

It's Up to You 2025 (Week 3) - How can we share our faith with our adult children?

### **Yesterday's Sermon Summary**

1. Pastor Chris got two related questions for this year's Q&A series, and yesterday we tried to put the emphasis on the second one while touching on the first along the way. Question #1 was "How can I share my faith in 2025?" and question #2 was "How can I share my faith with my adult child who may not value Christianity and/or church the way I do?"



2. Many a Christian parent is haunted by verses like Proverbs 22.6: "Teach a child in the way they should go, and when they're old they will not depart from it." This can seem like a guarantee, so if our adult kids don't stay on "the way" we taught them, does that mean we were failures as parents?

3. Some necessary observations about Proverbs 22.6: a) parents teach, children travel along "the way," which parents can't do the walking for their child; b) parents teach children (a term in the ancient that would be anyone under the age of 13, give or take), but then their role needs to shift when those children become adults to something like encourager, supporter, listener, coach (when appropriate), etc.; and c) please notice the wide age gap in the verse, there are 3-5 decades between "children" and "getting old" that are not described, when perhaps there's a lot of wandering, getting lost, falling down, learning the hard way, etc.

4. We can use what we know about the spiritual and religious life of American adults to help us understand our own adult children. First, they likely believe in and have a personal relationship with God. However, beginning with Gen X (ages 45-59), it's also just as likely that they prefer to be "religiously unaffiliated," having a distrust of organized or institutional religion, which includes churches.

5. And that speaks to the current credibility crisis that American Christianity faces with those who are Gen X, Millennials, or Gen Z (basically, those under the age of 55). For example, between 60-70% of Christian young adults will leave the church by the age of 30, and half of them will become openly hostile or antagonistic to it. This trend has been observable for several decades. In his 2003 book *The Church on the Other Side*, Brian McLaren lists the kind of questions that adults ask about Christianity (and, thereby, so do our adult children): e.g., What kind of people or communities does Christianity produce in America right now?; Can I get along with those who identify themselves as Christians?; Would I be ashamed to be associated with Christianity at this moment?; etc.

6. So when are adults (like our own grown kids) more open to faith, or coming back to God, in their lives? Dr. Lewis Rambo is America's leading expert on adult religious conversion, and his research reports that one catalyst is when they come to the end of themselves, that is, when they face a crisis or insurmountable difficulty in life. South African Methodist pastor Trevor Hudson, in his book *One Day at a Time*, writes along those lines, "The first step of the spiritual life is a courageous admission of that weakness. When we won't or can't take that first step, we preemptively cut ourselves off from the experience of God's power to change us from the inside out...When we do take it, we discover one of the open secrets of the spiritual life: it is in our weakness, and maybe only in our weakness, that we discover God's strength."

7. Pastor Dave Ferguson was also intrigued about how and why adults in American turn to - or turn back to - faith so he spent years researching that question and published the results in 2016. He found that another catalyst is that deep longing for God that no amount of busyness, success, work, play, family, or friends can fill. This ache is universal, every human being has it, including our adult children. According to the apostle Paul, we were born to stumble around and search for God ([Acts 17.27-28](#)). French Christian philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal said it like this: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man, which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God."

8. Ferguson also discovered that adults who have divine encounters, a bare wire contact with God moment, tend to be more open to faith after that event. It might surprise you to learn that almost 2/3s of American adults say they experience spiritual wonder or awe (which would be a specific kind of divine encounter) at least once every month, which is a higher percentage than 15 years ago. Psalm 8.1 proclaims that God's majesty is infused in all - that's the key word - the earth, meaning we could have a divine encounter literally anywhere. [Psalm 8](#) goes on to say that we can sense God's glory and presence in the stars above, in children and infants, in deliverance from evil and enemies, and even in other human beings with whom we interact.

9. As parents to adult kids who may not prioritize God or faith, we can watch for these catalysts listed in #6-8 above. When they occur, or when our kids talk about them, we can come alongside them - to encourage them to explore, to help them lean in and pay attention, to guide when given the opportunity, etc.

## More to Explore this Week

1. This week, commit to praying for your adult children, and maybe even specifically for their own faith, character, and need for religious community. You could even be brave enough to pray that one of the catalysts mentioned in the sermon might occur in their lives soon.
2. Talk to your adult kids about what you heard on Sunday (and read above): how are they like what you heard, how aren't they, where do they agree, where don't they, etc.?
3. Two helpful articles:
  - First, a piece from a senior living center on how its residents can encourage their own adult kids to explore faith...lots of great, practical tips: [How to Encourage Your Adult Children in Their Faith Walk](#)
  - Second, a thoughtful piece on how to be a safe haven for your adult kids: [How to Be a Haven for Your Adult Child](#)
4. We've spent a lot of time as a church talking about how to share our faith over the last five years. Here are the links to three previous series that you might want to revisit, even if only to reread some of the Monday Memo summaries:
  - Ancient Future Mission, in which we explored the four major ways that the earliest church shared their faith (go and be, go and love, go and tell, come and belong): [Sermon Series "Ancient Future Mission"](#)
  - Lost in Translation, in which we used the apostle Paul's speech in Athens to help understand better how to communicate the truths of Christianity to those who have no biblical or Christian knowledge: [Sermon Series "Lost in Translation"](#)
  - Surprise the World, in which we tracked along with the book we read together as a church family about practical actions we can take to reach out to others in Jesus' name, like blessing them intentionally: [Sermon Series "Surprise the World"](#)