

to siblings. When it comes to faith skills, stay on the positive. Talk about benefits and encourage them to be recipients of them.

5. Encourage Honesty. If your teenager says, "I read the Bible, but it was so boring!" don't freak out. Don't react like, I CANNOT believe you said that about the holy Bible!! Like I said, I felt that way about the Bible as a teenage dude. Relax. Let your teenager know that he or she can be honest with you about all things faith-related. That will encourage them to continue to be honest with you in the future.

I've been working with teenagers since 1998. They're all unique. Which means they all have unique ways of worshipping, connecting with God through prayer, talking about their faith, etc. It's part of their distinct wiring. To expect every teenager to get the same amount of energy and passion around knowing God the same way is simply ridiculous. No other relationship works that way. Faith skills shouldn't, either.

6. Pray, Then Pray Again, Then Pray Some More. Again, this is the work of God through the power of the Holy Spirit to stretch your teenager son or daughter's faith. It's going to be His job, not yours. You should talk about it. You should model it. You should encourage it. It's just one of those things that HAS to be the work of God. And your best move is to continually put that before God as an urgent request.

7. Be Ready When They're Ready to Talk. Every teenager is different. But most teenagers aren't volunteering authentic information to their parents. You ask, "How was your day?" They say, "Fine." There's a reason why parents stalk their teenagers on social media: we want to know what's going on in their lives! But there will be rare, random moments when your teenager opens up. It may happen when you're distracted or ready to go to bed. But those are the moments when you need to be ready. So prepare ahead of time for those random moments. And when they happen, cherish them and engage with all your heart!

By Ben Crenshaw, Parent Cue

Going Further — Church Support

Fusion is a great place for students (grades 6-12) to meet friends and learn more about God, faith, and much more! Fusion meets Sundays from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Get more info here:

- <https://staffordcrossing.org/fusion>
- Email fusion@staffordcrossing.org



7 Tips to Help Your Teen Develop Faith Skills

Helping families
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I grew up as a preacher's kid. My parents made a couple of things clear:

1. They wanted me to read the Bible.
2. They wanted me to memorize Scripture.

So they did what any sensible parents would do to develop those habits in me... They paid me. They paid me every time I read through the Bible, memorized a Bible verse, and read a Christian book.

Yes, they did this even when I was a teenager and was desperate for gas money for my Volkswagen Jetta! It must've been because they had so much money.

Nope. Look back at the first line: I grew up as a preacher's kid!

My parents wanted me to know God better. They did things that a lot of parents do: they made me go to church, and they prayed with me before school in the morning. But ultimately, they understood that there were some tools I needed that were bigger than listening to someone pray or teach a lesson (although both of those are great).

Now that I'm a parent, I make no judgments on their decision. But for the sake of this blog, let's talk about some other ways we can develop faith skills in our teenagers (Although, if you want to bribe them with cash and skip the rest of this post, be my guest!).

First, let's be honest about a couple of things:

1. It's difficult for us to develop and maintain these habits in our own lives. There are some of you reading this who've never ever missed a day of praying or reading your Bible in your entire life. That's awesome!

For the rest of us, there are seasons where we're killing it in this area, and seasons when we ride the struggle bus.

2. It's a tough sell. I've spent A LOT of time working with teenagers. And trying to convince a teenage guy to pray to an invisible God or read a hard-to-understand book instead of video gaming, playing any sport, or simply napping...Yeah, that's NOT an easy sell. No, really. It's not.

I tell you these things to take some pressure off of you thinking your teenager will become an overnight theologian. And also because I want you to eliminate the idea of thinking you can nag and pressure your teenager into becoming a highly-motivated pursuer of faith skills.

Now that we've covered the disclaimers, let's dive into 7 tips to help your teen get off the sidelines and in the game when it comes to their faith skills:

1. Model It. Whether your child is 17 or 7, there's going to be a greater chance of them stepping up and praying, reading their Bible, and worshipping when they see it as something you do (and actually enjoy!). Be honest with them about your own inconsistency in this area. But also let them know how it's helped your life.

2. Give Them A Resource That Makes Sense To Them. This is the reason why I've written devotional journals like *Know God and Live Free*. It's because I want teenagers to have a guide to acquiring faith skills in a way that makes sense to them. As a teenager, I couldn't sit down and read the Bible. I didn't understand it. It didn't make sense to me. It was boring, and I desperately wanted to fall asleep. When I actually did read the Bible, I didn't remember any of it. Not a single word.

I'm not saying every teenager is like I was. I'm just saying that if you met me when I was 15, you would've said there's no way this kid is ever going to develop any faith skills. But I did.

As a 19-year old, I got a devotional journal at a Christian summer camp. For the first time in my life, I was guided in my personal time with God. It allowed me to actually stay focused, engaged, and connect with God. I loved it because I actually understood it! I am forever passionate about devotional journals as a way of getting teenagers engaged because that's how I got started.

As unpleasant as it might initially be, having difficult conversations with our kids offers a unique opportunity for important discussions about history, race, civics, empathy, and justice. As you share, remember to avoid negatively labeling groups, communities, or political parties—only label behaviors. With younger kids, be sure to emphasize any acts of heroism and how the event is being addressed, either through investigations or preventative measures.

3. Partner with a Student Ministry. If a student pastor has introduced a plan for any type of faith skill development—and it's something your teenager's student ministry is currently doing—jump on board with that! Don't encourage a competing plan. Don't guilt or put pressure on your student pastor if he or she doesn't have a plan for this. But if they do, align your family with it. That's the power of unified energy that comes when churches and families get on the same page!

4. Don't Push Too Hard. Just encourage. If you're a mom, your teenage son responds to your encouragement more than your pressure. Sure, there are times you need to be "don't-argue-with-me" strong. But save that for homework, respecting authority, and being nice

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