

Discipleship in the Home, Week 6

Children Who Doubt

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.”

Matthew 28:16-17

1. Doubts About God

- Existence, Character, Relationship
 - Is God in control? Is he good? Can I know him? Does he care?

Doubt to be avoided: James 1:6

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

Doubt as part of the process of discipleship: Mark 9:23-24

And Jesus said to him, “If you can’t! All things are possible for one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

Champion mystery and questions

If you believe that you can, or need to, know everything with absolute certainty, your faith will be in trouble very soon. For this season of life, we walk by faith not by sight. Doubts and questions about God do not change who God is or how he views us.

- Doubts can be evidence of faith
- Asking questions of God requires faith
- Doubt can lead one to grow closer to God
- Doubt can deepen and strengthen faith for real life

The Catechism is helpful here...

Q4: What is God?

A: God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Q33: What is justification?

A: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

A weak faith is a vulnerable faith. The process of maturing as a Christian involves deepening our understanding of what we believe.

When you child doubts their faith:

- How will you respond to these assertions by your child?
 - “I don’t think God is real.”
 - “God allowed my friend to die, or mommy to get cancer, or our house to burn down, he must not care.”
- Amidst resistance, will you require your child to come to church, or Sunday school, or youth group?

2. Doubts About Themselves

- Meaning, Purpose, Worth
 - Does anyone care? Do I have something to offer? Will anyone pursue me?

If the answer is no, then these questions can lead to depression and various coping mechanisms (substance abuse, eating disorders, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, acting out sexually).

- Teen diagnosis of major depression is up 47% since 2013.
- Teen suicide attempts increased 23% in the past 8 years.
- Over all suicide up 33% since 1999. 1.25 million attempts in 2016.

Song: 1-800-273-8255, by Logic

Sadness and depression were no stranger to the prophets, psalmists, and saints throughout history.

Psalm 42:11

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God.

When your children doubt themselves:

- What will you do now to build deep relationship, so you can lean on it later on?
- How could trying to “fix” your child’s feelings of sadness or loneliness push them away? What is an alternative way of pursuing your child?
- What will it take for your child to trust you with the most vulnerable parts of their heart?
- How can you point your child to the gospel and not a self-esteem boost?

Resources:

Hope and Healing for Kids Who Cut, by Marv Penner

Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave, by Ed Welch

How Children Raise Parents, by Dan Allender

The Lord says to us, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you....
When you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.”
Isaiah 43:2