



When taking the time to talk to your middle schooler...

- Tell personal stories
 - This is a time in your life where you can open up and let your student know that you are not perfect. The lessons you have learned over the course of your life will help your student navigate through difficult circumstances they may encounter during this period of their life.
 - Being open and honest with your student will result in increased trust and friendship between both of you. This will allow them to understand that your desire is to help them when they encounter the various challenges life has to throw at them!
- Learn how to address life challenges.
 - LISTEN TO THEM! When they say something that shocks you, don't just jump in right away. Let them tell you the whole story before you respond. Patience is often difficult in these situations, but the fruit of the waiting is well worth it.
 - If you blow up on them or don't handle this well, your student may fear that they can't talk to you about hard news or crazy stories. If they don't come to you, then you can be assured that they are going somewhere else. You want to be the one directing your child so that you can ensure that the direction is pointing towards God and His Word.

- Know that it IS okay to not always know the answers.
 - Students can come up with some insane questions. You probably can answer most of them, and that's great, but if they have a question you don't know don't make an answer to satisfy their curiosity.
 - *We can find out together.* Stop what you are doing and go on a search with your student to find out the answer. Even if you can't immediately locate the answer to the question, taking the time to search shows your student that you **value** them and care about helping them in every circumstance!

Make the *most* of the time you spend together.

- Morning Time.
 - Be a coach.
 - You instill purpose when you start the day with encouraging words.
- Drive Time
 - Be a friend.
 - You interpret life during informal conversation as you travel.
- Meal Time
 - Be a teacher.
 - You establish values with intentional conversation while you eat together.
- Bed Time
 - Be available.
 - You strengthen your relationship by showing up when they need you.

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Your role is to *affirm* them.

- Help them connect the dots.
 - Why? Why? Why? I'm sure you have heard this a lot, but how do you respond to it? A middle school student isn't asking incessant questions to bother you, even though it can at times feel that way. They want to know the reason behind the *Why*.
 - Parent: *Clean your room!*
Student: *Why?*
Parent: *Because I said so...*

Be honest, you have said this at some point in time. Explain to them why you ask them to do things so that they understand the value behind what you're asking. Tell them that their room looks bad and it smells even worse. You can break it down as far as you want to go, but the student needs and wants to know the reason behind the *Why*.
- Help them understand who they are.
 - A lot of things are changing in your student's life right now. They are changing physically, relationally, mentally, and emotionally. You need to be there for them as much as you can. Open up God's Word. In the midst of their ever changing bodies, God and what He says about us as His children remains the same.
 - One of the biggest questions they will be wondering and working out is Who am I? You get the opportunity to help them discover that. Again, turn to Scripture. Who does God say that they are?

- Tell them:

God says that you are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139), you are chosen (1 Peter 2:9), you are loved (John 3:16), and you are His (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Your child is so precious. Let them know that!

SOME THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

- Do I read my Bible around my student?
- Do I pray in front of or with my student?
- Do I serve in the church?
- Do I give all I can to God when I'm around my student and when I'm away from them?
- It will be hard for you as a parent to ask these things of your student if you don't do them yourself. Your child is always watching you. If you don't already do them, you can start doing them together as a family.

ACTION STEPS

1. When your student asks *Why?* this week, explain to them the full reason behind your answer.
2. Make time to pray with your student.
3. After church have a real discussion about what each of you has learned. Try to dig deep and stay away from Yes/No questions.

RESOURCES

- *Parenting Your Seventh Grader* by Kristen Ivy and Reggie Joiner
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