

Building faith in your 5 to 7-year-old

As children start full-time school their world is expanding rapidly. Friendships are becoming important. They understand that games have rules and fairness matters a lot. Children's temperaments and personality characteristics are now more evident. They may be more physically active and increasingly capable but may need encouragement to concentrate on tasks at home or school.

There are some significant elements that help children to grow strong foundations in their faith. Here are some ideas for this particular stage of your child's development.



Care for the Family is a Christian initiative to strengthen family life. A registered charity (England and Wales: 1066905; Scotland: SC038497).

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Giving an instruction can take a few seconds but training – explaining why something is important or why there are consequences to behaviour – takes time and is pretty repetitive! Remind yourself that you are laying good foundations when you find yourself repeating the same words again (and again). As children develop they are more able to respond to calm reasoning and thrive on praise and encouragement.



Prayer

At this age, children are growing in their understanding that God has a purpose for their lives. You can pray with (and for) them and encourage them to chat to God themselves. Help them to think about how God can speak to them and use them now. Sharing stories of different Bible characters (Samuel, Naaman's servant girl) or other heroes of the faith (Mother Teresa, William Booth) will link into their strong sense of fairness and right and wrong.



Be real

Every parent will have times when you feel you've got it wrong – whether it's over-reacting to your child's behaviour, or being too rushed to listen to their worries. At those times your apology matters. As you explain why you've said sorry and why we need to forgive one another, you are giving them a glimpse of God's heart of forgiveness and restoration and they are learning that it's OK to make mistakes.

Purpose

Children find joy and purpose in creating (a drawing or a Lego construction) and achieving (learning to read or swim) and you can encourage them to see their growing abilities and interests as part of God's purpose for them.



Be intentional

Traditions create memories and a sense of security. You may use Christian seasons, such as Lent, Advent, Christmas and Easter to introduce specific activities or simply make Friday 'pizza night' in front of the TV. The memories traditions create can be the 'glue' that keeps you close as you look back with thankfulness and 'remember when...'!



Inspire a faith that lasts



Belong

Older children can have a really positive influence. Can you identify anyone who would be a good friend and role model for your child? Someone your child already looks up to? Perhaps you could invest in that relationship by inviting them for a meal, or going on a family walk together.

The Kitchen Table Project is a faith-based initiative for Christian parents, carers, church leaders and children's workers from Care for the Family.

Check out our website to find out more about the elements that build faith, as well as a variety of books, videos, resources and blog posts. kitchentable.org.uk