



October 2017

# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



## Help Kids Develop a “Thinking Faith”

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK JESUS:

1. To help your children trust God, not themselves, for answers.
2. To help you be a faithful example of how to learn, evaluate, and problem-solve.
3. To guide your kids to make wise, God-honoring decisions.

You’ve likely heard the buzz (in some form) about “21<sup>st</sup>-century learning.” Instead of just memorizing facts, children are now learning how to think, critique, and synthesize (combine and apply) information. Collaboration and problem-solving are also key.

These learning strategies can help kids grow in their Christian faith, too. Teaching abstract concepts to younger children can be challenging, but experts say certain techniques help preschool- and elementary-age kids move beyond concrete thinking.

For example, sensory experiences, movement, interaction, and personal involvement all make concepts more real to young learners. Children hang new information onto previous bits of

knowledge called “mental hooks.” Kids need hands-on experience to build on those hooks. That’s why, rather than just call God a divine being, we also say he’s a father, friend, and provider. We “hang” God onto hooks kids can grasp.

Then as children’s cognitive abilities develop, they’re able to use “mental operations”—letting them think more abstractly about relationships or patterns of objects without the actual objects present. Asking kids solid, higher-level questions further enhances their critical thinking about faith issues.

As author Josh McDowell notes, “I needed to teach my kids to think, to think logically, to come to their conclusions. Because if there is always Dad’s answer, then they couldn’t develop convictions. . . . We need to put our children on a quest for truth.”

## Living and Learning

As children grow and learn, they must solve problems along the way. Here's how that happens—and how you can help as a parent.

**Birth to Age 2** Young children are sensory-oriented and learn by imitating. Offer choices and model different basic problem-solving techniques.

**Ages 3 to 5** Preschoolers are multisensory, solving as they touch and do. Allow time and space for problem-solving. Praise children's efforts.

**Ages 6 to 8** Kids this age begin to learn in specific ways (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.), which also affects how they tackle problems.

**Ages 9 to 12** Preteens observe how peers solve problems. They want to be independent but may lack confidence. Tell kids you trust their abilities. Let them know failure is okay. Also be available to discuss problems.

**Mobile Learners** Researchers agree that some of the most productive mental processing occurs when children are active and involved. So get up and discuss Jesus and faith while doing other activities as a family.

**The "I Can't" Jar** When children say they can't do something, write down the problem and pray about it together. When the obstacle has been overcome, put the slip of paper in a jar as a reminder of what Jesus helps us accomplish.

**Apply Always** While reading the Bible together, ask questions with specific applications; for example, "How can we serve our neighbors today?" and "What's one thing you can do this week to show love?"

**Calm & Collected** Model for children how to react to bad or scary news. Don't use worst-case scenarios or exaggerate risks to make a point. Instead, provide accurate, age-appropriate information. Brainstorm solutions together to empower kids and to give them a sense of control.

**Wise Guys (and Gals)** Ask family members what they'd wish for if they were granted one wish. Then read aloud 1 Kings 3:5-9. Make

booklets out of folded paper, stapling the folded edge. Fill them with wise sayings (or drawings) you can teach one another—anything from "Treat others the way you want to be treated" to "Don't shake a bottle of soda before opening it." Browse through Proverbs for ideas. Add pages and ideas throughout the school year.

**Twenty Questions** Encourage interruptions and pause often while sharing biblical concepts with your kids. Let them share their thoughts and ask questions. You'll discover whether they have adequate "mental hooks" (see page one) on which to hang new information.

**Be Strengthened** Read aloud Isaiah 40:31. Say: "If we trust in God, he will give us new strength." As a reminder to trust God when problems arise, take turns trying a cool trick. Stand in a doorway and press the backs of your hands against the door frame as hard as you can. Count to 25, then step away, relax your arms, and see what happens. Say: "You found new strength! When you stopped pressing so hard, your arms wanted to fly up. God renews our strength when we're tired and when life gets tough. Always trust God!"

"I pray that...you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives."

—Philippians 1:9-10



## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

### On the "Grow"

With a marker, divide a sheet of poster board into four squares. Label the squares "Wisdom," "Physically," "Friendship With God," and "Friendship With People."

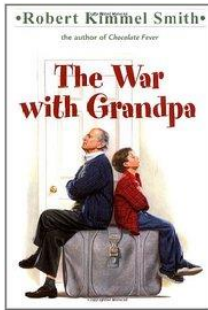
Read aloud Luke 2:52. Say: **Jesus was a child once and grew up. Let's play a game to think about ways we grow.**

Stand back from the poster and take turns throwing a beanbag at it. The "thrower" then acts out one thing he or she can do to grow in that area. For example, "Friendship With People" could be sharing a toy. Try to guess what's being acted out—no talking!

Afterward, ask: **Why was it important for Jesus to grow in these four areas? How can Jesus help you as you grow in each area? What's one area you can ask Jesus to help you grow in this week?**

Say: **By strengthening your mind, your body, your friendship with God, and your friendships with people, you can grow up just like Jesus did!**

# MEDIA MADNESS



## MOVIE

**Title:** *The War With Grandpa*

**Genre:** Family, Comedy, Drama

**Rating:** Not yet rated

**Cast:** Robert De Niro, Oakes Fegley, Christopher Walken, Uma Thurman

**Synopsis:** When Peter's grandfather becomes a widower, he moves into his grandson's beloved bedroom. Peter plots outrageous schemes to try to get his space back, but Grandpa is very resourceful and has a few tricks up his own sleeve.

**Our Take:** This film, based on a novel by Robert Kimmel Smith, explores the challenges of family life and change. Although the situation is played for laughs, the movie can lead to important discussions about respecting our elders, selflessness, and personal space.



## TV

**Title:** *Raven's Home*

**Network:** Disney

**Synopsis:** Raven-Symoné has returned to television, this time as a busy divorced mother of preteen twins. The title character, who starred in *That's So Raven* 10 years ago, joins forces with her best friend to raise their kids. Raven's son has inherited her psychic gift and must learn to cope with that power.

**Our Take:** Be warned that part of the plot line revolves about visions and clairvoyance. The sitcom addresses a range of preteen troubles and explores different family structures and parenting styles. Preview the show to determine whether it's a fit for your family. Geared toward ages 8 and up.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

**Recycled Clothes** Some students headed back to school this fall in "green" clothing—of many colors. Retailers such as Target and J.C. Penney now offer jeans and shirts made from recycled fabric and even plastic bottles. Tags touting "Responsible Style" attract eco-friendly consumers. (AP)

**The Honest Truth?** Take note: The new app Sarahah (Arabic for "candor") is exposing kids to online bullying. Known as the "honesty app," it allows anyone to comment on a person's social media posts and photos anonymously. Although Sarahah isn't recommended for children, it has no age restriction. (commonsensemedia.org)

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Arms

This cartoonish fighting game is for Nintendo's new Switch console. Players use detachable motion-sensor joysticks and can brawl with a variety of offbeat items. In just four months on the market, more than 5 million Switch consoles have sold, earning comparisons to Nintendo's last hit, Wii.

### Switchzoo.com

Kids can create their own unique animals, mixing and matching body parts, habitats, sounds, and more. Amid the fun, children also learn animal facts and explore topics such as diversity and species specialization. The site features 142 animals, as well as virtual field trips. Best for ages 5 to 9.

### Thinkrolls: Kings & Queens

This app from award-winning company Avokiddo features a variety of logic and physics-related puzzles. In a fantasy setting, young players learn strategy, problem-solving, and cause and effect. The app costs \$3.99 and is designed for ages 3 to 8.

## QUICK STATS

**Older Is Better?** Researchers say older mothers tend to thrive because they have more psychological and cognitive flexibility. A study of more than 4,700 families reveals that older mothers are less harsh regarding discipline, and their kids are less likely to have behavioral, social, and emotional problems. (nytimes.com)

**Screen Danger** A study of 4,500 children found that those who logged more than three hours of screen time per day had insulin-resistance levels that were 11% higher than those of kids who spent less than one hour a day in front of screens. (theguardian.com)