



# Partnering with Parents

Parent Conversation Guide

How to engage with our  
kids when they ask the  
hard questions.

*At Bent Tree, our Family Ministry Team wants to come alongside you to equip and support you as you disciple your children from a place of dependence on the Lord. As parents, we will never have all the answers, but we can show our kids that God is in control, even in the hard places.*

**We hope this resource will provide some guidance and encouragement wherever you are on your parenting journey.**



# Partnering with Parents

Sometimes, when our young kids hear about difficult topics like addiction, depression, abuse, or anxiety, we tend to want to protect their innocence and avoid engaging in honest conversations around adult topics. But to make you the trusted resource for your kids' curious questions, it's important to respond calmly and prayerfully.

## Here are some general tips when a child's question catches you off guard:

- If you feel panic setting in, stop, take a deep breath, and pray. Lead with calm, not fear!
- Acknowledge their curiosity and the validity of their question. Try not to shut it down if you feel panicked or don't know the best way to respond.
- Stall if you need time to pray about the best age-appropriate answer. But don't put them off for long. Let them know a specific time you will make space to talk with them more if you aren't in a place to answer right in the moment.
- It's okay to give short answers followed by follow-up questions. Don't feel the need to overexplain if they seem satisfied. *Answer only what they asked*, then pause.
- Avoid fear-based warnings or shaming language.
- Normalize ongoing conversations about challenging topics. Use small, calm conversations in everyday moments to teach your kids that you're a safe person to talk to about hard things.

## Examples of what to say when your elementary-age child asks questions about depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation:

- That's a great question, and I may not have all the answers, but here are some things God has taught me.
- Start with God's design- "You are made by God, and your body and mind are good." Also, "Jesus loves people even when they make choices that aren't part of God's best way."
- Sometimes people feel so sad or confused that they don't know how to get help.
- Jesus brings us from death to life. This means he forgives us and loves us, even if for a time, we chose sin instead of following him.

## What NOT to say:

- Words that communicate you're freaking out. (Try and stay calm.)
- That's grown-up stuff, and we can't talk about it during church.
- You don't need to worry about that.
- Words that shame or condemn.
- They (person dealing with anxiety, depression, etc.) just need to have more faith. Or this wouldn't have happened to him if...

## When kids ask about a story that includes abuse or something scary...

### Set the tone

- Start with clarifying questions: What did you hear? What do you think it means? This helps you know what your child is thinking about.
- Affirm and simplify with general explanations, not specific details.
- Anchor in safety and care. “If something ever worries you, you can always tell me.”

### Examples you might use as they are processing what they've heard:

- “It is really sad that she had to go through that. How does that story make you feel?”
- “Sometimes people make wrong choices that can hurt kids. That’s not what God wants, and it makes him sad, too.”
- “When hard things happen, we can remember to look for the helpers. And Jesus loves us, protects us, and is with us.”

As your kids grow older and you continue to engage in more conversations about hard things, our deep hope is that you will allow the Holy Spirit to be your guide. He has chosen you to be the parent of your child and will give you wisdom as you continually point your child to the hope we have in Jesus. You won't do it perfectly, but his grace covers our mistakes, too.