

Faith Development

(from *Raising Great Kids*, Henry Cloud and John Townsend,
1999, Zondervan Publishing House, pg. 172-174)

Stage	Child's Faith	Parent's Task
<i>Infancy</i>	<p>This is a pre-faith period. Faith requires the ability to differentiate self from other, which is a task of infancy itself.</p> <p>This is foundational to the later experience of faith.</p>	<p>Help infant experience God "incarnationally." In other words, infants can't conceive of God, but they know when they are safe and loved. The infant senses the realities of dependency, goodness, and love through the relationship with mother or primary caretaker.</p>
<i>Toddlerhood</i>	<p>Child begins learning dos and don'ts of God.</p> <p>Initiative behavior takes place as child prays and talks about God</p>	<p>Make toddler part of family worship, using simple Bible stories, songs and pictures.</p>
<i>Childhood</i>	<p>Faith becomes conventional. Child learns the beliefs and doctrines of God. Not much questioning, more uncritical assimilation of vast amounts of information. Highly curious stage.</p> <p>Child conceptualizes God more personally.</p> <p>Child wants to belong.</p>	<p>Provide lots of teaching, both in stories and with concepts.</p> <p>Involve child in worship and prayer experiences.</p> <p>Give child sense that he belongs in spiritual family.</p> <p>Include child in family ministry activities.</p>
<i>Adolescence</i>	<p>The adolescent questions, challenges, and owns faith individually and personally.</p> <p>Has difficulties keeping God and parents separate.</p> <p>Needs to investigate, search and struggle.</p>	<p>Provide freedom within parameters for the search</p> <p>Respect dependency-independence conflict.</p> <p>Teach less, dialogue more.</p> <p>Deal with skepticism with challenges to seek.</p> <p>Keep church a requirement, with room for trying other youth groups.</p>
<i>College</i>	<p>Young adult deepens and consolidates faith.</p> <p>Integrates relationship with God to other aspects of life, such as life mission, values, marriage, career</p> <p>Finds avenues of meaningful service and ministry based on faith.</p>	<p>Relate as spiritual sibling, not parent.</p> <p>Share struggles.</p> <p>Provide support for growth deepening.</p>