



November 2017

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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Ask Questions That Spark Great Conversations

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To bless your family time, especially during the holidays.
2. To help you challenge your children to dig deep into faith-related issues.
3. To fill your family members with gratitude for their blessings—especially their faith in God.

For many families, a highlight of Thanksgiving is the opportunity to enjoy meaningful conversations—often around a good meal. Asking the right questions is key, and with a little brainstorming, you can move beyond “What are you thankful for?” Good questions can spark great discussions where family members learn more about each other. Use these tips to ask questions that help children dig deep and open up:

Ask questions that don't have specific answers. When questions are surprising, children's answers will be unpredictable as well.

Ditch the question mark. Ask kids to tell about a time they experienced something, like being left out or being helped by a friend.

Open Up to Open-Ended Questions. If a question can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” it will stifle kids' answers.

“Why do you think...?” and “What could you do...?” Instead of having kids guess what people in the Bible thought, turn the tables and make it personal.

“What if...?” These wondering questions make kids really ponder the context of a situation.

“Why...?” and “How...?” These questions often help kids make new discoveries, while “who, what, when, and where” questions are usually just for review.

Discussions That Dig Deeper

Good questions help children process what they've learned. They also help kids own their faith and think more deeply about it. Intriguing questions move beyond Bible verses and lessons to how they relate to children's own lives. It's important to spark kids' imaginations and move into life application. Thought-provoking questions make kids pause to think about their answers rather than blurting out pieces of memorized trivia. Let children share their opinions and personal experiences. When they start opening up, listen attentively and actively. And don't be afraid of getting a question in return that you don't know the answer to. This can be a time of humility to show kids that it's okay not to have all the answers. Here are some other ways to launch meaningful conversations with children:



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Beforehand, hang treats to a room's ceiling with yarn and tape—high enough so family members will have to stretch to reach them. Gather in another room. Say: **Close your eyes and I'll lead you somewhere. No peeking until I tell you which direction to look for good gifts.**

When you're in the treat room, say: **Put your chin on your chest and look only at the ground! What good things do you see?** (Answers might include shoes, feet, carpet, furniture, and so on). Say: **Now put your hand above your eyes and look only straight ahead. What good things do you see?** (Pause for answers.)

Say: **Keep your hand above your eyes and look only to the right. What good things do you see?** (Pause for answers, and then repeat for the left.) Say: **On the count of three, look up for good things!**

After enjoying the treats, read Psalm 136:1. Ask: **What are some surprising places you find gifts from God? How can we thank God for his good gifts?**

Table Tents Make simple table tents (like restaurants use to advertise desserts!) for mealtimes. Have family members take turns creating questions and artwork for the tents. Or use this template: <http://childrensministry.com/articles/family-ministry-conversation-tent/>

Devices Down Not only are phones distracting, but they're affecting children's ability to converse. Research shows that parents' use of phones hampers their kids' social skills. Device-free times are essential for in-depth conversations.

Arts & Crafts Kids of all ages enjoy being creative. While they're working on simple age-appropriate projects, they'll express themselves not only through their artwork but in response to questions you ask.

Encourage Commitments Hypothetical questions don't require any buy-in from kids. Instead, ask life-application questions that move into real-life changes and commitments. For example, ask, "What's one thing you'll do this week to serve God?" or "How can we work together to tell others about Jesus?" Then be sure to follow through.

Take Time to Debrief Debriefing questions help children make discoveries about how the Bible relates to their lives. This is essential after Sunday school, VBS, and other faith lessons so kids make connections between faith and their day-to-day experiences.

Make It a Game Help older kids and preteens open up by turning question-and-answer time into a game. Brainstorm a list of "Would You Rather?" questions, or use the "Preteen Throw and Tell Ball" (<https://www.group.com/product/9781470720346-preteen-throw-tell-174-ball-this-or-that.do>).

Start Shuffling Card games such as Uno, which don't require much focus, are perfect for encouraging discussions. Once you fall into a groove, you can easily start a discussion—one that may turn more meaningful than who has to draw four.

Bingo! Print some Bingo cards for use at your Thanksgiving meal, filling in the squares beforehand with likely conversation topics. Templates are available here: <http://childrensministry.com/articles/november-december-2014-web-exclusives/>.

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."
—Psalm 19:14

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MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Coco*

Genre: Animation, Adventure, Comedy

Rating: PG

Cast: Anthony Gonzalez, Gael García Bernal, Edward James Olmos

Synopsis: In Mexico, a preteen aspiring singer wants to learn more about his family's history and why they oppose music. He accidentally enters the land of the dead, where he meets deceased family members. Before returning to earth, he must earn his family's blessing to perform musically.

Our Take: This cultural fantasy-adventure is packed with musical numbers and some comedy. But use caution because of the Day of the Dead holiday, where people honor deceased loved ones and entice their spirits to briefly return to earth.



TV

Title: *Stranger Things*

Network: Netflix

Rating: TV-14

Cast: Millie Bobby Brown, Winona Ryder, Matthew Modine

Synopsis: This sci-fi drama's long-awaited second season has begun, featuring a group of kids who rescued a friend from a monster in a different dimension. He isn't the same, and now the whole town may be in danger, too.

Our Take: The first season of *Stranger Things* had some violence, mild sexuality, and scary parts, but a lot of the frightening aspects were implied rather than shown. In season two, "the horror is more up-close and personal," according to the show's creators. Parents should preview episodes before letting preteens tune in.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Workout Trends Some young families are replacing pizza-and-movie nights with time spent exercising together, even if it's just playing active video games. And for parents who need a break, some fitness centers now offer first-run movies you can watch while on exercise equipment. (*thebabyspot.ca; chuzefitness.com*)

Pressured Athletes The more money families devote to youth sports, the more pressure their young athletes feel—and the less those kids enjoy their sport and feel committed to it. (*time.com*)

QUICK STATS

Birds, Bees, and Parents 52% of kids ages 12 to 15 say that when it comes to sex, their parents have the most influence over their choices. (*cnn.com*)

Ah-choo! 40% of allergy sufferers are children, and allergies are on the rise.

Quality Time After a divorce, experts recommend that children spend a minimum of 35% of their time with each parent in order to improve development. Kids who are with each parent for at least that much time have healthier academic, social, and psychological lives. (*statnews.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Super Mario Odyssey

It's been seven years since the last true 3D Mario game. This title for the Nintendo Switch features many new bizarre-looking worlds to explore. Reviewers are calling the game a "love letter" to the entire Mario franchise. Rating is pending.

OpenCulture.com

www.openculture.com/2017/02/free-coloring-books-from-world-class-libraries-museums.html

This site provides free coloring pages and books from the world's best museums and libraries. Kids can share artwork with the hashtag #ColorOurCollections.

Kid Builders

This free app boosts early-childhood development by offering parents fun activities to do with their children (from birth to age 5). Activities, categorized by age group, are easy to incorporate into daily life. They build skills in these six areas: health, mind, body, safety, words, and relationships.

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.