



faith PATH

PREPARING *for*
ADOLESCENCE

PREPARING FOR ADOLESCENCE

assisting your child during times of change

Planning for the spiritual wellbeing of your ten-year-old is more than planning for “survival” during the teen years. With the proper focus and by the grace of God, these can be years in which your family *thrives*. The best strategy for preparation is for you, the parent, to set the stage beforehand. A mom and her daughter, or a father and his son, or a single parent and either gender need to spend time together dedicated to giving the pre-adolescent a basic understanding of what’s coming *before* these transitions begin. The best results come when you—the parent—are the one to explain how to make the most of this vital time in life. Here’s a quick guide to the “when” and “what” of that time together:

WHEN?

Often parents are concerned that they will overwhelm their preteen or encourage premature curiosity if they jump the gun in preparing them for adolescence. A greater concern, however, is the likelihood that someone else will beat you to it. Of course, not all children are the same. That’s why it’s important to spend time with your preteen getting a sense of where they are developmentally. Ask God for wisdom about the timing of your conversations. Children are typically ready before their parents are, often around 10 years old.

WHAT?

In your conversations about the years ahead, you should plan to address the many areas of change your son or daughter will encounter during their transition to adulthood—in their body, in their decision-making, in their relationship with you, and in their relationship with God.

• DECISION-MAKING

Increasingly, your child will have to make and assume the responsibilities for his or her decisions. As you maintain your overall family values in media choices, individual responsibilities (chores, homework, etc.), and alcohol/drug use, you also need to direct your son or daughter in how to make good decisions on their own. Give your children the freedom to make choices, and when it is at all possible, let them fail. Talk openly about how you make difficult decisions for yourself and the consequences of those decisions both good and bad. The earlier children are allowed to fail in life, the sooner they will learn and the less significant the consequences will be.

- **RELATIONSHIP TO YOU**

Helping your son or daughter understand and embrace the changes in his or her body, while challenging them to bear the responsibility of their decision making, will be different from the role you've played before. He or she will need to be constantly reassured of your love and support even when making decisions that are different from your own. Your role will be progressively changing to that of a coach who is present to guide the child in their transition toward independence. But note also that you must be more than a "friend" or "buddy" to your child. Your role is still one of authority and leadership.

- **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

Your son or daughter's spiritual life will have many seasons, many ups and downs. Commit their way to God, and never underestimate the power of prayer (James 5:16). Do what you can to help your child not just learn the faith intellectually, but experience it in reality, both through sacramental worship and through private prayer in your home. During their teen years, some kids run away from God, while others become "on fire" with devotion. Remember through it all that God has a plan for your child's life, and it is a plan for good and not for evil (Jeremiah 29:11). The most convincing "argument" you can make for the Christian faith is to walk daily with Jesus Christ, loving him as well as you know how. There is nothing more compelling than the beauty of holiness.

HOW? HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- Remember that all of your teaching and coaching will come from the foundation of your relationship with your child. So spend time together to build that relationship. Watch and plan very carefully, so that your schedules don't become too crazed and overfilled.
- Set aside special times to talk with your child, and go through one of the recommended resources (next page) in preparation.
- Help your child to think about their maturity (physical and emotional) within the context of their spiritual growth. It is all a part of God's plan for their lives.
- Create an environment for open communication for your child to share, talk, and discuss with you. Don't avoid awkward topics about their bodies, sex, etc.
- Listen. Really listen to your child. Allow him or her to share thoughts and questions without being judgmental or quick to give a lecture.
- Have fun! Your child is much more likely to listen to you and be open with you if you consistently spend free time together. Invest your time and energy into things that you both like to do, and don't make these times overly serious.

INTENTIONAL FAITHPATH PLAN

CHILD'S NAME _____

How will you be intentional this next year?

- Pray daily for and with my child.
- Attend church regularly.
- Schedule and have regular family times.
- Create a habit of worship with my child, teaching them “why we do what we do.”
- Consistently spend time in God’s Word with my child.
- Help my child develop the habit of giving some of their money back to God.
- Schedule a time to serve the wider community together as a family.
- Talk with my child about the upcoming changes of puberty.
- _____

The next step on the FaithPath is *Confirmation*, recommended at age eleven. You will receive an email in the month of your child’s birthday, and the resource will be available for you with your child’s name on it at the Bringing Faith Home Center, right outside the Incarnation Bookstore.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- We highly recommend the *Birds and Bees* curriculum found at birds-bees.com for parents of children of all ages.
- *Ready for Adolescence Family Night Tool Chest* from heritagebuilders.com.
- *Feeding the Mouth that Bites You: A Complete Guide to Raising Adolescents and Launching them into the World*, by Ken Wilgus.
- *Theology of the Body Made Simple*, by Anthony Percy, is a great resource about what it means to be human from a Roman Catholic perspective.
- *Not Just Good, but Beautiful: The Complementary Relationship Between Man and Woman*, by N.T. Wright, et al. is a small book with many famous contributors about the meaning of masculinity and femininity.

INCARNATION'S CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

Bringing Faith Home: incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home
Children & Family Ministry: incarnation.org/grow/children