

Why Take Kids to Church?
Parents Summit
Parkway Hills Baptist Church
Feb. 8, 2025

Why Take Kids to Church?

Recently I had a conversation with a friend who is a grandmother and is concerned about the spiritual well-being of her young granddaughter. She raised her own daughter in church and of course, assumed her daughter would do the same with her family. But other activities (primarily sports) had gradually replaced Sunday morning church in that family's life. She was troubled by this, and after bringing it up at her Bible study, discovered that she wasn't the only grandmother with this worry. She and several others were concerned that if their grandchildren did not get involved in church during their elementary school years, chances would be slim that they would want to attend during middle and high school. And just what to do about this? One must tread carefully in these areas, especially when it comes to how grandchildren are being raised. And it should be noted that this is not an isolated problem, it's a massive cultural change in communities across the country. Scheduling tournaments and Club sports on Sundays now is common, not an exception. Church, in general, has lost out among a certain demographic. Is it wise to speak up on such a sensitive subject? I believe that if given the opportunity, grandparents can offer three strong reasons for parents to get their kids involved in church. These are "talking points", should the Holy Spirit open up a conversation between the generations.

1. For teens, nothing is as influential as their peer group, this is common knowledge. Your child WILL have a community. If you want input on who their friends will be in the sixth grade, you must know who their friends are in the fourth grade. If you want their community to be made up of believers with the same values as yours, the very best place to find that is in church, a Christian school, or a Christian organization. This is crucial. And it takes planning and thinking with the future in mind.

2. Kids need to own their own faith. "God does not have grandchildren", the saying goes. A living, vibrant faith is not passed down through generations, like family characteristics. They must have something to hold on to during a crisis, and Granny's faith will not suffice. They must come to grips with their own spiritual life and salvation, or it is not genuine and will not see them through the difficult times.

3. Recognize the importance of spiritual leaders in their lives. I call this "backup". Student ministry leaders are often young adults or couples who teach Bible study, serve as camp counselors, mission tour sponsors, or coaches. These adults speak into teenagers hearts more than we can imagine, although we might not realize it until years later. The support role of spiritual leaders in the life of a teenager ideally supplement the parents teaching in the home, reinforcing what parents want to see in their children - a genuine faith and spiritual formation. Where will you find these leaders? Church, primarily. And remember - even if a child is not involved on a Sunday, there are usually other student activities she can be a part of during the

week or year. Small groups, camps, retreats, and other social activities that do not meet on Sundays can be essential in their spiritual and social growth.

But back to the concerned grandmother. She certainly does not want to risk damaging her relationship with her adult child. First, obviously, she must pray for the priorities in this family to be changed. Secondly, she should pray for an opportunity to share these insights with the parent. That can be touchy and has to be done with grace and sensitivity. But she should be prepared to give her viewpoint, if asked, in a succinct and gracious manner. Her grandchild's spiritual well being is worth the risk.

Grandparents, do not despair. God hears your prayers! "God...acts for those who wait for him"(Isaiah 64:4). As you wait and pray, find small things to do that will encourage your grandchild's faith, such as sending a Bible verse via text every week. Keep a channel of communication open on spiritual topics. And remember that a grandparent's influence carries an enormous weight in the life of a child. And God will be faithful.

Susie Hawkins

Why Grandparents Matter!
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FOUR PROMISES FOR YOUR YOUNG ADULT

It's that time of the year when parents whose kids are college bound are busy preparing them for dorm or apartment life. It's a never ending list of needs - purchase bedding, clothing, new electronics, update computers, phones, and a hundred other items that are necessary.

The shopping will eventually be completed and all the arrangements made, but most parents are also fervently praying that their children have been prepared spiritually for what lies ahead. College years can bring spiritual challenges. Can she withstand the inevitable temptations? Will she be faithful to church and/or a campus ministry? Will there be a strong Christian community to encourage her spiritually? These are all valid questions and deserve thoughtful answers. And I add - these promises are not just for students who are headed to college but certainly also for those whose immediate plans don't include leaving home. These issues generally surface at young adult age, no matter where they are.

The Bible is full of promises for believers. Here are four that are especially relevant to young adults, as they move into the university culture.

1. God will be faithful to deliver from temptations: "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Everyone is subject to temptation, it is the common human experience. Even Jesus had to overcome it, alone in the wilderness. Like us, He was tempted to fill a legitimate human need in an illegitimate way. How can we pray for this generation and encourage them as they face these tests? In light of this promise, there are two things to note. First, God is faithful. His nature is faithfulness and we see His faithfulness demonstrated repeatedly throughout scripture. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Because of that faithfulness, he will provide a "way of escape", due to the threat of being "overtaken" by temptation. The word picture here is of a battle with an army surrounded by enemies. Suddenly the army sees an escape route through a mountain pass. The way of escape is provided, but the army (or person) being tempted, must take it. God is ready to help us, but we must be looking for His provision. There is another nuance to the "escape clause" in this verse. The "way of escape" may be the ability to "endure" and not give in to it. In this case, the way of escape happens due to the Spirit empowered endurance of the believer, as in 2 Tim. 2:17, "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me...". Peter adds "... the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations..." (2 Peter 2:9). We pray that God would make the way of escape clear and give our children the strength to choose it.

God will be faithful to deliver from temptation.

2. God will be faithful to those who struggle with their faith. Do questions always indicate a loss of faith? Not necessarily. If a Christian has never been confused or asked serious questions, then I wonder how much he has even thought seriously about it. Seeking answers to spiritual questions is a crucial factor in spiritual growth, and often surfaces during the college years, as we all know. Those of us raised in the church were usually admonished, "Don't doubt, just believe." But for many, there comes a time when simple answers don't satisfy and they walk through what Daniel Silliman calls "The Valley of the Shadow of Doubt". In his article found in *Christian Higher Education*, Silliman says it is very common for students to go through a period of spiritual instability during the college years. These questions may be existential in nature, or just exploring how to live out one's faith. The key to working through it is found in having mentors, small groups, resources and campus ministries that can come alongside the student to thoughtfully answer his questions with respect, a sound knowledge of scripture and sensitivity. Students must eventually own their own faith by knowing what they believe and why they believe it. Periods of doubt where one is honestly seeking answers to valid questions can lead to a much more robust faith - although the process distresses parents to no end. J.A. Block, in his helpful blog, says "We shouldn't view their questions and doubt as a crisis, but merely as the new normal in an epistemologically unsteady age" (www.thegospelcoalition.org "My Christian High School Students Have Doubts. Here's How I Respond".)

In Jude's succinct epistle, he urges followers of Christ to "contend earnestly for the faith" (3) and to "have mercy on those who doubt" (22). As we pray for our doubters, we can pray with confidence that God will walk with them through their season of doubting. And remember, "This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning, great is Your faithfulness!" (Lam. 3:21-23). God is big enough for their questions. He is faithful.

3. God will be faithful in times of uncertainty. If we have ever lived in a time of unpredictability, it is now. Pandemic, racial tension, political divisions, financial crises - it is impossible to predict how things are going to play out in the near future. In this confusing season, young adults are especially vulnerable when it comes to making wrong choices. They face making the most influential decisions in their life, such as choosing a college, a vocation or finding a marriage partner, and all in the context of unparalleled uncertainty regarding the future.

I recently read an article that speaks to this very issue. Author Daniel Henderson, who was in a season of searching, traveled to Calcutta to work at Mother Teresa's "House of the Dying". One day he met Mother Teresa, who asked him what she could do for him. He replied that he was looking for direction in his life and asked her to "pray that I have clarity". She laughed and said, "I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God."

The truth is, we all want details of how our choices will affect us. We want to see ahead and have assurances that we made the right call. But scripture is full of people who followed the call of God, without knowing what was going to happen. For example, in Hebrews 11 we are presented with examples of those who trusted God, who had no idea of what their future would be. Abraham "went out, not knowing where he was going". Moses, Sarah, and many other Old Testament saints listed in this passage had no "clarity", except for the promise of God. In the New Testament, Jesus says to His disciples, "Follow Me." Each one's path would be unique and would take them to places they could never have even imagined. Daniel Henderson says, "Faith flourishes when we are trusting God at the deepest level with a willingness to let go of our insistence for clarity."

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct Your path" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

God will be faithful in times of uncertainty.

4. God will be faithful to fulfill your child's destiny. Psalm 20:4, a prayer from the Psalmist, puts it so succinctly, "May God grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans".

Young adulthood often brings the questions of "Who am I? Why am I here? What should I do with my life?" In seeking God's will, this verse gives sure guidance. The key here is that our desires would be what God's desires for us, meaning that we would desire His will above our own. This angst is perfectly expressed in Michael W. Smith's song, "My Place in This World":

The wind is moving,
But I am standing still
A life of pages, waiting to be filled
A heart that's hopeful, a head that's full of dreams,
But this becoming is harder than it seems
Feels like I'm looking for a reason
Roaming through the night to find my place in this world, my place in this world

Not a lot to lean on
I need to Your light to help me find
My place in this world, my place in this world

In a world that demands immediate gratification and success, finding one's place can be overwhelming. There will be faltering steps and maybe an unwise decision here and there, but overall, God will give your child the guidance he or she needs. As a parent, our part is to wait, pray and be ready with words of encouragement and wisdom.

Parents, you have prepared your children for their college experience, and you will continue to pray them through their young adult years. God is faithful!

Susie Hawkins

PROMISES AND PRAYERS FOR GRANDCHILDREN

“For He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways..”
Psalm 91:11

“The children of your servants will live in Your presence, and their descendants will be established before You.”
Psalm 102:28

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life”
Proverbs 4:23

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight”
Proverbs 3:5-6

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.”
Luke 2:52

“...God is faithful and will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”
1 Corinthians 10:13

“...He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 1:6

“The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one”
2 Thessalonians 3:3

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...and your neighbor as yourself.”
Mark 12:30-31

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for believers in speech, in conduct, in love and in faith and purity.”
1 Timothy 4:12

“The revelation of your words brings light, and gives understanding to the inexperienced.”
Psalm 119:130 (CSB)

“May He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.”
Psalm 20:4

“ You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”
Isaiah 26:3

“Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity.”
Colossians 4:5