

THE FIVE KEY TOOLS

Unwinding

Explore what your child or teenager thinks God is like and gently help them develop a broader, more balanced picture.

01

Key points

- Children and teenagers are constantly building a picture of what God is like from the Bible, church, family, friends, social media, conversations and their own experiences.
- Sometimes that picture is accurate. Sometimes it's partly right but unbalanced. Sometimes it's simply wrong.
- The way a child sees God affects how they relate to him. If they think God is distant, they may not expect him to care. If they think God is angry with them, they may avoid him. If they think God only wants them to be happy, they may struggle when life is difficult.
- Unwinding means noticing what our children think about God and gently helping them move towards a broader, more balanced picture.
- The first step is often simply noticing. Listen for little comments about God rather than asking, "What is your theology of God?"!
- Open-ended questions can help because they aren't a quiz. You're trying to discover what your child genuinely thinks, not whether they know the right answer.
- Once you've noticed something, you don't have to correct it immediately. Try "Tell me more". Follow your curiosity and find out where the idea came from.
- Then think about what might help bring balance. Sometimes children need more information. Sometimes they need an experience of the truth they're missing.
- For example, if a child thinks God is distant, you might create more windows into how close God is to you or help them experience connecting with God for themselves.

- You can also join your child in their journey — especially teenagers who are getting ideas about God from friends, podcasts, school or social media. Ask them what they've heard and invite them to explore it with you rather than turning it into a debate.
- And remember: you don't have to do this alone. Other Christians, church communities and people with particular knowledge can help.

02 Things to think about/chat about

- What do you think your child or teenager currently thinks God is like?
- Where might that idea have come from?
- What might be missing from their picture?
- How could you explore that together without turning it into a correction or a test?

03 Have a go – under-fives

- Ask your toddler to draw a picture of God and them. Look at it together and see what you notice.
- Think about your own view of God. Are there characteristics you naturally emphasise more than others?
- Use the “When I am...” tool (see link below) to help your child discover that God's love isn't dependent on their behaviour.
- If your child says something about God that seems unhelpful, gently explore it rather than simply saying, “That's wrong.”
- If your child loves hearing the same Bible story repeatedly, introduce another story that shows a different aspect of God's character.
- Remember that you don't need to force a conversation. You can also broaden their picture simply through the stories you choose, the way you talk about God and the windows you create.

04

Have a go – children and teenagers

- Ask: “If you had to describe God in five words, what would they be and why?”
- Ask open questions such as “What do you think God thinks about...?” or “What do you think God was doing in that situation?”
- When your child says something about God that interests you, try “Tell me more.”
- Ask where they've got an idea about God from.
- If they are getting ideas from a podcast, YouTube video or social media, ask them to show you what they've heard and explore it together.
- If you notice an unbalanced view of God, ask: “What else might they need to know or experience about God?”
- Be willing to share things you find difficult to understand about God too.

05

Keep exploring

- These ideas are a starting point, not a checklist. You don't need to try everything. Choose something that feels like it might fit your child, your family and the season you're in and see what happens.
- There is no one right way to parent for faith. You're the expert in your child, and you can experiment, notice what helps and work out their next step with God.

GO DEEPER

- › Summary of the Unwinding tool (1 min watch, 4 min read)
- › Unwinding and additional needs: FAQs (5 min read)
- › Ideas to spark a conversation with children and teens (4 min watch)
- › Ideas to spark a conversation with teens (2 min watch)
- › 101 questions to start an interesting conversation about God (free download)

- › Helping under-fives grow a balanced view of God (3 min watch)
- › Session 3 of the Original Parenting for Faith course (25 min watch)
- › Session 4 of Parenting Teens for a Life of Faith course (35 min watch)

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SPACE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS
