



AGE 11

The Branch Years



HOME
22.6

AGE 11

A Snapshot of Life

All teenagers develop differently, but some characteristics are the same. Below are some developmental changes that may be present during these years as your child grows physically, emotionally, and spiritually during the age of 11 to 12 years. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give you some insight into what to expect.

Physical Development

Many children will begin puberty at this age. This will lead to many physical and emotional changes. Boys will experience voice cracking and begin to grow facial and pubic hair. Girls will likely grow tall quicker than boys, grow pubic hair, and develop breasts. Girls may get their periods.

Emotional Development

Boys and girls can easily become moody.

Relational Development

Children become more socially aware. With the change to middle school, a search for new friendships often begins. Learning how to relate to other students in a kind way is often a challenge. Children begin to be embarrassed by their parents.

Spiritual Development

Children are searching for identity at this stage. They are discovering their talents and often try to determine who they are through their abilities rather than their identity in Christ. Spiritually, students can understand some of the basics of the Gospel, but often times struggle to know the difference between faith and works.

Parent Dedication

What is Parent Dedication?

Parent dedication is giving a strong spiritual legacy to your children. The Legacy Principle, the Likelihood Principle, and the Lenses Principle are crucial to your child's spiritual growth. In the parent dedication section you'll find tools to help you grow as a parent. **The Legacy Principle** states that the scriptures tell us that what we do today directly influences the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad (Exodus 20:5-6, Psalm 78:5-8). So passing a strong faith to our children begins by having a strong faith ourselves, modeling the gospel in our marriages and in how we relate to those closest to us. Some of us need to break negative cycles that may have started with our own upbringing in order to launch a new and improved legacy for the next generation. **The Likelihood Principle** states that the good news is this: in the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the values of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that when children learn right from wrong at home under the nurturing, loving training of parents, they tend to adopt mom and dad's beliefs. While there are no guarantees because every child has a free will, kids are far more likely to embrace their parent's faith if they enjoy their parent's company! That's a big part of the reason parents are warned not to "provoke your children to wrath" but rather "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Bottom line – a strong relationship with mom and dad is key to a strong Christian faith. **The Lenses Principle** says Jesus taught that our enemy's primary weapon is deception – getting us to believe and live according to lies rather than truth (John 8:44). And when someone is deceived, he or she does not know it! Our children are growing up in a culture that bombards them with lies. An hour or two per week at church is no match for the hundreds of hours spent with media, school, and friends. Nor can it compete with a child's fallen nature that often wants to rebel against what is good, true and beautiful. It is the job of parents to equip children with the corrective "lenses" of truth so they can better navigate the deceptive roads of life.

Parenting Tool: *Affirmation*

Because of your child's development during 11–12 years of age, it is good for parents to focus on affirmation. The verb affirm means to “state as fact; to assert strongly and publicly.” Affirmation does not mean speaking encouraging lies to your children; it means speaking truth to them. Affirmation is not to be spoken weakly or casually; rather, it is to be spoken strongly and confidently. Children value the opinion of their parents. Therefore, how you speak to them—as well as how you speak of them before others—determines what they will in turn believe about themselves.

As you are aware, and as the Legacy Principle explains, you cannot affirm your child unless you are secure yourself in everything God has stated of you and re-created you to be.

Tips for How to Affirm Your Child

1. Affirm identity in Christ.

Affirm God's current activity in your child's life as well as describe what Christ has already achieved for him or her (see Ephesians 1:1–14). In Christ, we find our truest definition and facts about ourselves. Affirming your children's identity in Christ ensures that your children understand that God loves them. A parent's affirmation creates a sense of self-esteem that helps children find their joy and happiness in Christ without encouraging arrogance or self-centeredness. The following concepts are particularly important at the pre-adolescent stage of your child's development:

- **Physical Beauty** Being in Christ reshapes how Christians should think about physical beauty. As children's bodies change, a prevalent temptation is for them to define themselves by outward looks. We know from the Bible, however, that Christ has not defined us by our outward beauty. 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us, “man looks at the outward appearance but the LORD looks at the heart.” 1 Peter 3:3–4 speaks to women in particular and says, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”
- **Gender Roles** Being in Christ renews the way that we perceive the roles of men and women. Make it your task as parents to affirm your sons

in their masculinity and affirm your daughters in their femininity. Make sure to affirm your child with Christ's definition of biblical manhood and womanhood rather than referring to the world's definitions of masculinity and femininity (1 Peter 3:1–7, 1 Timothy 1:8–15, Ephesians 5:22–33).

- **Talents** Being in Christ means that our talents and abilities do not define us. Our talents may describe us, but they do not define us. Your child's abilities are gifts from God and are given for the greater purpose of being used to glorify God. Be sure to affirm not only your child's talents, but also the proper use of these talents (Colossians 3:17, Ephesians 6:5–9, 1 Corinthians 10:31–33).

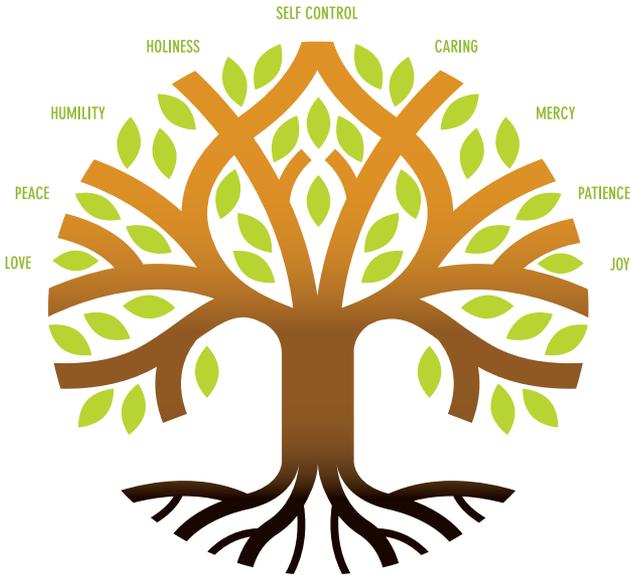
- **Salvation by Grace through Faith** If your child is a believer by this age, affirm to them the grace he or she has received by faith. It is not uncommon for a child to doubt a prior decision to become a Christian as they grow in their understanding of the Gospel. It is possible that as your child comes to a greater understanding of the Gospel, your child may correctly realize he or she has never truly placed faith in Christ alone to be saved. Other times, children can doubt their salvation because of a simple lack of discipleship from the time they first became a Christian. To help your children with this important decision, be sure to speak regularly of the Gospel. You can do this in the family times of prayer by thanking God for Jesus and His grace that is received by faith alone. Another way to do this is to share your own personal testimonies with your children regularly. Also, when your children disobey, use the opportunity to speak about Christ's ultimate forgiveness.

2. Affirm both publicly and privately.

Affirming your child both in private and public settings will communicate to your child that you really do believe in what you are affirming.

3. Affirm by rewarding your children.

Our heavenly Father rewards His children and promises rewards for them in heaven. Parents can affirm children through tangible rewards, such as physical affection, surprises, and quality time. Think of creative, fresh ways to reward your children. Read Matthew 6:1–18 to see how our heavenly Father rewards His children.



How you speak to your youth, as well as how you speak of them before others, determines what they will believe about themselves.



Blessing Your Children

How do I bless my children?

There is power in a blessing. The Hebrew word for blessing is used over 640 times in the Old Testament alone. Do you know the very first thing God did after creating us? In Genesis 1:27–28 we read, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them...” We were made for blessing! Based on examples in the Bible, there are five basic elements that make up a biblical blessing:

1. Meaningful Touch Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation—even physical health! For anyone who wishes to see the blessing grow and develop in a child, touch is an integral part of the blessing. As Mark 10:13–16 says, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

2. A Spoken Message Words have an incredible power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. This is particularly true when those words are coming from our parents. Therefore, the blessing hinges on a spoken message. Your child desperately needs to hear a spoken blessing from you. As parents, we must be keenly aware of the power of the spoken word and also be aware of how powerful the absence of spoken words can be. Both people and relationships suffer in the absence of words of blessing, or those spoken words of love, encouragement, and support. Proverbs 16:24 reminds us, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones...”

3. Expression of High Value To “value” something means to attach great importance to it. This is at the very heart of the concept of blessing. Anytime we bless someone, we are attaching high value to him or her. Our children need to hear that they are someone who has great worth apart from his or her performance. As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

4. Picture of a Special Future Communicating a special future to a child is another important part of giving the blessing. Children are filled with the potential to be all God intends them to be. Picturing a special future for your children can help bring out the best in their lives. It gives them a positive direction to strive toward and surrounds them with hope. When a child feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude toward life. We can see this very thing in our relationship with the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

5. An Active Commitment The first four elements listed above are the building blocks of the blessing, but the mortar that holds them together is an active commitment—the fifth element. This element of the blessing describes the responsibility that goes with the blessing. Parents need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children’s blessing. You have God’s Word through the Scriptures as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a commitment to do everything possible to help the one blessed to be successful. Isaiah 40:31 encourages us, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

For more information on the biblical blessing, see *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent, PhD.

Identity

At this age, your child is on a quest to find out his or her true identity. Use the verses from Ephesians 1:3–19 below to bless your child’s quest to fully know identity in Christ.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power”

—Ephesians 1:3–19

Remind your child that he or she has already been blessed in Christ. What does “every spiritual blessing” include? The following verses from Ephesians specifically answer how Christ has already blessed us:

- “He chose us in Him [Christ]...” (1:4)
- “Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself... by which He made us accepted in the Beloved” (1:5–6)
- “In Him we have redemption through His blood...” (1:7)
- “The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (1:7)
- “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance...” (1:11)
- “In Him you also trusted...you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13)

From these verses, we can gather that there are three distinct blessings that are specifically mentioned for our teens to know and receive. Answer the following reflective questions related to each of these three blessings.

I. The Blessing of Knowing the Hope in Christ

“...that you may know what is the hope of His calling”—Ephesians 1:18

1. In what ways is my child already showing signs of hope in Christ?

2. In what ways do I hope my child will display hope in Christ?

3. What challenge will my child likely be facing this year in regard to placing his or her hope in Christ?

4. How will I commit to helping my child face this challenge?

5. When will be the best time to give my child this blessing?

6. Is there a “meaningful marker” that I can give to my child to make the blessing memorable?

II. The Blessing of Knowing the Richness of Our Inheritance in Christ

“...that you may know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” —Ephesians 1:18

1. In what ways is my child already showing that he or she realizes that this life is temporary, and that God has an eternal reward waiting for believers?

2. In what ways do I hope my child will live for eternity and not for this temporary world?

3. What challenge is my child facing this year in regard to living for eternity and not for this temporary world?

4. How will I commit to helping my child face this challenge?

5. When will be the best time to give my child this blessing?

6. Is there a "meaningful marker" that I can give my child to make the blessing memorable?

III. The Blessing of Knowing the Immeasurable Great Power That Is In Us

"That you may know... what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe"—Ephesians 1:19

1. In what ways do I see God's power already at work in my child?

2. In what ways do I hope my child will display God's power?

3. What challenge will my child likely be facing this year in regard to displaying God's power?

4. How will I commit to helping my child face this challenge?

5. When will be the best time to give my child this blessing?

6. Is there a "meaningful marker" that I can give to my child to make the blessing memorable?

Family Time

What is Family Time?

The idea of family worship is both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will equip you to lead your family in worship.

What does the Bible say about growing together in Christ as a family?

The importance of the family in discipleship is prominent throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). Husbands are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of their children (Ephesians 6:1-3). These are huge responsibilities, but God has promised to provide everything we need to lead our families well, according to His design. As leaders in our home, the critical thing to remember is that God's Word must be written upon our hearts. Our faith in Christ and reliance on His Word should be authentic, tangible, and transparent.

What are the benefits of family worship?

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. Jesus will bring joy to families who worship and grow together. The love of Christ will be more evident in a family where worship is central.
- Family worship effects change in the world. As families read, pray, study, sing, and grow together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations, while influencing each other's lives for generations to come.

What should we do during family worship?

Keep it simple. Consider the following elements as you worship together:

READ—Read a portion of the Bible together. Don't worry if you've already read it in your time alone with God. Reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!).

DISCUSS—After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read, much like you do in your own time alone with God. Give everyone a chance to discuss the passage and consider how it applies to everyday life. Ideally, you will lead by example and share with your family what you learned in your time alone with God and the difference it has made.

PRAY—Consider praying through the key points of the Bible passage that you have just read and discussed. Ask God to change your hearts, minds, lives, and family accordingly. This specific prayer can lead to a more general time of prayer that uses the letters P-R-A-Y as a guide:

Praise—Worship God for who He is.

Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.

Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever He leads you.

Try to include everyone as you pray, even if this is on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to keep a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God's answers to those requests.

SING—Sing or listen to music together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, that person may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, you can sing along with music from a CD or DVD and discuss what the songs mean.

MEMORIZE—Choose key verses or passages to memorize. You may want to work on a verse or passage for a week or a month. Either way, be sure to work together, taking time to understand what you are memorizing. Periodically, set aside time to review verses over the course of the year.

Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

1. What if a father or mother is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume believing parents. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a follower of Christ, the mother will need to take the initiative for leading family worship in a non-offensive and non-threatening way. In the case of a mother not being a follower of Christ, the father should lead with compassion and sensitivity.

2. What about a single parent family?

In this case, the responsibility falls to the single parent. This, along with the many other duties that single parents have, may present a significant challenge. However, God will supply great grace and everything we need to raise and strengthen our children in the faith.

3. What about children?

The dynamic of family worship will vary considerably depending upon the ages of the children involved. The goal for every child in the family is not the same. With young children, focus on the importance of knowing God, respecting the Bible, and worshiping as a family. With older children, dig into Scripture more, ask good questions, and discuss how the Bible relates to life and how a relationship with Christ changes us every day.

4. How do I keep things interesting if the ages of my children vary widely?

Regardless of age, include children in planning, reading, singing, teaching, and praying as much as possible and as much as maturity will allow. Make sure to keep things simple, and don't be afraid to keep it short; listen well, and be aware of what is happening in each child's heart and life.

5. What time of day is best for family worship?

Timing is far less important than consistency. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since everyone may be present at that time.



Deuteronomy 6:7 says,
"You shall teach [God's words] diligently
to your children, and shall talk of them
when you sit in your house, and when you
walk by the way, and when you lie down,
and when you rise up."

Concentrated time in family worship
can serve as a catalyst and support for
"as you go, as you sit, as you walk"
conversations and applications of God's
Word within our families. Encouraging
and challenging our spouses and children
in Christian faith happens best in the
context of real, everyday life. Family
worship builds consistency into our family
routines and opens up many opportunities
and possibilities within our family
relationships.



A Family Time

from Joshua 3, 6 & 24

READ

o Forty years had passed since the Israelites were first delivered out of Egypt and the day was approaching for Israel to finally enter God's promised land, the land of Canaan. As the story unfolds, God is faithful to keep His word. God lead Israel across the Jordan, holding back the river for all the Israelites to pass over on dry ground.

o Joshua 3:7-17

o God was ever-present as they marched around the city of Jericho. The walls fell down, just as the Lord had promised.

o Joshua 6:1-20

o God was faithful to the Israelites when He gave them the land He promised to Abraham and his descendants. God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, out of slavery, and did many great signs, preserving Israel along the way and driving out their enemies. At the end of Joshua's life, the land of Canaan had been divided among the Israelites. Then Joshua gathered together all the people of Israel. He reminded them of the many promises God had made and fulfilled, then told them to choose whom they would serve. Would they serve the gods of their fathers, the gods of the Amorites, or the true God of Israel? The children of Israel replied, "...we also will serve the Lord, for He is our God." (Joshua 24:18)

o Joshua 24:1-24

The Bottom Line: God is faithful to keep His word.

Questions:

- Chapter 24 of Joshua details numerous times when God had proven Himself faithful, so why do you think Joshua asked the people whom they were going to serve?
- Had they ever made the choice to turn away from God?
- What does that show you about God's mercy towards His children?
- How can we, as parents, lead our families in a way that serves the Lord

whole-heartedly?

- How can we, as children, be a part of our families in a way that serves the Lord whole-heartedly?

PRAY

o Intercession means praying for others' spiritual and physical needs. God tells us in His Word to pray for others. If you desire to read some passages from Scripture about this, some are listed below.

Biblical Basis for Intercession:

1 Corinthians 10:3-5; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 6:18-21; 1 Timothy 2:1-8
Take an opportunity for those gathered with you in worship to mention specific prayer needs of others. Pray for each one of these requests specifically.

o Pray for the nation of Chad.

- Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world. Ask God to provide for the Chadians so His name will be great among them.
- Pray for God to bless the efforts of those translating the Bible and working in other ways to spread the Gospel of Christ.
- Pray for the believers in Chad to take the Gospel to the vast number of Chadians who do not know Christ.
- Pray for God to send laborers to the 86 people groups who do not have a Gospel witness.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Joshua 24:15 "And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions to help their children discover the truths of God's Word and worship Him together.

Preschool (Birth-Kindergarten)

o Before you begin: Gather some items you will use to reward your preschooler for following directions in this game. (Example: small pieces of candy, Cheerios, or stickers)

o Game: "Simon Says" or "Mommy or Daddy Says"

Tell your preschooler you are going to play a game that will require them to follow directions. If they follow the rules correctly, then you promise to give them a reward. Begin to play the game by giving directions like the ones below: Mommy/Daddy says, "Touch your toes." When they respond correctly to your directions, then give them the reward. Make sure you praise them for following your directions correctly and use the phrase, "You did a great job, following my directions so I will keep my promise and give you this reward." Repeat this with a few more commands, like; wiggle your ears, jump up and down, scratch your elbow, pat your knees, stand on one foot, etc...

o Tell your preschooler that you were proud of them for the way that they followed your directions and that is why you kept your promise and gave them the rewards. Tell them just like Mommy/Daddy kept their promise, there is One who always keeps His promises and that is God! God is faithful to keep His promises when His people obey His directions. He wants us to always obey and follow Him with all of our hearts. Sometimes, we mess up and do things that are not what He wants us to do, and even then, God loves us so much He still wants to keep His promises to us.

Children (Grades 1-5)

o Joshua 24:1-24 Gather together materials to make a sign that you will hang in your house. The sign will say, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Before you create the sign, parents should share how God has been gracious and faithful to your family and church over the last few years. Make it clear to your child that your family will serve the Lord and worship only Him (this would be a good time to remind them of Jesus' work on their behalf). Then create the sign and hang it up for all to see. You can use that moment as a time to share why you want to worship and serve only Him (your personal testimony of God's saving grace). Once the sign is completed pray about your family's commitment to the Lord, praising and thanking Him for His grace and faithfulness.

Students (Grades 6-12)

o Students are constantly bombarded with things that promise they can provide students with ultimate satisfaction. (i.e.: if you buy a certain makeup you will be beautiful, own this video game you will be cool, or take that pill and you will be skinny.) Reread Joshua 24 and make a list of all the times the Lord refers to a promise made or a promise kept. Knowing that Christ, the one true Savior, always follows through on His promises is an incredibly

comforting thought. He is the only one who has and always will be faithful to keep His promises.

o Wayne Grudem said in his book, *Christian Beliefs*, "The essence of true faith is taking God at His word and relying on Him to do as He promised." Believing God is God is one thing, but why do you think it is so hard to rely on Him? How does knowing God has always kept His promises help us to rely on Him?

Church Community

What is Church Community?

With so many young people leaving the church after they are under the leadership of their parents, it is important that we teach the necessity of the church. Scripture says that the church is the Bride of Christ and He has given the church these four responsibilities: worship God, connect with others, grow in God's Word, and go tell the world about Christ. It is important that our children understand the heart behind what the church is meant to be and that our children allow Christ to transform their hearts to serve Him through His church.

We go to church to worship our God who has saved each of us and given us a personal relationship with Him. We go to church to come together to celebrate our Heavenly Father by giving Him our worship. Our children should see families living their lives side-by-side, sharing experiences, caring for each other, being open with one another, and praying together. Our children should know that the church is a place where they can grow in their faith and gain the knowledge that will help them grow closer to the Lord and live a more abundant life. In other words, our children should know the church is a place where we can be transformed. Finally, the church leads us to the point where we must open our eyes and our hearts to step out and follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit to reach the world around us.



When Your Child Struggles With Assurance of Salvation

Salvation is a personal decision that is between one person and the Lord. It is not a parent's place to convince a child whether he or she is saved or not. A parent's role is to fully present the Gospel, and then urge children to honestly look at themselves to see if they truly believe in it or not. Below are some strategies and concepts that may be of help if your child is struggling with assurance of salvation.

1. Ask why your child doubts.

Just because a person doubts does not mean that he or she is not saved. Does your child doubt because of a particular sin, a grievous sin, or a continual sin in his or her life? Does he doubt because he cannot articulate the Gospel? Does she doubt because a lack of knowledge about biblical truth? Are the doubts partially due to a lack of discipleship? Knowing why your child doubts will assist you in knowing how to counsel him or her.

2. Determine if the doubts are biblical reasons to doubt salvation.

Consider the following verses as you prayerfully approach the situation.

- *"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother."—1 John 3:7–10*
- *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?...Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."—James 2:14, 17*

When people become Christians, they do not instantly know everything about the depths of the Gospel or all there is to know about living as a Christian. They are babes in Christ. The role of parents, as the main disciplers

of their children, is that once a child prays to receive Christ, parents affirm the decision and help the child understand the the Gospel and how it enables a believer for spiritual growth. 1 John says that continual sin is a reason to doubt whether a person is born of God or not. Parents need to help their child know whether continual sin is a result of never truly being born of God or whether the doubts result from a lack of discipleship for a child to know how to put off sin, renew his or her mind, and put on righteousness. Ultimately, the parent cannot answer this question for the child. The honest answer is between the child and the Lord.

3. Present the Gospel.

Share the following verses with your child to apply Truth and provide peace and comfort in the midst of his or her doubt.

- *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”—1 Corinthians 15:3–4*
- *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” — John 3:16*
- *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”—2 Corinthians 5:21*
- *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”—Ephesians 2:10*
- *“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”—Romans 10:9–10*

Salvation is received by faith alone in Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death and resurrection. Salvation is a free gift of forgiveness of sins and new life that God extends to us. Any form of our good works does not earn salvation; rather, it is received by faith.

4. Explain how a believer deals with sin.

Use the following verses to explain to your child how he or she can deal with sin.

- *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—1 John 1:8–9*
- *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
—Romans 12:1–2*
- *“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness...” —Ephesians 4:17-24*

When a believer sins, he or she does not forfeit salvation. When we sin, we are able to confess our sins to God, knowing that he is faithful and just to forgive us. Once we confess, we then are to enter into the process of putting off sin, renewing our minds, and putting on righteousness.

5. Explain that assurance of salvation does not rest in us, but in Christ.

Use these powerful verses to remind your child we need only put our trust in Jesus—and not ourselves—to receive salvation.

- *“And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater*

than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”—1 John 3:19–24

- “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
—Romans 8:31–39

One of the wonderful truths of Scripture is that salvation is not ours to hang on to in fear that we may lose it. Salvation is a free gift from God that He gives us! Rather than it resting upon us to keep it, we get to rest in the truth that God is holding on to us. God has promised salvation to those who place their faith in Him.

6. Let your child determine if he or she is saved or not.

Share this verse with your child to help him or her see the truth of his or her relationship with Jesus as it is.

- “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received

mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God..."—2 Corinthians 4:1–2

Your role as parents is to not play the "Holy Spirit." Your role is to present the truth of Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your child's heart. Place your trust in God to reveal to your child his or her standing with Him. Let your child make the decision.



A rectangular title card with a light beige background and a decorative border of small green dots. The text is written in a cursive, orange-brown font.

Discipling As You Go

What is Discipling As You Go?

Deuteronomy 6 is clear in its instructions to parents: constantly, as you live your life, be an example and train your children to follow the Lord. As parents, it is important for us to live a consistent life of faith in front of our children. As things happen in life, we should use those events to train our children, not only in right and wrong, but also in how to make decisions to live the abundant life that Christ has for us. We should model and explain how God's truth should be the standard of how we live our lives. In other words, even from the beginning, we should teach wisdom rather than the facts of "do's and don'ts." Faith is much easier caught than taught. Parents should always help their children see life's decisions through the lenses of our faith.



Parenting Tools: *Teens & Social Media*

At the time of this writing, most 6th graders are using social media. Social media requires a lot of responsibility and maturity on the part of those using it. We hope some of the following suggestions will help you disciple your child in the use of social media.

Explain how social media, like everything else, is to be used for the glory of God.

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

—Colossians 1:16–18

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” —Colossians 3:17

In conversations with your children, help them to understand that even social media has eternal significance. As all things in life, God is Creator and Sustainer. All things were made by Him and ultimately for Him. Discuss with your child ways that social media can be used for the glory of God.

Help your child find identity in Christ rather than in a social media profile.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”—Galatians 2:20

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

—Ephesians 2:10

Most social media outlets serve as an expression of the self and allow a person to write a bio, share photos, and express ideas. With social media,

people tend to present themselves to the world in hopes that they are perceived as they would like to be perceived. Because of this, it is extremely easy for social media users to find their identities in their social media profiles.

Users may tend to conclude whether they are popular or not by how many friends or followers they have. Secretly, narcissistically we ask ourselves, “Do I have more followers than the people I am following?” It is easy to perceive our value based off of how many likes we get after posting a photo. Furthermore, if a picture we post does not get enough “likes,” then we may decide to delete it. Being discouraged by a lack of “likes,” teen girls may be driven to post immodest photos in hopes of getting more likes and comments.

Approaching social media in these ways contradicts a biblical understanding of who Christ has created us to be. As you talk with your children about their use of social media, help them to understand that social media is not an accurate way to determine who they are. Only the Bible gives us assured truths about ourselves.

Teach your child how to interact appropriately on social media.

Just as parents should teach their kids how to interact with others face-to-face, so, too, parents should advise their kids how to interact with others in the social media realm. Most social media outlets are designed for people to connect with one another. Therefore, there is the need for teens to have wisdom and tact as they use social media.

Just as you might imagine, conversations similar to those that take place at a sleepover or at the school lunch table when adults are not around can take place through social media. Teens often participate in a social media activity called “TBH” (To Be Honest), which is similar to a game of “truth or dare,” without the dare part. Teens may also take part in what is called “rating,” a practice in which students will rate each other with a number according to good looks. These social media activities, among many others, are constantly evolving and are ways that teens are likely to interact with each other. Parents should make their children aware that similar social media conversations like these take place. Parents also need to explain that the difference between face-to-face and online conversations is that while face-to-face conversations usually can stay between a small group of people,

social media conversations are usually on display for everyone to see.

Advise your child about social media safety.

Inform your child about some of the safety risks of social media. Explain that since social media is through a screen and is not a face-to-face interaction, it can be easy for people to present themselves deceptively online and then actually be a different person in real life. Help your child know when to block access to another person or avoid people that he or she does not know.

Parents, understand that your child lives in a culture that praises those who have the most followers/friends. It will be tempting for your children to compete for followers for the sake of popularity, even if it means that they do not know who is following them.

In addition to safety from strangers, parents should also warn their children about the dangers of sexually explicit content. Whether it is YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Vine, or Snapchat, it is not hard to access images or dialogue about sexually explicit content through these social media venues. Help your child be aware that sexually explicit content is prevalent in each social media outlet and can come in the form of direct messages containing revealing photos sent privately to your child, searches for swimsuit models, or pornography.

Model to your child how to be in the world but not of the world.

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

—John 17: 15–18

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us... For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever

makes manifest is light. Therefore He says:

*“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”
Walk in Wisdom*

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” —Ephesians 5:1–2, 8–16

Probably the best way to approach social media is to “be in the world but not of the world.” Social media’s influence is growing and becoming an established and accustomed way in which people connect and communicate. To not engage in social media is almost to avoid being in the world. Since it is the language of the people, it is profitable and fitting that Christians be involved with social media with a missional mindset.

As our Legacy Principle communicates, it is impossible to expect our children to “be in the world but not of the world” in the realm of social media, unless we as parents are modeling this practice before them. For these reasons, we encourage you to be on every social media outlet that your children are using; this allows you to do two things. First, as parents you are able to supervise and protect when necessary. Second and more importantly, you can model how to missionally be “in the world but not of it.”



We encourage you to be on every social media outlet that your children are using; this allows you to do two things. First, as parents you are able to supervise and protect when necessary. Second and more importantly, you can model how to missionally be “in the world but not of it.”