

K12 Stepping Stones

Phases of Development: 4th and 5th Graders

What's Going on with my 4th or 5th Grader?

Confidence

Your 4th or 5th grader is now officially a pre-teen, or as he may enthusiastically refer to himself as, a “tween.” This period can be unpredictable as your child’s brain is rapidly changing, and he is beginning to ask many questions about his identity. Your child wants to win the approval of his peers, which can seem a daunting task as he may not be sure who his friends are or even what are his own interests. The goal of this stage is for your child to transition to the next stage successfully with confidence. As you are sympathetic to your child’s internal struggle, you can guide him to confidence that he is loved and known by God.

How Do I Share my Faith with my 4th or 5th Grader?

As a parent or caregiver, you have the ability to influence your child’s faith more than anyone else because of the sheer amount of time you have together that no one else has. Preteens may have challenging questions about faith and need your guidance pointing them towards a God who loves them and wants them to love others. As you help your child achieve confidence in different areas of his life, you have the opportunity to instill in him that this confidence comes from knowing his identity in Christ, as a child of God.

The Bible teaches us that we should make talking about God part of our everyday life:

⁵Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

The above passage tells us that we should talk about faith with our children, and talking to them about our faith should be natural. You can tell your child about God every day, any time of the day, but there are natural rhythms built into most family’s schedules that will lend themselves to these learning opportunities. During these times, look for opportunities to teach and to show your faith:

- **Morning Time**
- **Drive Time**
- **Meal Time**
- **Bed Time**

What Do I Want my 4th or 5th Grader to Know?

- **He is loved by you, and he is loved by God.**
 - *"You were created by God to be you! He loves you so much."*
 - *"I will always love you, and there is nothing that could ever change that fact."*
- **God sent Jesus to save us.**
 - *"No one expects you to be perfect; only Jesus was perfect. How do you think He'd handle this situation?"*
 - *"I love hearing your questions about Jesus. He welcomes our questions, too."*
 - *"There's nothing you can do to earn God's favor—He gives it freely to those who want to follow Jesus."*
- **God made the world and everything in it.**
 - *"I'm so glad God invented cocoa beans so we could enjoy this chocolate ice cream together!"*
 - *"Our friend Yohana is from Tanzania. I love hearing him explain how they worship God in his country."*
- **God made his body, and his body is beautiful.**
 - Continue having conversations about the changes your child will expect to see or is seeing in his body.
 - Begin having conversations about sex and sexual integrity appropriate to your child's maturity level.
 - Talk about pornography and what to do if he sees it.
 - Talk about drugs and alcohol.
- **Simple Bible Verses**
 - Download the Parent Cue app. You will find the Bible verse that your child is learning for the month.
- **The Parts of the Bible**
 - The Bible has two parts: The Old and the New Testament.
 - The Bible has 66 books.
 - The Bible tells one story of God's love for us.
- **God wants him to love God and love others.**
 - *"You know what it feels like to be left out. What do you think you should do?"*
 - *"You have such a kind heart. I love the way you help others the way Jesus would."*

What Can I do to Encourage my 4th or 5th Grader's Faith?

Your child is in a bit of an identity crisis as she figures out who she wants to be. She is asking a lot of good questions and is becoming more empathetic. Use this time of growth to show your child she can be confident in God's love and His love for others. Consider the following suggestions:

- **Serve:** Encourage your child to act on her desire to help others in need. Allow her to suggest ways to serve others and enact her plans.
- **Spend Quality Time with Her:** Your child is at a tough age where everything feels a little uncertain. Give her a sense of stability by spending time with her and allowing space for her tough faith questions. Check out studio252.tv for activities you can do together and the Parent Cue app for great discussion-starters.
- **Talk about Wise Choices:** Now is a great time to help your child think through good decisions concerning the following topics:
 - *Screen Time:* What an appropriate amount of time is to spend each day
 - *Friends:* How to maintain healthy boundaries and work through conflict
 - *Phone:* If your child has a phone, what the responsibilities and guidelines are that come with that privilege
 - *Sports/Extracurricular Activities:* How to ensure God and growing in faith is the top priority by designating time each day for God and committing to a service time where your family can be consistent
- **Pray:** You can pray any time. Look for natural moments to pray with your 4th or 5th grader, and ask her specifically how you can pray for her.
 - *Morning Time:* "Hannah, what do you have going on today? What can I pray about for you?"
 - *Drive Time:* "Dear God, Sophia seems really nervous about her test today. Please give her peace and the ability to recall what she studied."
 - *Meal Time:* "Caleb, will you thank God for the meal we are about to eat and our friends who are joining us for dinner?"
 - *Bed Time:* "Josh, you seemed really bothered by the hurricane on the news. Would you like to pray together for the victims?"
- **Sing:** Follow K12Worship on Spotify, and play the songs your child is learning in K12 while you're driving or making dinner.
- **Read:**
 - Encourage your child to read books. Ask her about the characters in the books—their strengths and weaknesses, what they value, etc. Click [here](#) for book ideas.
 - Help your child read her Bible. You can find short devotions at studio252.tv.
 - Take your child to the bookstore and have her pick out a pre-teen devotional.
- **Give:** Teach your child the concept of tithing by encouraging her to give a portion of her allowance to church.
- **Go to Church:** Pick a service time and attend that service weekly. Consistent attendance allows your 4th or 5th grader to develop relationships with her small group leader and

the kids in her small group. She will learn the importance of church community by having her own!