



January 2010

Church on Mill
Preschool & Children's Ministry
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Producing developing disciples by sharing God's love hand in hand.

How to Handle Doubt & Questions

"Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith," wrote Frederick Buechner. "They keep it awake and moving." This runs contrary to most people's assumptions about doubt—that questioning your faith proves you're a weak Christian. But when we have doubts about something, we're forced to examine its truthfulness and consider how much of ourselves we wish to invest in it. If we (and our children) are going to truly own our beliefs, we must critically evaluate them first.

Teaching your children that it's okay to express doubts and ask questions is crucial for their faith development. "When the doubts get ignored, it could eventually result in serious skepticism of one's worldview and personal faith," says professor Dean Hardy. Use these tips to help kids wonder and open up:

Don't feel threatened when children want to ask questions. These queries help kids verbalize their doubts. View tough questions not as a sign of rebellion but as opportunities to teach and learn.

Listen intently, and don't shame kids for asking questions. Reflect on what children say and affirm their feelings with phrases such as "You seem afraid" or "You look like you have a question."

Make your family a "safe zone." Foster attitudes that say it's okay to question and doubt. That will encourage children to feel free to think critically and explore honestly.



When Doubts Arise

In *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do About It* (Master Books), Ken Ham and Britt Beemer explore the epidemic of young people leaving the traditional church in droves. They cite a George Barna study showing that 61% of young adults had been church-ed at one point during their teen years but are now spiritually disengaged. They also discovered that of young adults who no longer believe that all the Bible accounts are true:

- 40% first had doubts in middle school.
- 44% first had doubts in high school.
- 11% first had doubts in college.

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To help your children know it's okay to have questions.
2. To help you be a good listener when kids share their doubts.
3. To reassure your whole family of God's presence and love.

Parenting Insights

These age-level insights from *Children's Ministry Magazine* track how young Christians' thoughts and questions change over time.

Ages 3 to 5

Older preschoolers begin to ask "why?" and "how?" Miracles, symbolism, and God's nonphysical nature are often confusing for kids this age. Answer their questions simply with words that mean exactly what they say.

Ages 6 to 8

Children this age begin to distinguish between fantasy and reality and begin to use logical thinking. Give them answers that allow them to use these skills; otherwise, they'll get frustrated.

Ages 9 to 12

Older children tend to question some basic beliefs they previously accepted. They want to explore an issue from many perspectives. Share your own doubts and help kids find a niche to put their faith into action.

OpenTheBook

"You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

John 20:29

Jesus said these words to "Doubting Thomas," the disciple who wouldn't believe that Jesus rose unless he saw and touched him. When our faith is unsteady, we can find answers in God's Word.

Teachable Moments

1. **Establish the Bible as the authority for truth.** Affirm that whatever God's Word says has either happened or will happen. Tell Bible accounts with enthusiasm so your children will believe them, too.



2. **Let your children know that you also doubt sometimes.** Share the ways that your faith is a work in progress. Tell how God has worked in your life today. Be an example of how to grow through positive doubting.
3. **Celebrate your children's faith journeys.** Recognize that kids' images of God expand as they struggle with life's complexities. Accept their immature perceptions and challenge them as their ability to think abstractly develops. Mark important milestones such as baptism, first Bible, Sunday school promotion, confirmation, etc.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." **Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Support children's faith development by talking to them about their doubts and questions. Start by asking:

1. How much proof or evidence do you need before you believe something or someone?
2. What things about God and the Bible are hardest for you to believe, and why?
3. Why do you think God asks us to believe without visual "proof"?
4. How might doubts and questions actually make our faith stronger?

Family Experience: Faith Adventures

Many people in the Bible struggled with doubt. Use these experiences from Group's *Hands-On Bible* to explore faith.

- **What You Know**—Read aloud John 20:24-31 to meet a doubting disciple. Then say: "When you have doubts, it's helpful to separate what you *know* from what you *feel*. For example, you may doubt that God loves you because you didn't make the soccer team. You feel alone and unloved. But the Bible says that God loves you and that he'll take care of you. Because the Bible says it, you know it's true, even if it doesn't feel that way right now."

Together, divide a sheet of poster board into two columns. Label one "What I Feel" and the other "What I Know." List some feelings, and across from each feeling, write a Bible verse in response. For example, across from "loneliness" you can write "God is with me. Matthew 28:20." Use a Bible index to help you find relevant passages.

- **Childlike Faith**—Say: "When you were littler, you trusted your parents about everything. Jesus says everyone should have faith like little kids—even grown-ups! We *all* need Jesus, *all* the time." Read aloud Luke 18:15-17. Then make something to remind you that Jesus wants you to trust him the same way little kids trust their parents. Have each family member draw a heart on a piece of construction paper. Write "Jesus" inside it. To the left, tape a picture of when you were little. To the right, tape a recent picture of yourself. Decorate and hang the paper as a reminder of your faith.





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *The Tooth Fairy* (Jan. 22)

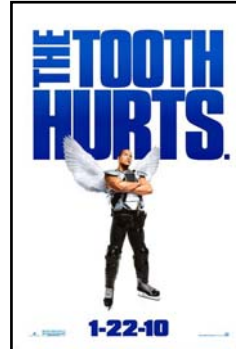
Genre: Family comedy

Rating: PG

Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Ashley Judd, Julie Andrews

Synopsis: A tough minor-league hockey player with a reputation for doing facial damage to opponents gets busted for some insensitive comments to a child. His lousy attitude earns him a sentence working for a week as a real-life tooth fairy. After getting used to his new role, he starts to rediscover some of his own long-lost dreams.

Discussion Questions: What type of attitude do you usually have? Think of a time you've hurt someone with your words: Were you able to undo the damage? If so, how? Read aloud Matthew 18:4. What does it mean to have a childlike faith?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Katharine McPhee

Album: *Unbroken*

Artist Info: This 25-year-old pop singer was the runner-up on *American Idol* season five. Her self-titled debut album reached number two on the Billboard top 200 chart. McPhee has been upfront about her struggle with bulimia.

Summary: McPhee's sophomore album highlights her versatile, elegant vocal style. Several songs deal with broken relationships. In the first single, "Had It All," McPhee sings, "Why did I believe that little voice that led me down the path to this bad choice? Why don't I listen to the angels when they sing?"

Discussion Questions: How aware are you each day of your conscience? How much do you rely on it to help you choose between right and wrong? Read aloud 1 Kings 19:11-13. How and when does God speak to you? When are you most likely to listen to him?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Ultimate I Spy</i>	Players navigate 3D screens to solve riddles and complete puzzles.	E; Wii
<i>Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box</i>	In this adventure game, players can work on more than 150 logic puzzles. Clues help players solve a mystery.	E10+; Nintendo DS
<i>James Cameron's Avatar: The Game</i>	This shoot-'em-up fantasy game offers a prequel version of the hit movie, introducing the alien moon Pandora. Contains non-bloody combat violence.	T; PSP

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- "Helicopter parents" who are overinvolved with their children's lives face a growing backlash. Kids grow best when parents let go, experts say.
- The recession is slowing such "hyperparenting." One-third of parents say they've had to cut their children's extracurricular activities—and most families admit they like the results.

(CBS News Poll)

Quick Stats

- An estimated 13% of U.S. children walk or bike to school these days, compared to more than 50% of children 40 years ago.
- A study shows that children burn about three times more calories playing some exercise-oriented video games than they do just sitting on the couch watching television.

(*Science Daily*)

(*USA Today*)



January 2010

					1	2
					Happy New Year	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Preschool Promotion Sunday						
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			Wed. Night activities resume			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	No School					
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
			Moms and Tots at Pump It Up 10am			
31						

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS

Sunday School 9:30am

Worship 10:45am

Worship Care (infant-2 yr olds), Preschool Church (3 yr-K).

Children's Church (1-4 gd) does not meet last Sun of month

WEDNESDAYS

Choirs 6:00pm

Mission Friends & Team KID 6:30pm

ITEMS OF NOTE

All Families:

-Please note that there will not be any **Wednesday evening activities** from Dec 16-Jan 6. Wednesday evening activities resume on January 13.

-If you would like to **serve** in the preschool or children's ministry please contact someone on the team: Andrea Heaton, Amy Mottern, Tina Schuler, Jennifer Wood, Joni Ward, Jessica Oaks. We currently need helpers in preschool Sunday School, preschool choir, and children's church. We need a 4-6 gd Sunday School teacher.

Preschool Families:

-Preschool mid-year **promotion** is Sunday, January 3. If your child has had a birthday between June-January your child will promote to the next age class at church. Our current class groupings are infants, toddlers, 2-3 year olds, 4yr-K. If your child is in kindergarten he/she will not promote to the children's department until June when entering 1st grade. If your child turned 3 in the last six months he/she will begin going to preschool church. Remember to pick your child up after Sunday School, take him/her to worship, then help your child meet the preschool church teacher on the patio when the children get dismissed during worship.

-**Moms and Tots** is a great monthly fellowship time for babies-kinder and their moms. This month we are going to Pump It Up on Wed. Jan. 27 from 10-11:30 during their open jump time. The cost is \$7 but you can get a discount coupon on line. Pump It Up is at 1325 W. Auto Dr. #101, Tempe. Everyone must wear socks.

-Rebekah Milz is subbing for Alison Rotter during January in the **4-K Sunday School** class.

Children Families:

-**Lunch Box Connection** – This is a ministry time for Andrea to get to have lunch with your child on your child's campus. Most of our children attend different schools and don't have many connections for sharing their church life with their school life. Lunch Box Connection is a time for Andrea to meet your child's school friends and teachers. Just contact Andrea by email with a good Wed, Thr or Fri date, lunch time, school name/address, and teacher's name.

-Beginning January 10 all adult Life Groups will be studying The Gospel Centered Life for 8 weeks. The children will have a condensed version of these lessons during **Team KID**. We will have 4 sessions with this curriculum – Jan 13, 20, 27, Feb3. Our Bible skills goal for this semester is for each child to be able to say the books of the Bible.