

# Cultural Influences and Biblical Values

**Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. *Romans 12:2***

The values promoted in the culture around your children might contradict biblical teachings. Teens may feel torn between what society deems acceptable and what the Bible teaches, leading to internal conflicts about how to align their beliefs with their actions.

## › conversation starter

Have you ever felt torn between what the world considers acceptable and what the Bible teaches? How do you think we can navigate this tension and stay true to biblical values?

In today's world, there are many different perspectives on what's right or wrong. How do you think we can discern and filter cultural influences through the lens of biblical truth?

## › navigating the conversation:

- **Discuss Worldviews:** Help teens understand that cultural influences often stem from different worldviews and belief systems. Talk about the importance of comparing these influences with biblical principles.
- **Explore Biblical Principles:** Engage in discussions about specific biblical values, such as love, compassion, integrity, and honesty. Discuss how these principles can guide their decisions and actions in various situations.
- **Teach Discernment:** Encourage critical thinking and discernment by asking questions like, "How does this cultural influence align with what the Bible teaches?" or "What are the potential consequences of following this cultural trend?"
- **Provide Context:** Offer historical and cultural context to certain biblical passages or teachings that may help clarify their relevance in today's world.
- **Examine Cultural Messages:** Analyze media, advertisements, and popular trends together to identify potential conflicts with a biblical worldview. This helps teens become more aware of the messages they encounter daily.
- **Encourage Faithful Examples:** Share stories of individuals who lived out their faith courageously despite cultural pressures. This could include biblical figures or modern-day heroes of the faith.
- **Create a Safe Space:** Foster an environment where teens feel comfortable discussing their questions and concerns about cultural influences and how they align with their faith.
- **Teach Flexibility and Conviction:** Discuss the balance between adapting to cultural practices that are not in direct conflict with biblical values while remaining firm in areas where biblical principles are at stake.
- **Model Biblical Values:** Demonstrate biblical values in your actions and decisions, showing teens how to apply these principles in real-life situations.
- **Prayer and Seeking God's Will:** Emphasize the importance of prayer and seeking God's will in making decisions.



# Treating Others with Respect

Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. *Matthew 7:12*

Teaching respect is about instilling values that shape character. The teachings of the Bible serve as a compass for navigating relationships. When your teens learn to respect others, they're not just following rules; they're embodying a deeper understanding of empathy, kindness, and Christlikeness. Take time to chat about it over dinner or in the car. Share your own experiences and let the life of Jesus guide your conversations. It's an investment that pays dividends in building a compassionate and considerate adult.

## ➤ conversation starter

I was thinking about a time when receiving someone's respect had a positive impact on me. Have you ever experienced something like that? How did you feel?

Imagine you're in a situation where a friend is being treated unfairly. How do you think you would handle it?

## ➤ navigating the conversation:

- **Create a Comfortable Setting:** Choose a time and place where you and your teens can have an uninterrupted and relaxed conversation. Whether it's over a meal or a quiet evening at home, creating a comfortable setting can set the tone for open discussion.
- **Start with a Story:** Share a biblical story that highlights the importance of treating others with respect. One such example is the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Discuss the actions of the Samaritan and how it reflects the principle of loving one's neighbor.
- **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage teens to share their thoughts and feelings. Ask questions like, "How do you think Matthew 7:12 applies to our daily lives?" or "Can you think of a situation where showing respect might have a positive impact, just like in the stories we've read in the Bible?"
- **Explore Relevant Scriptures:** Look into other passages that emphasize respect and kindness. Proverbs 15:1 and Ephesians 4:32 are great verses to explore and discuss.
- **Relate to Real-Life Situations:** Connect biblical principles to everyday scenarios. Ask teens how they can apply the teachings of the Bible to their interactions with friends, classmates, and family members. Encourage them to think about how their words and actions impact others.
- **Emphasize Compassion:** Discuss the concept of empathy and understanding another's perspective. Philippians 2:4 is a powerful verse that underscores the importance of considering others.



# When To Get Help

**Without guidance, a people will fall, but with many counselors there is deliverance.** *Proverbs 11:14*

Discerning when teens require extra support for their mental health can feel overwhelming. Our desire is to guide them through these waters, anchoring them in faith and the love found in Christ. It's also important to recognize that seeking external guidance is not just a choice; it's a proactive step forward in their mental health journey. As you navigate the challenges of adolescence, it's useful to lean on both the spiritual guidance provided by our faith and the practical support offered by those equipped to assist in matters of mental health. Together, with faith and wisdom, we can support our teens through the storms of life, fostering an environment where their mental and spiritual well-being can thrive.

## › conversation starter

I've been thinking about how important it is for us to support each other, especially when it comes to things like mental health. Is there anything you'd like to share with me about how you're feeling or anything that's been on your mind lately?

Is there anything you've come across or learned that you find interesting or would like to talk about, especially when it comes to managing stress or mental well-being?

## › navigating the conversation:

- **Active Listening:** Practice active listening during conversations. Let teens express themselves without interruption. Repeat what you hear to ensure that they feel heard and understood.
- **Integrate Faith into the Conversation:** Share your faith and emphasize the importance of relying on God during challenging times. Remind teens that seeking help is not a sign of weakness but a testament to God's wisdom in placing supportive resources, including mental health professionals, in our lives.
- **Use Relatable Bible Verses:** Incorporate relevant Bible verses that emphasize seeking guidance and finding strength in God. For example, you might share Philippians 4:6-7.
- **Normalize the Process of Seeking Help:** Discuss the idea that seeking help is a normal and courageous step when facing challenges. Highlight individuals in the Bible, like David or Elijah, who sought God's guidance and support during difficult times.
- **Recognize Warning Signs:** Educate yourself on the warning signs of mental health issues, such as persistent changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, or withdrawal from social activities. If you observe these signs, approach the conversation with compassion and express your concern.
- **Encourage Professional Guidance:** Communicate that seeking help from mental health professionals is a valid and valuable option. Emphasize that God works through various means, including the expertise of trained professionals, to bring healing and restoration.
- **Pray Together:** Conclude the conversation by praying together. Pray for guidance, strength, and peace. Reinforce the idea that turning to God in prayer is a powerful source of support.



# Politics and Being Kingdom Minded

**Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Philippians 3:20*

Navigating the complex world of politics can be challenging, especially from a Christian perspective. As parents, guiding your teens to be kingdom-minded in political matters means helping them understand that our primary allegiance is to God and His kingdom. Encourage them to view political issues through the lens of faith, compassion, and justice as taught in the Scriptures. It's important to discuss the role of Christians in society—to be informed, respectful, and loving advocates for God's truth and righteousness, while remembering that our ultimate hope and trust are in God's sovereign plan, not in human governments or leaders.

## › conversation starter

How do you think our faith should influence our views on political issues? What are some ways we can reflect our Christian values in these discussions?

When we hear different political opinions, how can we maintain a kingdom perspective and respond in a way that honors God?

## › navigating the conversation:

- **Encourage Respectful Dialogue:** Teach the importance of listening and engaging respectfully with others, especially when opinions differ.
- **Focus on Kingdom Values:** Discuss how Christian values like love, justice, and mercy apply to political issues. Proverbs 31:8-9, Micah 6:8, Matthew 6:33, and Galatians 5:22-23 are all important verses in this conversation.
- **Pray for Leaders:** Encourage prayer for all leaders, regardless of political affiliation, as advised in the Bible (see 1 Tim. 2:1-2).
- **Educate on Current Issues:** Help teens stay informed about current political issues and guide them in evaluating these topics using a biblical lens.
- **Model Christlike Behavior:** Demonstrate how to handle political discussions with grace, love, and truth.
- **Avoid Partisanship:** Emphasize the importance of not aligning the Christian faith with any particular political party but rather aligning with biblical principles.
- **Discuss the Role of Christians in Society:** Talk about how Christians can be involved in politics in a way that promotes peace, justice, and care for the needy.
- **Seek Wisdom:** Encourage seeking wisdom and guidance from God in understanding and engaging in political matters.



# Salvation

**For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

Talking to your teens about salvation is such a blessing! This conversation is an opportunity to explain the core belief of Christianity—that salvation is a gift of grace from God, received through faith in Jesus Christ. Encourage them to ask questions and express their thoughts. It's important to convey that salvation is not about being perfect or following a set of rules but about a personal relationship with God through Jesus. Reassure them that doubts and questions are a natural part of faith development, and your open and honest dialogue can guide them in understanding this fundamental truth of Christianity.

## ➤ conversation starter

What are your thoughts on what it means to be saved? Do you have any questions about how someone becomes a Christian?

How do you feel about the idea that salvation is a gift and not something we earn?

## ➤ navigating the conversation:

- **Clarify the Concept of Grace:** Explain that grace is an unearned favor from God, and it's the foundation of salvation. Salvation is not a reward for good behavior, but a gift that God freely offers out of love.
- **Discuss Faith in Jesus:** Emphasize that faith in Jesus Christ—His life, death, and resurrection—is central to Christian belief and salvation. Explain that it's about trusting in Jesus and what He has done for us.
- **Encourage Personal Reflection:** Invite teens to reflect on their own beliefs and feelings about salvation.
- **Address Misconceptions:** Clarify any misconceptions about salvation, such as the idea that people can earn their way into heaven through good deeds, or that only "perfect" people are saved.
- **Share Your Experience:** Talk about your own faith journey and how you came to understand and accept the truth of salvation. Personal stories can be very impactful.
- **Talk About Relationship with God:** Discuss how salvation is the beginning of a lifelong relationship with God, not just a one-time event. It's about growing in faith.
- **Discuss the Role of Good Works:** While salvation is not earned by good works, explain how good deeds are a response to God's love and a way to live out one's faith.
- **Offer Reassurance:** Reassure them that it's normal to have questions or doubts; the journey of faith is ongoing.
- **Pray Together:** Offer to pray together, asking for understanding and faith.
- **Encourage Continued Exploration:** Suggest that they continue exploring this topic through Bible reading, youth group discussions, or conversations with trusted spiritual mentors.

