



10 Tips for Having Deeper Faith Conversations with Your Kids

As mentioned in the Focus on the Family Daily Broadcast, “Answering Your Kids’ Tough Faith Questions”

“It’s not possible to outline a definitive one-size-fits-all conversation plan. Every family has a unique group of personalities, ages, interests, relationships, and spiritual histories to work with. All of those factors affect how to best engage with your kids. That said, there are some things that will facilitate deeper faith conversations in any family.” – Natasha Crain

1. **Commit to continually deepening your understanding of Christianity.** There is no replacement for you. If you’re not prepared to be the number one representative of Jesus in your kids’ lives, you’ll lose spiritual credibility. When you can’t answer your kids’ big questions, you’ll leave them wondering if all this really matters. Make continual study a way of life. *I’ve created a list of recommended resources at www.NatashaCrain.com/ReadingList.*
2. **Make spiritual space in your home.** By spiritual space I mean dedicated time for your family to engage together in growing your understanding of and relationship with God. Start with 30 minutes once per week—a feasible goal for virtually any family. Then add time as you are able. Making spiritual space will completely change your family’s spiritual life.
3. **Study the Bible with your kids. Really.** I know that sounds like Christian parenting 101. But here are two reasons I’m including the seemingly obvious here. First, even if you know it’s important, statistics show you’re probably not doing it (fewer than 1 in 10 Christian families read the Bible together in a given week). Second, I want to point out the difference between *reading* the Bible and *studying* it. Simply reading the Bible helps kids learn key stories and events. But studying the Bible helps them learn what it all means and introduces them to the importance of interpretation.
4. **Proactively and regularly ask your kids what questions they have.** Parents often believe their kids will ask questions about faith because they’ve been told they can. But there are reasons your kids may never walk through that door, even when they know it’s open. You need to proactively

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pull your kids' questions to the forefront of conversation. You don't have to have all the answers, but you do need to provide the forum. Our family dedicates a night each week to letting our kids ask any questions they have about God. In case you're wondering, they've never run out of things to ask.

5. **Ask your kids the tough questions they don't ask of you.** We can't just react to the questions our kids happen to have. We need to proactively put all the questions we know are important (like the 40 in my book, *Keeping Your Kids on God's Side*) in front of them.
6. **If your kids are struggling with faith, become a detective.** Don't panic, and don't immediately start dispensing answers. Instead, find out (1) what exactly they mean when they say what they say, and (2) why they've come to that conclusion. Then you'll be able to address the real concerns.
7. **Emphasize critical thinking skills.** Challenges to your kids' faith often come wrapped in a pretty package of rhetoric, and it can be difficult to isolate the underlying issue from the propaganda. Teaching kids how to think critically means teaching them how to objectively evaluate the validity of what someone else is asserting and how to draw logically appropriate conclusions themselves. To do that, encourage your kids to talk through the answers to any questions before you offer your own knowledge. This allows you to directly observe their thought process and challenge the validity of their conclusions in a safe environment.
8. **Work with your kids on how to seek answers to faith questions online.** A great way to do this with older kids is by giving them a question and asking them to research the answer online. Ask them to keep track of their process: What did they do first? What kind of sites did they end up visiting? What differences in information and views did they find between these sources? What sources did they end up trusting for the answer, and why?
9. **Teach your kids about religions and worldviews other than Christianity.** When my twins were toddlers, I started teaching them the letters of the alphabet using an easel we had. I put one magnetic letter at a time, and they had to tell me what it was. Months later, I bought them a preschool alphabet workbook so they could learn writing, too. The letter c page had a tree with several c's and o's hanging on it. I was dumbfounded when my son, who had known his letters for months, couldn't distinguish between the c's and the o's. He had always seen and identified c and o individually on the easel. But now he couldn't tell them apart next to each other. Similarly, our kids can get confused by competing worldviews. Study and compare the actual beliefs of each worldview to give them a side-by-side comparison of the truth with what *sounds* like the truth.
10. **Start today.** It will be tempting to do nothing with this list. The spiritual status quo in your family is probably quite comfortable, particularly if your kids are still young. But please don't get into the mind-set that you have an indefinite amount of time to impact your kids' faith. Don't put it off. You really should start today in transforming your family's spiritual life.

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