made so many different _____ (leaves, animals, fish, people, etc)?

What is your favorite Bible story? Why?

Is there anything that confuses you about Jesus?

Who can you talk to about Jesus?

Do you have friends that have talked about Jesus before?

With elementary kids: Set up the framework for consistent conversation in your family. If you haven't yet, establish a regular family devotion time. You can find devotion books online, look up a plan on a Bible app, or lead it yourself. Create space to read scripture together and be intentional to ask questions that help your child think logically about what they are hearing. Remember that you don't need to have all the answers, walking them through the process of finding answers is very powerful and equips them for the future. Try asking them...

How do we know that Jesus was a real person?

The Old Testament happened so long ago, how can we be sure it happened? How do you think you'd know if God was talking to you, like he talked to the people who wrote the Bible?

Are there any parts of the Bible that you don't think are true?

With students: Ensure that your student has a safe place to wrestle with their questions and doubts. At this phase, it's beneficial for them to also have a non-parent adult to bring their struggles to. Invest in finding them a Christian mentor or getting to know their small group leader and other influential people in their life. Be willing to struggle through some of these tough questions with them, chances are you either have asked or are currently asking similar things. Don't panic if there's something they ask or say that seems like a red flag. Be patient, process through, and find guidance when needed. Look for opportunities to open up some questions about their faith and their journey. Start conversations with questions like...

Do you ever struggle with whether or not Jesus was real?

Are there Bible stories that you question? How can we find a way to learn more about that story?

Do you believe that the Holy Spirit can speak to you?

Have you ever felt or heard the Spirit working in your life?

Is there anything you've learned at church that you have had questions about? How can I help answer those questions?

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 3:15

But make sure that in your hearts you honor Christ as Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect.

PRAYER FOR PARENTS

Dear Lord, bless our family with wisdom, knowledge and a heart for sharing you with others. When we meet people who don't know you, give us wisdom in how we speak to them and answer their questions. Help us speak and act in a way that opens their hearts to learning more about you. When we feel attacked, give us courage to stand up for your truth and peace. Help us speak with respect to those who are looking for you or questioning you. Lead me as I guide my family through this process. Thank you for being worthy of all adoration and all defense. Amen.

RESOURCES

Keeping Your Kids on God's Side
by Natasha Crain

Cold Case Christianity for Kids
by Lee Strobel

Picture Book Apologetics
series by J D Camorlinga

Christianmomthoughts.com



PARENTING
MATTERS