



11th - 12th grade

SPIRITUAL ROOTS

Spiritual development and personal identity go hand in hand. During the last two years of high school, students are experiencing incredible change. They are earning a driver's license, getting a job and applying for college. During this time, a teen's sense of autonomy is developing rapidly, which can lead to many questions and doubts.

How we respond to doubt is critical. While hard questions can sometimes be uncomfortable, the best thing we can do is engage students in their doubts. The Fuller Youth Institute reminds us: "Doubt isn't toxic to faith; silence is." Instead of shying away from doubt, we can lean in and tackle these questions with our students, affirming their desire to make their faith their own.

For a teen to truly feel ownership in their personal relationship with God, we want to address how practical life change intersects with faith. For example, how can a teen make new friends in college while still holding tight to their faith? What does it mean to be a grown up (and take ownership for mundane tasks like laundry and making lunch)? When the credit card applications come in the mail, how should a teen responsibly react?

Even though some of these questions seem outside of the Church's scope, research has shown that the more these practical issues are addressed by faith communities, the more likely a student is to develop spiritual roots that anchor

them to the body of Christ long after high school. Just like tree roots, a relationship with Christ is a living, moving thing. We have the opportunity to show 11th and 12th grade students that their faith is powerful enough to be relevant in all circumstances - and that the Church cares about these seemingly mundane things just as much as they do.

As a parent of a junior or senior, you are aware that big changes are coming (or already happening) for your child. Often, as change happens, it is natural to ask "What's next?" Our Student Ministries staff is committed to looking ahead with your family, preparing your son or daughter for the next step in life. Not only do we recognize the upcoming changes, we are implementing an action plan to help your teen navigate these changes. Once a month on Sundays, we will create space just for juniors and seniors where we will talk about everything from how to manage money to finding a new church when you are far from home. We want our students to leave St. Luke's feeling prepared to continue on in their faith journey long after the cap and gown.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul offers this prayer for the church: "May Christ make his home in your hearts as you trust in him, and may your roots grow down deep into God's love and keep you strong" (3:17). This is our prayer for your student as well!

movie night

Doubt is a normal part of growth. Especially during times of transition, we all need to test our beliefs and perhaps even expand them to accommodate the new realities we are experiencing. But just because doubt is normal doesn't make it easy. It can be scary to question our beliefs, especially those that are deeply held.

Creating space to dialogue about doubt isn't easy, either. Forcing the conversation over dinner is unlikely to produce a helpful result. So our suggestion this month is to create a movie night with your teen once this month. Here are four different films that raise significant questions about life and faith:

- **The Apostle** (1997):
A repentant preacher seeks a fresh start, but struggles to leave his past behind. Raises the question: *What does genuine faith look like?*
- **Saved!** (2004):
When a girl becomes pregnant, she finds herself ostracized from her friends. Raises the question: *Can I be a Christian and still believe differently than others around me?*
- **To Save a Life** (2009):
After a childhood friend's death, an all-star athlete must decide whether to sacrifice his dreams. Raises the question: *How do we respond to loss?*
- **Life of Pi** (2012):
A young man who survives a disaster at sea is hurtled into an epic journey of adventure and survival. Raises the question: *What role does faith play in our lives?*

There are certainly many other movies about faith. You might even want to allow your teen to choose which movie is most interesting to him or her. After you watch the movie together, go out for coffee or ice cream and reflect on what you've seen using these questions as a starting point:

- Who or what did you relate to in the movie?
- How were doubts about faith handled in the movie?
- Have you ever experienced a crisis of faith?
- What role has doubt played in your faith journey so far?