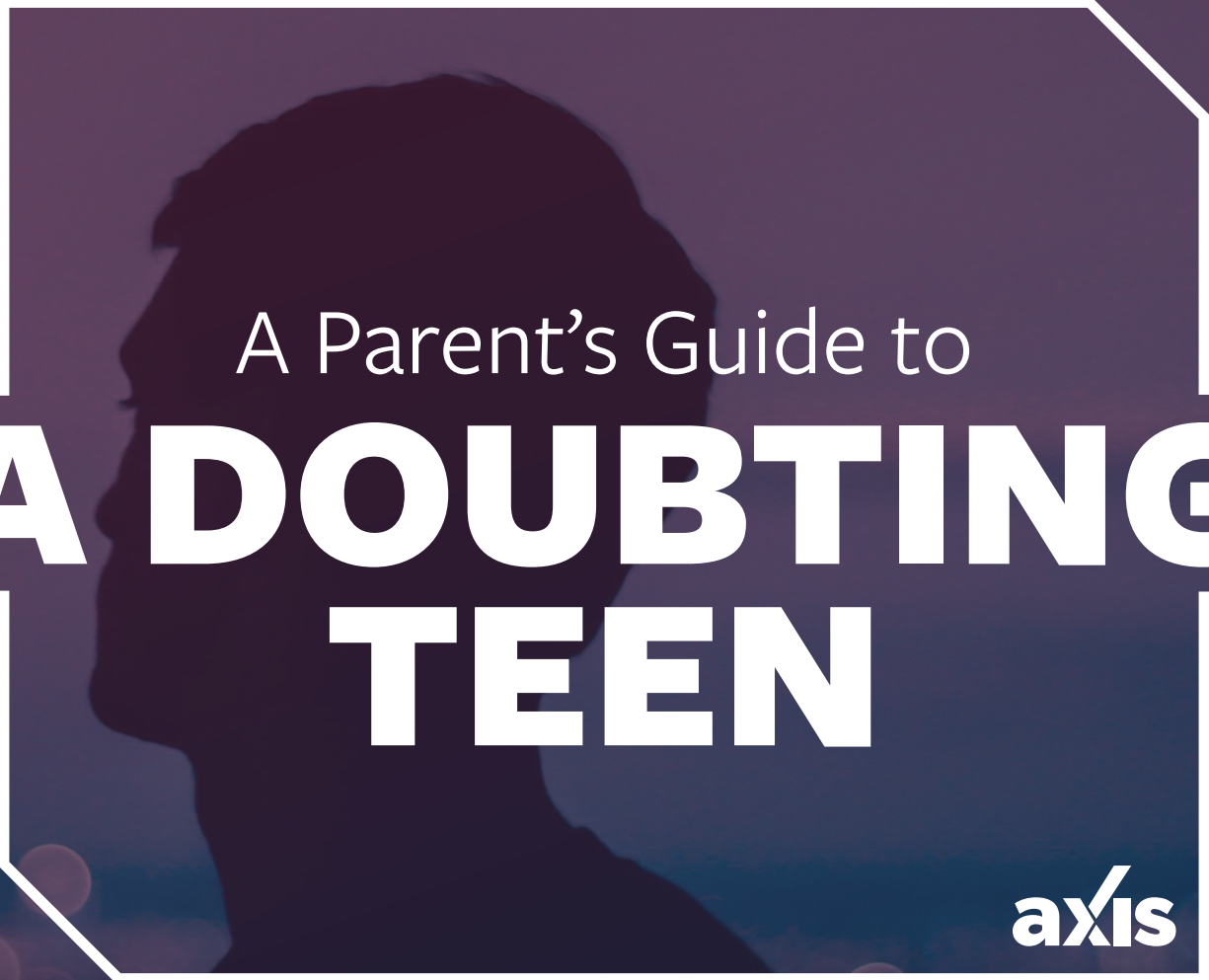


CHRISTIAN LIVING



A Parent's Guide to
**A DOUBTING
TEEN**

axis



If ours is an examined faith, we should be unafraid of doubt. If doubt is eventually justified, we were believing what clearly was not worth believing. But if doubt is answered, our faith has grown stronger.

— [Os Guinness](#)

A Parent's Guide to **A DOUBTING TEEN**

Contents

You're not alone	1
Why do teens doubt?	1
What questions do teens have?	3
Is doubt wrong?	4
What does the Bible say about doubt?	6
What does my teen need from me?	7
A few encouragements	11
Stories	11
Final thoughts	12
Related Axis Resources	13
Additional Resources	13
Reflection Questions	14
Recap	15
Discussion Questions	16

You're not alone

Claire was the kind of teen every parent hopes for—intelligent (think National Merit Scholar and attending a top 10 law school), hard-working, kind, easy-going. Most importantly, she loved God. In high school she led Bible studies. She enjoyed apologetics and engaging with the intellectual side of Christianity. She went on mission trips. No one imagined that Claire would lose her faith.

Her family did everything right. They went to church. They prayed together. They were loving and close. And even so, Claire is now agnostic. Her journey away from faith is one among many journeys; there's a well-trodden path both into and out of Christianity.

Our teens will choose for themselves what to believe and devote their lives to. If this is a terrifying thought for you, you're not alone; it can feel overwhelming, heartbreaking, and painful to think about your teen leaving Christianity.

We won't sugarcoat things: Some of us have kids who aren't Christians anymore. Some of us have kids who are wrestling deeply with their faith, and the outcome of that wrestling is unknown. So when our kids walk away, or when they have troubling questions, or when they aren't even sure what they believe anymore, what are we to do? How should we respond?

Several parents were kind enough to share their stories with us. A few of them have adult children who are no longer Christians and gave us some insight about what they've learned as they keep walking closely with their non-believing kids. A few of them shared about the hard and good conversations that have come from their believing kids' doubts. We pray that their vulnerability gives you insight into what your teen needs, and encouragement that doubt can lead to beautiful conversations, a deeper relationship with your teen, and sometimes, an even deeper faith.

Why do teens doubt?

You know that overloaded feeling you get when you walk down the cereal aisle at the grocery store? How do you choose between Reese's Puffs, Captain Crunch Berries, Frosted Flakes, and Cinnamon Toast Crunch?

If the cereal aisle is overwhelming, the [4,300 possible world religions](#) are in a surpassing category of overwhelm. What is life about? Who am I? Is there a god? What does that god want from us? How do we know which of these belief systems is true? Is truth

even knowable? Paradox of choice doesn't even begin to describe the angst that comes from realizing that most of the people in the world disagree about how to answer these fundamentally important questions.

These plentiful options are, in part, why doubt is woven into the fabric of modern existence. 500 years ago atheism was unimaginable. Belief was assumed. In his book, [A Secular Age](#), Charles Taylor describes the cultural shifts that allowed for the opposite to be true today: the journey from 1500 A.D., when atheism was practically unthinkable, to 2000 A.D., when, for many, theism can seem unbelievable. He says a lot, but we want to focus on the movement toward individualism alongside an increasingly globalized society.

We come in contact with people who believe differently than we do daily. With this increased diversity comes more uncertainty: "Who am I to say that my understanding of the world is better than my Muslim friend's or my agnostic lab partner's?" Awareness of the many explanations for reality is, in many ways, a distinctly modern experience. Not only can we choose where to live, who to marry, which career path to pursue, and what shows to watch, we also can choose to deviate from the beliefs of our upbringing. We get to decide what to believe, an option that didn't exist for pre-modern people.

As James K.A. Smith explains in his book [How \(Not\) to be Secular](#), we are all skeptics now: *"Even as faith endures in our secular age, believing doesn't come easy. Faith is fraught; confession is haunted by an inescapable sense of its contestability. We don't believe instead of doubting; we believe while doubting. We're all Thomas now."*

[Madeleine L'Engle](#) describes the modern believer's experience: *"Those who believe they believe in God, but without passion in the heart, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, and even at times without despair, believe only in the idea of God, and not in God himself."* The clarity of orthodoxy is made crooked by our experience. Doubt sits with longing, faith with questioning. Can we trust our instinct to worship? Or are we just making it up? Yet a longing for the infinite persists.

Modern globalized culture has unique givens, or presuppositions, that make any sort of religious faith difficult. [Darin Stevens writes](#), *"Generation Z hasn't rejected God, as previous generations may have done, they simply don't ever think about him. Like all good 'postmoderns', Generation Z appears sceptical of organised religion, but they are not anti-God or anti-Jesus."*

For teens who've grown up in the church, there's sometimes a feeling that Christians are hypocritical, judgmental, and unloving; that following Jesus means obeying a bunch of weird rules, not embracing a beautiful life.

Recognizing this can feel overwhelming, even frightening. We pray that as you read

this Parent Guide another feeling breaks in as well: encouragement. Few people have walked this modern (or even post-modern) road. We're forging a new path, dealing with questions and presuppositions that previous generations didn't encounter. It's okay if we don't have this figured out—it's new, both for us, and for our teens.

In the midst of this newness, [N.T. Wright](#) offers a beautiful thought. God doesn't want spiritual grandchildren. Instead, He longs for each of us to personally choose adoption into His family—not to ride on our parents' coattails of faith, but to come to Him on our own. As scary as Gen Z's questions can be (questions that we maybe wouldn't think of), they actually force our teens to seek God for themselves. They don't have the luxury of resting on our answers. This is a new generation with a new quest, and God will be present to them as He has been present to us.

What questions do teens have?

Gen Z faces some questions that previous generations didn't need to consider. For them, the age old question, "Who am I?" now includes, "Where do I fit on the masculine/feminine spectrum?" "Who am I attracted to?" and "What does God think of trans people?" Questions surrounding gender and sexuality very quickly move into the painful question, "How can God be good if my gay friend isn't allowed to love someone?" or, "Would God really send my queer friends to hell for something that they can't control, their sexuality?"

Of course, there's also the problem of evil (and unfortunately none of us are untouched by the reality of living in a broken world). There's the hiddenness of God (if God loves us so much, why is He so hard to find?). There are questions about the evidence (or lack thereof) for God, and questions about purpose and whether Christianity's guidelines for living are good.

If you're curious about how to address some of these specific objections, our Parent's Guide to Apologetics does a wonderful job of outlining intellectual responses. God tells us to love Him with every piece of us, our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Research and apologetics (defending the Christian faith) can be a part of loving God with the brains He gave us.

But a small word of caution: Even familiarity with all the right arguments and reading all the right books can feel hollow when God is nowhere to be found. Or when granddad isn't at the dinner table anymore. If you're hoping to equip your teen with a bulletproof, unshakable certainty...well, we would argue that isn't possible for anyone. If you're hoping to keep your teen from experiencing the pain of not knowing what they believe,

or if you're afraid for their soul if they leave Christianity, we would say as gently as possible that, in our experience, there's no formula for creating perfect Christian teens.

Even if you do all the “right things,” you may still have to walk with your teen through some very difficult questions. The most important thing we can say is that your teen needs you. No matter where they land, no matter what they end up believing, no matter how angry they are at God or at the way you raised them—they need you. Please don't leave them to figure this stuff out on their own.

It's odd that God would let us decide whether we want to follow Him or do our own thing. That's a pretty big decision. But He doesn't force us. He lets us choose. And in a way, parenting a doubting teen is a picture of the way God relates to us. God stays with us, even when we rebel, even when we kick and hit and scream. [Jesus' beautiful parable](#) about the prodigal son (and the “faithful,” legalistic son who was home the whole time but who didn't really love his father) is a perfect illustration of this love. God is anxiously hanging out on the porch, just waiting for us to come home—aching to give us a squeeze, to tell us that everything will be alright.

You are a physical representation of God's love to your teen. Your hugs, your prayers, your conversations, your questions...God uses it all to love your teen.

Is doubt wrong?

The present age is better than Christendom. In the old Christendom, everyone was a Christian and hardly anyone thought twice about it. But in the present age the survivor of theory and consumption becomes a wayfarer in the desert, like St. Anthony; which is to say, open to signs. —[Charles Taylor](#)

In order to know if doubt is wrong, we first have to define it. [Doubt indicates uncertainty](#), calling a premise into question, or lacking confidence in something (or someone). Doubt exists on a spectrum, from nagging, unwanted questions about peripheral issues to the kind of angst that feels earth-shattering. And doubt is impartial. Spiritual giants and nobodies alike have wrestled with God's absence, with wondering if this whole Christianity thing is just a pleasant invention to distract us from the yawning void of death.

Mother Teresa endured a profound experiential doubt about God's love for her during the 50+ years that she served the Dalits in India. She [wrote this](#) to her spiritual advisor in September of 1979: “Jesus has a very special love for you. [But] as for me — The silence and the emptiness is so great — that I look and do not see, — Listen and do not hear.”

Her journals and letters, published posthumously, shocked people. One of the most faithful followers of Christ in the 20th century may have lived in service of the gospel while feeling like an atheist most of the time.

Some people never wrestle with their faith. Others resonate with [Fyodor Dostoyevsky's sentiment](#), "*It is not as a child that I believe and confess Jesus Christ. My hosanna is born of a furnace of doubt.*" For him, doubt was a crucible: painful, but able to mold and shape a stronger faith.

Here's our controversial claim: Admitting doubt is better than claiming to have certainty. Doubt can lead to a posture of consideration, of openness to being wrong, of investigation, of searching. We actually hope that teens take this posture—that they carefully consider Christianity to find out if it's true. Anything that makes us feel like we can't ask questions is worrisome, and "certainty," an assumption that we've arrived at the complete truth, easily leads to arrogance, defensiveness, or complacency.

[Jesus tells us](#) to dedicate our whole selves to loving God: hearts, souls, minds, and strength. We don't leave intellect behind to follow God. Logic, rationality, and information shouldn't scare us. Our minds are gifts from God.

Skepticism, or the willingness to criticize current conclusions, keeps us from holding onto unwarranted beliefs. Imagine talking with a non-Christian friend. You would want them to be critical of their current unbelief, to at least consider the possible truth of Christianity. We ask them to be open because truth is valuable. Similarly, we should consider the possibility that we are wrong. When we do, doubt can become an opportunity to investigate—to seek out and put our faith in ideas that can bear the weight of lived experience. [Kevin Simler argues](#),

Knowledge can't exist without criticism. If we want to be right in the long run, we have to accept that we'll often be wrong in the short run, and be willing to...discard questionable beliefs...if I believe that my daughter's soccer game starts at 6pm, but my neighbor informs me that it's 5pm, I won't begrudge his correction—I'll be downright grateful.

So belief (or faith) is only valuable if it is correctly placed. Timothy Keller points out that you can have sincere faith in your ability to swim across the Atlantic. But, of course, no amount of confidence is going to keep you afloat for [3,716 miles](#). Conversely, you can seriously doubt a Boeing 747's ability to fly. But that won't keep you from getting to LAX. The amount of someone's faith hardly matters in comparison to the importance of the object that their faith is in. This is what the searching process is all about: finding out if the object of our faith is trustworthy.

What does the Bible say about doubt?

[Some of Jesus' comments about faith](#) feel blunt: “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

Is he telling his disciples to banish their questions and doubts? He often addresses them as “[you of little faith](#).” Kinda harsh. But remember, these guys had been traveling around with Jesus, watching him perform miracles for years. He even [told them](#) that he was the Messiah. So they already had evidence of his ability and character. And He’s asking them, “What will be enough for you? At what point will you believe that I am who I claim to be?”

Paul’s missionary travels took him to Berea where he conversed with an earnest and investigative group of people: “[Now the Berean Jews](#) were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed.” The Bereans valued truth. They did their research. They didn’t believe Paul right away, but compared what he told them with what they already knew about God. And they are held up as a shining example of how to search for truth.

So a Scriptural framework values evidence and research as a foundation for faith. Sometimes the word “faith” carries an unfortunate connotation of being anti-intellectual, of taking a “blind leap,” and trusting in spite of contrary evidence. Yet even the Greek word for [faith](#), πίστις (pronounced pistis), includes concepts like trustworthiness, reliability, and confidence. This makes sense given [God’s continual invitation](#) to look at His prior trustworthiness as evidence that He will continue to take care of His people in the future.

Human existence is characterized by this kind of faith because we are limited. Faith is commitment without certainty—but it’s not blind commitment—it’s confidence based on prior evidence. We believe that our cars will start (because they usually do), that the sky won’t fall (because it never has before), that the weather app’s rain forecast warrants bringing a poncho (because it’s often correct)...though we aren’t certain of any of these beliefs. Being human means acting in spite of incomplete information.

Pastor Greg Boyd [makes an observation](#) about what doubt and faith meant to a first century Jewish audience. We tend to think of doubt and faith as occurring in our minds, as purely intellectual. But ancient people (Jesus’ audience) would not have asked, “How psychologically certain are you?” when talking about faith. Asking, “Do you have faith?”

would have meant, “Are you willing to commit?” Boyd says, “*Biblical faith isn’t about trying to attain certainty; it’s about committing to a course of action in the face of uncertainty.*”

While Christianity isn’t irrational, God is beyond explanation. [Job 11:9-7 says](#),

Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens above—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.

Apophatic theology, or the *via negativa* (negative way), leans into the mysterious beyondness of God, asserting that human language and intellect fail when trying to describe transcendence. Our capacity to know God is like a goldfish’s ability to grasp physics. As [St. Thomas Aquinas said](#), “*This is the ultimate in human knowledge of God: to know that we do not know Him.*”

Christian mystics warn us not to expect evidence or logical argumentation to result in certainty. There is no such thing as “proving” or “disproving” God, no intellectual tower high enough to give us an objective or unbiased view of what’s real. But the post-enlightenment Church still got swept up in rationalism, sometimes reducing salvation to intellectual agreement with a list of beliefs.

[Stanley Hauerwas says](#), “*Christianity is not a set of beliefs or doctrines one believes in order to be a Christian, but rather Christianity is to have one’s body shaped, one’s habits determined, in such a way that the worship of God is unavoidable.*” Christian faith is an embodied, holistic commitment to Jesus and His way of life, not simply agreement that God is real ([even the demons believe and shudder](#)).

What does my teen need from me?

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares. —[Henri Nouwen](#)

Space to process. Dr. Kara Powell, the author of *Sticky Faith*, noted, “*It’s not doubt that’s toxic to faith, it’s silence about doubt.*” Your teen has a lot of answers coming at them all the time. Instead of more answers, they might need to sort through what they’re already thinking about. You are their conversation partner. You get to ask probing and clarifying questions. Consider using the phrase, “Interesting, tell me more about that...”

Jesus is the best example in this area. He had all the answers. But most of the time He was more interested in hearing from the people who had questions for Him.

Things take time. Your teen’s questions probably feel urgent. But remember, you’re in this for the long haul. You want to walk with them not just until they turn 18, but as a wise and trusted mentor for life. So take a breath. Everything doesn’t have to get resolved today. 15-minute conversations, quick texts, involved discussions about epistemology—these all add up. None of it is wasted. And there is no rush.

One of the parents we interviewed acknowledges how counterintuitive this feels: “I would never forsake relationship with my son because he believes differently than I do. But disagreement is challenging. Maybe the hardest thing to do is to hear others without refuting them.”

Cast a vision for your relationship with your teen. We want to be a trusted voice, a refuge from a turbulent world, someone who they can be completely transparent with, and we want this to be lifelong. What will it take for us to be in that kind of relationship for that amount of time, no matter what our kids believe along the way?

Empathy. How might your teen feel in the midst of their doubt and questions? Feel free to jot down anything that comes to mind as you ponder this question.

These answers come from personal experience and from interviews with friends of Axis:

- Disoriented. Navigating a world turned upside down.
- Isolated, alone.
- Afraid. “What will I lose if I stop believing?”
- Nervous to tell anyone about their questions. “Dad, are you still going to love me if I’m not a Christian?”
- Indifferent or apathetic.
- Despair about ever finding answers.
- Angry (a masking emotion. Maybe help them figure out what is underneath their frustration).
- A deep wanting to believe.
- Tiredness. Wanting to be done with all the unsettled ache that comes from questioning their way of seeing the world.

As one friend of ours put it, “Consider the real possibility that you’re wrong. Think about that and dwell on it. That chaotic feeling is what your teen is internalizing. They’re grappling with their ‘tornado-ness’—that when they die, they just stop spinning. And what do they have to care about but you?”

Don’t assume motives. Rhett McLaughlin, a popular YouTuber who left evangelical Christianity in 2020, [explains](#) how often his journey toward agnosticism was critiqued and minimized:

I understand that neatly condensing me and Link down to theological footnotes is the easiest way to deal with us. If we simply fell victim to the seductive ways of the world and our doubts were based on misunderstandings and false information, then the youth group faith-grounding curriculum pretty much writes itself. But if you take our stories at face value or recognize the sincere nature of our journeys, things get complicated and cumbersome. We become significantly more inconvenient if we went from having a rich and personal faith, and then, after a long and painful grappling with legitimate questions, made the excruciating decision to depart.

Doubt is stressful, and often unwanted. [Jon Steingard](#), former Christian and member of the band Hawk Nelson, admits, “I don’t believe in God, but I miss Him...[walking away from Christianity] felt like a loss, it didn’t feel like a victory.”

Some Christians are quick to slap a convenient answer on doubt, especially doubt that ends in a loss of faith: “Oh, that person just wanted to justify a sinful lifestyle,” “They have a hard, rebellious heart,” “They were deceived.” But if we really listen, Jon, Rhett and many others would say they just want to know what’s true. That they’re not walking away because it’s easier. In fact, many of them are searching for a way to believe. Jon says, “To this day my preference is for there to be a loving God who is our father.”

Unconditional love. Many of the teens and young adults we talked with were surprised and awed by the way their parents responded to their questions. “My mom told me, ‘we are with you and for you no matter where you land or what you believe. Of course we want you to follow Jesus, but your decision in that area will not change our love for you.’” How beautiful!

In [Romans 2](#) we learn that God’s kindness draws us to repentance. Your teen can experience God’s kindness through your steady love.

An example. Don Miller writes in [Blue Like Jazz](#), “Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself.”

Your teen is watching the way that the Gospel shapes your life, the way that God’s love compels your actions, the way that you engage your own questions and uncertainties.

Perhaps this feels weighty, but what if it also felt like a kind invitation? To stop worrying about having all the right answers, and to just live with God, as an apostle (literally emulator or follower) of Jesus. In a way, that's enough. Your closeness with Jesus will rub off on your teen. And in many ways this is what Gen Z longs for. No hypocrisy. Just what's real. So show them what's real.

Freedom. A friend of ours started questioning her faith in college (she went to a Christian university, by the way). A well beloved and respected professor shocked her one time by saying, "Test Christianity for yourself. If it isn't true, you can, and should, walk away." Basically, he repeated [Paul's strong assertion](#) that following Jesus is a waste of time if he didn't actually rise from the dead. Put another way, we should believe what's true, even when that's uncomfortable and disorienting.

This claim that information isn't the enemy, that if the Gospel is true it can withstand even critical investigation, gave our friend so much relief. She didn't have to shove her questions down anymore. In fact, she could bring them to her community and get input from trusted friends and mentors without feeling threatening or guilty. Because if God is real, and actually laid the foundation of reality, poking around in His universe will lead us to Him.

Respect. We love how Joy Clarkson's mom made her feel. [Joy writes:](#)

One of the unique things about my mother was the way she always made me feel like my thoughts were worth listening to, engaging with, improving upon. From the time I was very little, I was not merely a child, but a conversation partner, a fellow discoverer of the world and investigator of its riches.

We hope that your teen feels valued and cherished by you as you engage doubt together.

Practice your "not shocked face." If you want your teen to continue coming to you with the really hard stuff, your reactions need to be inviting and kind. Even if you're deeply upset or freaked out, practice staying calm and curious. Easier said than done, we know, but if you start preparing yourself now, you'll do better when your teen says something unexpected.

A few encouragements

- Your teen is so young. Whatever they think today will probably change. They are on a journey. And you are with them on that journey.
- Your teen's language is limited. "I'm an atheist" may actually mean, "I'm agnostic," or "I'm a Christian with doubts."
- Sometimes it's fun to disagree, to say things for shock value or try to get a reaction. Your teen may be playing devil's advocate just to see what kind of conversation you have.
- Curiosity is more helpful than fear. Be genuinely curious about what your teen has been pondering. Consider these questions as a starting place:
 - What have you been thinking about lately?
 - What led you here?
 - How long have you had these questions?
 - Where did they come from?
 - What emotions have you been feeling?
- Our teens will share all of this with someone, so why not have that person be you?
- As a friend of ours put it, "the force of gravity is stronger over short distances." If you want your teen to change their mind, if you want to be influential and trusted, stay close to them. Change comes from being with, not from external criticism.

Stories

We talked with some friends who doubt (some haven't arrived anywhere, some are atheists now, and some are still Christians). Here's what they appreciated from their parents and friends when talking about faith:

- "My dad holds our conversations about Christianity loosely. He is willing to change his mind and to be wrong, so I never feel like a project or like he's trying to convert me."
- "I appreciate my friends' willingness to follow the evidence wherever it leads, even when that's uncomfortable."
- "Humility and an openness to being wrong are key."
- "My mom recommended books and podcasts about the things we talked about (hell, LGBTQ+, postmodernism, epistemology, women in church leadership, the hiddenness of God, Scripture...), and then we would talk about them together."

- “Continued conversations...letting me vent...letting me talk about my confusion for the thousandth time. They listened and asked questions. I often didn’t really want answers, I mainly wanted to process out loud.”
- “They let me get angry.”
- “They never expect me to ‘arrive.’”
- “I didn’t realize that there’s a spectrum of deconstruction. A mentor told me, ‘You have permission to shed cultural christianity and cultural assumptions about Jesus. Refining Christianity can happen before you have to ditch the whole thing,’ and that was so relieving. I realized that there’s actually a lot of disagreement between Christian denominations, and that’s ok.”
- “The reason I’m still a Christian isn’t logical argumentation, it was God showing up in a weird way that probably only meant something to me (I saw my first shooting star—it’s a long story). I enjoy apologetics, but experiencing God has been far more important to my faith journey.”

Final thoughts

What is your view of God right now? What are you believing about God as you walk with your teen through doubt? There’s not a “right” answer to those questions, only an honest one. Where are you at? What are you afraid of? What are you hoping for?

Our hope for Gen Z finds expression in [one of Jesus’ miracles](#). He was walking past the pool of Bethesda, a heavy, forlorn place. Masses of overlooked, pitiful people gathered there, hoping to be healed. They were disfigured. Blind. Lame. Cast off. With no hope of fitting in or mattering to society.

[John writes](#), “*One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’*”

This guy had no idea who Jesus was. He was looking for healing in the pool, clueless that a miracle worker was standing in front of him. Yet with no prompting Jesus tells him, “*Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.*”

The passage concludes, “*The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.*”

Sometimes love finds us when we’re not even looking. God comes close when we least expect Him to. And instead of needing more answers, we find that we just wanted to be held in God’s love the whole time.

Even when you feel completely inadequate and answerless, with no way to help your teen, the God we believe in is powerful and loving enough to meet your teen wherever they are, to orchestrate the smallest details to show them their belovedness. Somehow, our rest lies not in searching, striving, or acquiring, but in being found.

Related Axis Resources

- [The Culture Translator](#), a **free** weekly email that offers biblical insight on all things teen-related
- Doubt Conversation Kit
- A Parent's Guide to Apologetics
- [A Parent's Guide to the Bible](#)
- Check out [axis.org](#) for even more resources!
- [Join Axis](#) to receive all our digital resources and start a new conversation today!

Additional Resources

Books:

- [Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical](#), Timothy Keller
- [Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality](#), Donald Miller
- [My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer](#), Christian Wiman
- [How \(Not\) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor](#), James K.A. Smith
- [The Cloud of Unknowing](#), Unknown Author
- [Dark Night of the Soul](#), St. John of the Cross
- [The Brothers Karamazov](#), Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- [Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?](#), James K.A. Smith

Articles:

- ["The God I Can't Believe In,"](#) Gary Alan Taylor
- ["It pays to believe obviously untrue things,"](#) Tom Chivers

Listen:

- ["Clarity,"](#) Andy Mineo
- ["A Prayer,"](#) Kings Kaleidoscope (*language*)
- ["The Truth is a Cave,"](#) The Oh Hellos
- ["Constellations,"](#) Ellie Holcomb

- [Holy Heretics Podcast](#), The Sophia Society
- [“Another Christian worship leader loses his faith? Jon Steingard and Sean McDowell,” Unbelievable? with Justin Brierly](#)

Watch:

- [“Dear God,” Dax \(language\)](#)
- [“Infinite Questions,” Madeleine L’Engle](#)
- [“Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical,” Timothy Keller](#)
- [“Greg Boyd: On Doubt, Faith, & James 1:6-7,” Greg Boyd](#)

Support Axis to get more resources like this!

Thanks so much for reading this Parent Guide from Axis! As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit ministry, Axis invests all proceeds from your purchases back into the creation of more quality content like this. By purchasing [content](#) from Axis, you support our ministry, allowing us to come alongside you in your parenting and/or discipleship journey.

Reflection Questions

- When was the last time you changed your mind about something important? What led to that change of belief or value?
- Are you willing to evaluate your own faith?
- What if you are wrong about Christianity? What if Jesus didn’t in fact rise from the dead, and Christianity is not actually true?
- If a non-Christian asked you, “Why are you a Christian?” what would tell them?
- Have any of your own opinions changed based on the conversations you’ve had with your teen? What has their doubt taught you?

A Parent's Guide to **A DOUBTING TEEN**

Recap

- It can be scary to watch our kids wrestle with doubt. We can't control what they believe; whether they commit to following Jesus or not is up to them. Yet we can trust our patient and powerful God to love them even more deeply and fiercely than we do.
- Admitting doubt is better than claiming to have certainty. Doubting can mean being open to being wrong, searching for truth, and looking for answers. Humble curiosity is exactly what we want for our teens.
- The Bible doesn't ask us to trust God blindly, without any reason or evidence for doing so. We are invited to use the minds God gave us to discover truth and discard false beliefs.
- Yet rationality will not take us all the way (as highlighted by Christian mysticism and apophatic theology). God is transcendent, completely and totally beyond comprehension and explanation. While apologetics is helpful, it will never lead us to certainty.
- Your teen is watching the way that the Gospel shapes your life, the way that God's love compels your actions, the way that you engage your own questions and uncertainties. What are you modeling for them?
- Be with your teen. They need your presence and encouragement more than anything, no matter what their process looks like or where they end up.

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!

A Parent's Guide to **A DOUBTING TEEN**

Discussion Questions

- What evidence are you looking for?
- What evidence has led you to believe what you believe now?
- How has your view of Jesus changed over time?
- How do you deal with the problem of evil? What is your answer?
- Is sin a social construct?
- What makes someone a Christian?
- How do you determine if Christianity is true?
- Is Christianity rational, emotional, or both?
- What is faith? Is it based on evidence? Experiences? Intellect? Feelings? What do you need to have faith in something?
- Does faith come from how we feel?
- What are your hardest questions about Christianity? What doesn't make sense to you?
- How do you feel when you talk about Christianity?
- Do you want the gospel to be true?

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!