

"No question is too big or too small for God to handle."

"If you have doubt or questions, that doesn't mean you're doing faith wrong. It's actually good! Because that means you're making this your own."

"Why do you think that happened? What do you think that means?"

"Where did you see God this week?"

"That's a great question, but I don't know the answer to that. Is it okay if I do some digging and we continue this conversation later so we can discover the answer together?"

"How is that true in your own life?" (Ask open-ended questions that help them personalize their faith.)

"I know it's hard to tell sometimes, but what do you think is the wise choice in this situation?"

"One of the best things you can do for your faith is to come to small group and be connected to other people working through their faith too. I'm so glad you're here."

"Now is the time to begin creating good habits to grow your faith. Want to pick out a Bible or a devotional together?"

"I can see how God has given you this ability/talent/characteristic. How do you think you can use that to serve your community?"

A Volunteer's Guide to . . .

Talking About Faith



with Middle Schoolers



How to Talk About Faith

The faith conversations during this phase are all about discovery.

→ Tweens who think like engineers need to know that God can rebuild a story—even when things haven't gone according to the plan. They relate to a God who overcomes impossible odds to rebuild what's broken, bring stability, restore peace, resolve doubt, give hope, and redeem everyone.

This is the phase when a kid begins connecting the information they learned in childhood to see how it works together. That means this is the very best phase to connect the overarching narrative of Scripture. There is incredible potential to re-engage their sense of wonder about the Bible when their eyes are open to the masterful way the story connects not only from Genesis to Revelation, but with their own life as well.

They may also begin to discover they believe a lot of things that don't easily fit together. You won't know all the answers, so don't act like you do. Just affirm what you do know. Help them anchor their faith to what is constant.

In this Phase . . . As a volunteer, when you **affirm their personal journey**, you help a middle schooler own their own faith and value a faith community.

Middle schoolers are primarily motivated by acceptance, so giving specific encouragement and listening patiently are extremely important.

In Your Conversations . . .

BEFORE

Break down terms. Faith language can be challenging for middle schoolers because their brains are still thinking pretty concretely. So, it can be helpful to identify terms that may be abstract (like “Spirit,” “prayer,” or “transformation”) and practice breaking them down into more concrete and simple terms.

Repetition is your friend. Brains change fast in middle school. So, identify a few words and phrases you want them to remember and repeat them often. (For example: “God is good.” “You matter to God.” or, “Treat others like you want to be treated.”)

DURING

Connect the dots. Tweens begin connecting the dots between ideas they learned about God in childhood. As they do, they may begin to wonder what those ideas actually mean for them. It's important to help them own their own faith by helping them process their questions and react calmly as they express their doubts.

Expect tangents. It's okay if a conversation doesn't go as planned. Sometimes having a conversation about the thing they want to talk about is actually the conversation they need the most.

Ask general questions. Middle school students may feel scared to share their doubts or questions, so try framing questions in terms of all students instead of just them. For example, ask, “Why might some middle schoolers feel . . .?” instead of “Why do you feel . . .?”.

Stay calm. As students begin to connect big ideas, they may have big questions like, “Why does a good God allow bad things to happen?”. Don't dismiss these questions, and be careful not to overreact, so students know church is a safe place to ask questions.

Ask one question at a time. Middle schoolers still struggle with layered thinking and processing multiple questions at once. Ask just one question at a time, even if multiple questions are connected.

AFTER

Serve together. Help students put what they're learning into action. When you give them something to do that matters, you help them feel like they matter.

Have fun. If they shared something heavy—a doubt, or a big question—having fun together can help them feel more secure with you and more likely to continue to do so in the future.

Keep your promises. If you said you would explore a question or if they tell you about something big happening in their life, follow up. This builds trust.