

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: Is there a more systematic way of finding out how my son is doing spiritually than just the gut feeling his mother and I have? When we ask the important people in his life about how they perceive his faith, we get polite and non-specific comments that don't really help us.

ANSWER: It's great to hear from a father who wants to take the lead in spiritual matters! I applaud you!

The answer is "yes!". Although we cannot look directly into the heart of another person, there are behaviors, attitudes, and relational styles that taken together can give an accurate evaluation of a child's spiritual maturity. Ask the important people in your son's life, who know and have had opportunity to observe your son, the following questions.

1. How have you observed my son's interest and practice of forgiving?

(Rationale: Awareness of one's own sin enables a person to forgive others out of gratitude to Christ. Awareness of sin drives a person to deep dependence on Christ.)

2. In what ways have you observed and heard my son's attitude and practice of sacrificing for others? (Rationale: Sacrifice is Christ-like. It indicates a self-less, "denying of oneself" lifestyle...living for God and others. Sacrifice is evidence of spiritual maturity.)

3. How have you observed and heard my son sharing the Gospel in word and deed? (Rationale: Excitement, gratitude and willingness to share the wonder of Christ are indications of transformation and commitment.)

4. How does my son give of himself by personal involvement in the lives of others? (Rationale: Deep, relational involvement is a sign of trust and confidence in God...the individual is not self-absorbed, nor does he use relationships for selfish gain.)

5. Which strong and godly convictions are solidly held by my son? (Rationale: Having solid, moral and theological anchors is a sign that the child has well thought-out and tested beliefs that control his thoughts, actions, and motives.)

6. What evidences of the "fruit of the Spirit" have you observed in my son? (Rationale: Fruit indicates the presence of the Spirit of God and sanctification.)

7. How does my son handle life in a fallen world? (Rationale: If the hurts, disappointments, tragedies, injustices, etc. of life are met in Christ-like ways...(e.g. trust, reliance on God the Father, faith and steadfastness etc.) spiritual maturity is indicated.)

8. How does the hope of Heaven and eternal life influence the behavior and motivation of my son? (Rationale: Future hope, being heavenly minded, storing up treasures in Heaven, not living for this world, are indications of godly priorities.)

9. Where is the focus of my son's prayers? (Rationale: God-focused and people-focused prayers are indications that the child is concerned with more than just himself. A child willing to pray, and excited to pray, indicates an on-going, mature relationship with Christ.)

10. How does my son respond to authority? (Rationale: Authority is instituted by God. A more mature believer will understand and value the benefits of authority and the God behind it.)

11. How does my son practice and experience forgiveness? (Rationale: Repentance is the key to a relationship with God. The deeper the repentance, the deeper is the love for the Cross and the Savior. Making restitution and possessing a desire to change will indicate the depth of repentance.)

12. **What is my son's attitude toward the Bible?** (Rationale: The Bible is the primary way a person finds out about God. A deep love, excitement, passion and awe for God's Word indicates a love, excitement, passion and awe for God himself.)

In addition to asking people who know your son well, take some time with your wife and answer them yourselves. The results should give you a better idea of how to prayer for, instruct, and challenge your son. **If you are very brave**, ask your wife to answer these questions about you. Your son's concept of his Heavenly Father will in large part be a reflection of his concept of you as his earthly father.

Jack Lipski, M.A.
SOTHCS Counselor
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J.C. LIPSKI, THE HEART OF A CHILD. 1994