

## CATCHPHRASE

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### WE'RE TEACHING THIS

Inside jokes are awesome, right? You probably have some with your friends where you can just say one word and have everyone laughing! Well... everyone on the "inside" that is. In fact, if you've ever been around a group of friends who had an inside joke, you probably learned quickly that being on the outside isn't much fun. Has church every felt that way to you? Like it's a bunch of people with inside jokes, language and words you just don't understand? Even if you grew up in church, there's a good chance there are some words you

hear, maybe even words you use, where the meaning isn't super clear. And, some of those words most often confused are the same ones that have the greatest impact on our faith. That's why, during this series we're going to dive in to two of the most common, and most misunderstood, words in our vocabulary and see how some clarity on what these words mean could lead us to a clearer picture of who God is and what He wants for our lives.

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### THINK ABOUT THIS

By Reggie Joiner

You and I naturally believe. We trust in things everyday that we cannot see or prove. Most of us are quick to imagine the impossible. We are hard-wired with the potential to have faith. Yet at the same time, we naturally doubt. We are skeptical, curious, and inquisitive. Sometimes, we even ask questions that make those around us nervous. (Or we ponder questions that we are afraid to ask out loud because they make us nervous.)

Everyone processes their faith in different ways and at different speeds. All of my children have unique personalities, but I do remember one conversation during their elementary years when we were riding in the car.

Hannah, who happened to be the spokesman for the family even in the second grade, blurted out a question. "Dad I don't get it. Some of my friends say there's not a God, how do I know they are wrong and I am right?"

RP, who was in the 4th grade at the time, became extremely concerned about his sister's soul and responded, "Hannah you can't ask questions like that. You'll go to hell."

Sarah, the positive kindergartner, could sense the angst in the car, and took her best shot to resolve the tension. She clearly explained, "Don't worry about it RP, Dad will explain it to her and she'll be okay."

Now I personally think that's too much pressure for a parent.

If any of you think that your job is to prove to your kids there is a God, you are probably going to live a pretty stressful life as a parent. Here are a few things I have decided when it comes to the faith of my kids:

**1. Relax when your children ask skeptical questions.**

Don't even try to always have an answer. It's an important part of the process of growing and solidifying what you believe. If you want your children to own their own faith, then you have to let them face their own doubts. Doubt is a necessary detour to take at times if you want to arrive at a deep and personal faith.

**2. There is always a degree of doubt in anyone's faith.**

I don't trust anyone who doesn't admit they have doubts. Doubt is actually okay. I used to think your spirituality was measured by "how much faith you have." Somewhere along the way, I decided it had more to do with "where you put your faith." When it comes to flying, it really doesn't matter if you believe or if you are skeptical, as long as you have enough faith to step on the plane. Planes carry people with different degrees of doubt and faith everyday. It's not the amount of faith, but the object of your faith that makes the

difference. A pastor once told me. "You don't need great faith in God. You need faith in a great God."

**3. You will never talk your kids into believing what you believe.**

You may have a primary role in shaping your kid's faith, but you will never be able to control what they believe or don't believe. If you could simply talk your kids into believing what you believe, then chances are someone else will talk them out of it one day. The spiritual growth of your children will take a number of twists and turns during their life. Most of us tend to forget the complicated spiritual journey that has shaped our faith. We expect our kids to skip that somehow. It will probably be hard at times, and you may even have to get to the point as a parent where you have to trust God with your kid's faith. I know that may take a little faith on your part.

From *I Doubt It* by Reggie Joiner.

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## TRY THIS

Most kids don't need a parent who has all the answers, but they do need an example of how to live out your faith even when you still have doubts. They need a model of healthy curiosity—the kind that doesn't give up just because tough questions arise.

Next time your kid suggests he or she is skeptical about something your family has always believed, try having a conversation instead of an answer.

That means...

**Honor what they said.** You don't have to agree to affirm your child's process of thinking through things. Say something like, "That's a good question" or "I'm proud of you for thinking through this for yourself".

**Ask what they think.** Even if you already know the answer. Even if you've talked about it a hundred times, ask what they think and, maybe more importantly, try asking what they experienced that lead them to that conclusion.

**Continue the conversation.** As soon as someone has a definitive answer, the conversation is over. Instead, offer your student some ideas for how to find the answer or name some people you trust that he or she can talk to. Then follow up later and ask what he or she has learned. You may just be surprised at how he or she owns their faith because you gave them the chance to own their doubts.