
parent cue

IF YOU ONLY KNEW



WE'RE TEACHING THIS

Have you ever felt a little crazy? Maybe you cheer for a sports team that no one else likes. Maybe you're the only person who doesn't love the new band everyone else is talking about. Maybe it seems like everyone understands what's going on in Spanish class except you. When you're in a situation where it seems everyone agrees or understands—and you don't—it can feel like you're losing your mind. You wonder, *"Am I missing something?"* Honestly, a lot of us have felt that way at church. We hear people talk about praying or reading the Bible in a way that sounds like it's the most exciting thing in the world, except...for us, it isn't. In

fact, when it comes to the habits that are supposed to grow our faith the most, they're actually the ones we want to do the least. And maybe that's just how it is. Since prayer and Bible reading and church are good for you, maybe you're just supposed to just suffer through them. But what if you're missing something? What if the people who do these things just see something you don't see? And what if a single piece of missing information could completely change the way you interact with God, His Word, and His people? Maybe you'd go from "have to" to "want to," if you only knew.

THINK ABOUT THIS

By Sandra Stanley

Recently I was asked by a mom of a pre-teen if she should force her child to read his Bible, have a daily devotional time, quiet time, whatever you want to call it. I think what she really wanted to know was how to lead her son to "own his faith." She just wasn't sure how to put words around that. She thought maybe forcing Bible reading and prayer time might be the path that leads there. I suppose it's possible there is a kid out there who would respond positively to that approach. I didn't have one.

While I've never encountered a perfect formula that I think would work for every kid, I have a few suggestions for leading your children to own their faith.

- Model it.
- Encourage it.
- Make it easy.

Model it. Stop for a moment and ask yourself if you're modeling for your kids what faith looks like. Do they see you consistently spending time alone with God? Do they ever see a verse of Scripture that you're trying to memorize stuck to your bathroom mirror or dash of your car? Have you ever shown them a journal entry for something you're praying about? Have they ever overheard a conversation you've had with someone about something God is teaching you or an area in which you feel He's stretching you? Have you shared with them what God might be doing in your heart, even regarding being a better parent? Let them SEE what God is accomplishing in you through your time alone with Him. Model it.

Encourage it. Sometimes our kids simply need our suggestions in order to begin thinking in a certain direction. As parents, we tend to know our kids pretty well. Is your child a morning or evening person? Start there with a simple suggestion of the time of day they might consider. Word



of caution: **there is a difference between occasional suggestions and nagging.** Recruit your son or daughter's small group leader to help you encourage a regular devotional time. Often our kids respond better when someone else throws an idea their way. Don't tell anyone, but occasionally we resorted to bribing our kids to read certain books or listen to certain messages. I didn't say that...

Make it easy. Does your child have an age appropriate Bible of his or her own? We started really early having a Bible beside each of our kids' beds. Early on, it was mostly picture Bibles with short Bible stories. As they learned to read, we made sure they had one they could read on their own. Every Easter, I made sure there was some great devotional tool in their Easter basket – an age appropriate Bible if I thought maybe they had outgrown their current one, a journal once

they were old enough to begin processing their thoughts and insights, cool pens and highlighters, maybe a great book or biography. For the boys, sometimes it would be a book about a sports figure who models faith. Get creative and make it easy!

Don't expect them to immediately have the same level of commitment to their spiritual habits as you do. Take their personalities, preferences, and maturity into account. Don't push too hard, you already know where that leads! Simply model it, encourage it, and make it easy. In their own timing, you'll possibly find that they inspire and challenge YOU.

From *Parenting Teenagers Part 4: Owning Their Faith*. For more from Sandra, check out SandraStanley.com.

TRY THIS

During this series, we are encouraging your student to try something new in their walk with God. Maybe for them it's...

- praying honestly.
- reading the Bible for themselves.
- participating in a church or student ministry group.

In order to model this behavior, **try something new in your own spiritual life.** You don't have to be a professional

pastor, church-goer, or even sure what you think about God and faith to try it out. Just choose of the suggestions above and then give it a shot. **Share what you learned with your kid.** You may just find them more willing to own their faith when they see you working to do the same.

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