

# ZION'S FAITH AT HOME MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER theParentLink<sup>SM</sup>



January 2011

## How to Handle Doubt & Questions

"Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith," wrote Frederick Buechner. "They keep it awake and moving." This runs contrary to most people's assumptions about doubt—that questioning your faith proves you're a weak Christian. But when we have doubts about something, we're forced to examine its truthfulness and consider how much of ourselves we wish to invest in it. If we (and our children) are going to truly own our beliefs, we must critically evaluate them first.

Teaching your children that it's okay to express doubts and ask questions is crucial for their faith development. "When the doubts get ignored, it could eventually result in serious skepticism of one's worldview and personal faith," says professor Dean Hardy. Use these tips to help kids wonder and open up:

**Don't feel threatened when children want to ask questions.** These queries help kids verbalize their doubts. View tough questions not as a sign of rebellion but as opportunities to teach and learn.

**Listen intently, and don't shame kids for asking questions.** Reflect on what children say and affirm their feelings with phrases such as "You seem afraid" or "You look like you have a question."

**Make your family a "safe zone."** Foster attitudes that say it's okay to question and doubt. That will encourage children to feel free to think critically and explore honestly.

### When Doubts Arise

In *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do About It* (Master Books), Ken Ham and Britt Beemer explore the epidemic of young people leaving the traditional church in droves. They cite a George Barna study showing that 61% of young adults had been churched at one point during their teen years but are now spiritually disengaged. They also discovered that of young adults who no longer believe that all the Bible accounts are true:

- 40% first had doubts in middle school.
- 44% first had doubts in high school.
- 11% first had doubts in college.

PowerSource



#### Ask God:

1. To help your children know it's okay to have questions.
2. To help you be a good listener when kids share their doubts.
3. To reassure your whole family of God's presence and love.

### Parenting Insights

These age-level insights from *Children's Ministry Magazine* track how young Christians' thoughts and questions change over time.

#### Ages 3 to 5

Older preschoolers begin to ask "why?" and "how?" Miracles, symbolism, and God's nonphysical nature are often confusing for kids this age. Answer their questions simply with words that mean exactly what they say.

#### Ages 6 to 8

Children this age begin to distinguish between fantasy and reality and begin to use logical thinking. Give them answers that allow them to use these skills; otherwise, they'll get frustrated.

#### Ages 9 to 12

Older children tend to question some basic beliefs they previously accepted. They want to explore an issue from many perspectives. Share your own doubts and help kids find a niche to put their faith into action.



**January 23<sup>rd</sup>**  
**12:30 pm -2:00 pm**

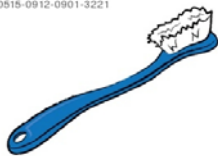
Please join us at *KENT BOWL* for an afternoon of fun! Cost is \$8 per student & that includes pizza and soda! Please sign up on the Faith at Home Ministries board. Carpooling is available.

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The offering focus for  
January  
is

individually wrapped  
**toothbrushes**

© Pamela Perry  
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0515-0912-0901-3221



these items will be  
donated to  
Lutheran World Relief

## What's Up With Kids

More Christian kids are becoming "Christian chameleons" these days, according to David R. Smith, content development director at [TheSource4YM.com](http://TheSource4YM.com). (Read his entire article by typing "chameleons" into the search engine at [wwwSimplyYouthMinistry.com](http://wwwSimplyYouthMinistry.com).)

Many teenagers reflect the morals of the world rather than Scripture. The sad truth is that the lifestyle of a "churched" or "Christian" teenager is far too similar to the lifestyle of an unchurched or non-Christian teenager these days. The line has become so blurred that distinguishing *who's who* is often hard to do.

Chameleons blend in with the backdrop. Their entire image morphs depending on where they are at any given moment. When Christian teenagers do it, they develop an "image problem," according to David Kinnaman, author of *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity*. Studying a group he calls "Mosaics," those born between 1984 and 2002, Kinnaman found that 84% of those young people knew at least one committed Christian, but only 15% of this same group could see a difference in lifestyle between themselves and their self-proclaimed Christian friends. How sad is that?

Kids don't need us to lower the standards that govern their spiritual lives, nor do they need us to share empty platitudes. No, they need a total image makeover. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul writes that "we are being transformed into his image." With every passing day, we're supposed to look more and more like Jesus. The church—literally "the called-out ones"—was never intended to mirror the world that so desperately needs it. But that's exactly what's happening! Kids' greatest need isn't a new message, just conformity to the old one. Talk with your teenagers about the example they set before their peers. Many of our actions are seen by others, and all of them are tied to consequences, for good or bad.

## Parenting Insights

Turn on children's "gratitude lights" with these tips from *Children's Ministry Magazine*:

1. **Encourage the language of thankfulness.** If children neglect to show gratitude, prompt them with words such as "What can you say to your friend for sharing?"
2. **At unexpected times, give small gifts.** Let children know you think of them often and always thank God for them.
3. **Affirm children's feelings of gratitude.** When you observe physical demonstrations such as eyes that light up, say, "I can see how much you're thankful for that."
4. **Model thankfulness in the little things.** Thank your children for picking up something you drop or for being patient with a sibling.

# Provide Godly Perspective About Moral Issues

The “generation gap” between teenagers and parents is evident not just in different tastes in music and clothes. Many of today’s young people also have different attitudes from their parents about moral issues such as homosexuality and cohabitation. Meanwhile, cursing has become an accepted form of everyday conversation, and pornography is spreading like wildfire, due to new technology.



Jim Burns, author of *The 10 Building Blocks for a Happy Family*, says one essential building block is healthy morals and values. “The decisions kids make today will often affect them for the rest of their lives,” he writes. “Parents have significant powers of influence—through modeling and teaching—over the morals and values their kids carry into adulthood.”

In our “anything goes” society, it isn’t enough to just preach your beliefs. To instill lasting Christian values in your kids, you should lead by example, remembering that perfection isn’t expected (or possible).

Don’t be afraid to bring up controversial topics and ask how your kids feel about them. Instead of quickly shooting down their opinions, listen to their reasoning. Pay attention to what your kids’ friends and media choices say about moral issues. Then dig up some tough questions and connect Scripture to real-life moral dilemmas. Most importantly, let kids know you aren’t the moral decision-makers; God sets his standards for right and wrong in the Bible. And he promises to bless people who strive to follow his commands out of love for him. Use this issue of “The Parent Link” to help you and your kids tackle tough moral issues.

**Although the loss of a moral compass is a complex issue, youth-culture expert Walt Mueller says the starting point for turning it around is rather simple. He looks in the mirror every morning and asks himself:**

- Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?
- Do you love your neighbor as yourself?
- Are you modeling those priorities to the kids who live under this roof?
- Is that model clear and consistent to the point that they know where you stand on matters of right and wrong?
- When they fail, do you show them the same grace your heavenly Father shows you every minute of every day?
- Are you praying for your children?
- Are you involved enough in their lives to know where they are struggling and where they are succeeding morally?
- Do you affirm them, compliment them, and tell them you’re proud when they make good choices?
- Are you willing to speak up and lovingly challenge those assumptions and ideas they adopt that are contrary to God’s standards for their lives?

## Senior High Youth

**FAITH CAFÉ Presents:**

**January 16<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup>** “What’s your number?” Put real dollar and “sense” into your career choices. Thinking about your future? You have not heard this information before!

**January 30<sup>th</sup>** we finish up this series, but the topic is: Relationships and Life issues: Who to date? Who not to date? Attraction? Caution! Honest dialogue here!



Senior High  
**MISSION TRIP**

Contact Berit Wright for more information.

## Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Encourage your teenagers to open up about tough moral issues by asking point-blank questions:

1. If two people are going to get married anyway, is it okay for them to live together first? Why or why not?
2. What effects can porn have on people's sexual attitudes and habits?
3. What does it feel like to "go against the tide" and stand up against immoral behavior? What can help you face that challenge?

## ZION'S CHURCH WIDE STUDY CATECHISM

The Faith at Home ministry teams' goal is to equip you with tools that you can use to strengthen your "faith at home." Follow along in the *Parent Link Newsletter* as we begin studying, highlighting and sharing the Catechism.

We will begin with The Ten Commandments. These laws are foundational truths. Our world is ever changing and throughout, these truths have stood the test of time. Join us in this study as we open our Bibles and Catechisms' and remain faithful to the Word of God!

*Jesus counseled His disciples, "hold to my teaching and then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

John 8:31-32.

# Living Word

The focus of *Living Word* is to make Jesus the center of your life. We can do that through:

**inWord: Digging** deeper into God's Word,  
**upWord: Living** life in daily worship and prayer,  
**outWord: Serving** others in Christ's name and  
**forWord: Sharing** Jesus Christ with other people.

In January we will be looking back at the People of the Promise—who were they and why are they so important?

- Have you ever had to leave something familiar and comfortable, and move into something you didn't know?
- Have you ever had to move to a new city, change schools, change homes or parents, or friends? What was it like?



January 28 – January 30

Join us for Camp Lutherhaven's epic junior high weekend, where there will be a fabulous speaker, awesome Bible study, meaningful worship, amazing winter games, plenty of great food, and awesome new friends! Contact Kelly Mullin for more information at [kmullin.zionkent@comcast.net](mailto:kmullin.zionkent@comcast.net) or 253.631.0100.



Living Word girls mark your calendar now for a Pajama Party! Come February 4th from 7:30-10:00 for pizza, crafts, cookies and lots of girl time! Please sign up on the Faith at Home bulletin board and feel free to bring friends!

The cost for this event is \$5.



**January 9<sup>th</sup>:** School for Faith back in session

**January 9<sup>th</sup>:** Adult Forum "Faith at Home" with Dave Ellingsen

**January 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Youth Bowling Party at Kent Bowl from 12:30pm -2:00pm

**January 28<sup>th</sup> -January 30<sup>th</sup>:** Unplugged Retreat at Camp Lutherhaven

**February 4<sup>th</sup>:** Living Word Girls Pajama Party 7:30pm -10:00pm at Zion