

Snapshots of Wonder

KICK-START WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PARENTS

- It's only too late to try to talk to your adolescent if you never actually do it. Don't be scared off if it's awkward at first. They may roll their eyes, but they'll secretly love that you tried to talk to them.
- Kids rarely complain that they don't want a relationship with their parents; they just wish they had a better one.
- For our kids, their perception is their reality. If we are dismissive about how they feel, it will be harder to show them a new perspective. Start by understanding how and why they feel the way they do, and they will eventually want to hear more of what you think.
- Take out some old 6th grade pictures of yourself and connect your heart to your own early adolescence before you start this Rites of Passage Experience. You might even bring it along for the first conversation, or better yet—bring a different and more embarrassing one for the start of each conversation. Nothing breaks the ice like letting our kids poke fun at us!

FRAMING UP OUR PURPOSE

The first Rites of Passage Experience is full of potential for creating lasting memories and healthy dialogue with your 6th grader. Because this is a season of so much change, it seems as if our kids can become unsure of themselves almost overnight. Sometimes we notice it when they just feel bad about everything. Sometimes they have a bad attitude. Sometimes they even make bad choices because of it.

The word we want you to keep in mind during this Rites of Passage Experience is **wonder**. Wonder is when we experience something that is unexpected but amazing or that is so thrilling it takes our breath away. Wonder is the moment we remember that our life and purpose come from the beautiful imagination of God the Creator. We want our kids to look at how they are shaped and wired and experience a deep sense of wonder.

Here are a few biblical truths you can share or use as the backdrop of your conversations. Feel free to look up these verses in a translation that resonates with you.

God's creation is so good because He is so great.

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.
Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.
You watched me as I was being formed in utter
seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the
womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of
my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was
laid out before a single day had passed.*

—Psalm 139:13-16 (NLT)

Your child was probably really good at wonder when they were young. Figuring out that $4+4=8$ stunned them. Watching a huge, bright green grasshopper captivated them. Most likely, they thought every colored page they finished was a work of art and that every game of chase on the playground demonstrated their superhuman speed! Probably the most important truth you can imprint on your 6th grader's heart this year is that, just like all of God's creation, they are "fearfully and wonderfully made."

***When change happens, and life is hard,
God is still there. And He is big enough
to handle the tough stuff.***

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.

Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

—Isaiah 40:28-31(NLT)

As children get older, wonder begins to slip away a little, and they don't trust it as much. And when they trust it less, they don't see themselves the same way anymore. Suddenly, it's harder to believe that they can do anything. There are a lot more questions that they can't answer, and unkind voices tell them that they aren't very good at anything. That's your cue to tangibly remind them that God has not changed and to show them God's strength when they don't feel

very strong. God wants to do amazing things in and through us.

"...but that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' (he said to the paralyzed man), 'I tell you, arise, and take up your cot, and go to your house.' Immediately he rose up before them, and took up that which he was lay-ing on, and departed to his house, glorifying God. Amazement took hold on all, and they glorified God. They were filled with fear, saying, 'We have seen strange things today.'"
--Luke 5:24-27(NLT)

The people with Jesus that day had probably let go of wonder. They had probably lost hope that God could show up in such a remarkable way. But here is Jesus not only loving a paralyzed man but also healing the brokenness! The people were gripped with wonder.

The beginning of adolescence is the perfect time for you to help your child hold on tightly to wonder and expect to see amazing things as God shows up through all the changes and unexpected problems. Find ways to create space for your child to see the greatness and boldness of God's creation--everything from a gorgeous sunset on the beach, to towering mountain ranges, to her own reflection in the mirror. Do what you can to help them trust that there are no mistakes or mishaps in God's artistry--only masterpieces like Himself.

IDEAS FOR KEEPING WONDER ALIVE TOGETHER

- Visit the Grand Canyon and walk out onto the glass skywalk bridge.
- On a clear night, go somewhere away from city lights and lay in the grass under the stars for an hour.
- Watch someone you love doing something they are really good at and think about how they are gifted in such a unique way.
- Stand in front of the mirror and pray that God would help you see all that He loves about you.
- Experience a sunrise or sunset on the beach.
- Climb a mountain. There are trails to the tops of mountains everywhere!
- Train to run farther than you thought you could--maybe try a 5K or a half-marathon. You'll amaze yourself. Better yet, do it together!
- Listen to the life story of someone from another country.
- Try something that has always scared you.