

MY MIDDLE SCHOOLER ONLY SAYS

“I DON'T KNOW”



Understanding Your Middle Schooler

The main reason “I don’t know” is said is to protect their inner thoughts from being completely influenced or overtaken by you.

Upon entering the middle school years, students’ brains develop the ability of abstract thinking which cues them to first wrestle with the question of, “Who am I?” For some, it seems to happen overnight and for others, it’s a little more gradual. This “who am I?” question is accompanied by an obsession to figure everything out for themselves, by themselves, with just about anybody else besides their parents.

Experts Say These Are a Few Reasons Why:

- Middle schoolers know just how much parents influence their thoughts, so if you are the ones who help them figure something out, it doesn’t count as figuring it out for themselves.
- Sometimes, students are unable or unwilling to tell you that they would be okay to talk later but want more time and space to think through it on their own first.
- Due to the heightened awareness of your influence, students often believe they need to have fully formed answers before being presentation-ready.
- Sometimes, middle schoolers are not in the mood to do any thinking from fatigue or laziness but mainly, it’s just not fun!

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

click on the following sections you'd like to read:

1. **ANSWERS** to why middle schoolers say, “I don’t know”
2. **DIRECTIONS** on how to use this guide
3. **QUESTIONS** to engage middle schoolers in their Bible reading time
4. **RESOURCES** for middle schoolers and their parents/guardians

You might be thinking, “But wait! Just because they don’t want to be influenced by us parents, it doesn’t mean that is what’s best for them, right?”

Yes! If anything, they need your love, affirmation, and influence more than ever, but they need to be approached in a different way. They need Jesus and they need your help the most to see Him!

DIRECTIONS

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



PURPOSE of this guide

We want to partner with parents to help your students develop a Jesus-centered faith that they call their own. Using this guide will not cure your middle school students of the “I don’t know” statement, but it will help you draw them out more and create a welcoming environment to explore life’s big and small questions.

This guide is a recommended approach. A new approach takes time to adopt so give yourself as much grace as you give your kids! This guide is NOT a step-by-step manual for guaranteed, consistent success. Rather, it has some tried and true tips for you to include in your parenting strategies since you know your kids best.

PREPARE and set aside an agreed upon time (10-15 mins)

- **Why:** Middle schoolers are growing in independence (thought especially) with their own agendas and ideas of how they’d like to spend their time. Setting aside time shows that you value and acknowledge them and their time. It’s also important to affirm that their thoughts are wanted and valuable to you. Over time, it will click and they’ll be willing to increasingly share their thoughts with you.
- **Example:** “Hey, I know you’ve been reading _____ lately. Can we find some time (10-15 min) together because I’d love to hear your thoughts on it!”

PROCESS with your child; go from broad to specific

- **Why:** Asking questions and answering the same questions you ask accomplishes a few things. It puts you in a place where you also say “I don’t know (yet)” and appropriately communicates that you do not have all the answers, so neither should your student.
- **Example:** “Thanks for making time for us to chat together. How are things going?”
- **NOTE:** Your child may very well answer with “I don’t know.” Don’t lose hope! Try the prompts in the ENGAGING QUESTIONS section to draw them out.

PRAISE your child for spending time in the Word together

- **Why:** This is a great time to affirm them and elevate the time you spend together.
- **Example:** “That was fun! I love your thoughts and really enjoyed hearing them. Thanks for setting aside time for us.”

ENGAGING QUESTIONS



Our first encounter with Jesus probably wasn't through the Bible, but those who have a vibrant, personal relationship with Jesus have a healthy relationship with the Bible. If we're being honest, the Bible is not always the most palatable book regardless of age. Thankfully, there are smaller steps that we can lead our middle schoolers to take on the way to developing their own healthy relationship with the Bible! This section includes age-appropriate questions that will help you engage your middle schooler.

GENERAL Questions:

- What does this teach me about God?
- What does this teach me about myself/humans?
- How can I live in light of this?

MIDDLE SCHOOL-SPECIFIC Questions:

- What is confusing about what you read?
- What is easy to agree with? What is hard to agree with?
 - Can you share why it's easy/hard to agree with?
- What do you think God is asking us to do through this Bible passage?
 - Does God ever command or ask us to do anything that Jesus hasn't done first?
 - How has Jesus done what God is asking us to do?
- How much do you think _____ is/are living this out?
Fill in the blank with "you," "our family," "we parents" etc.
- What is something you'd like to know about Jesus?
- What is something in your life that you would like Jesus to help you with?
 - I'd love to know more about this if you want to share with me. If you're not ready to share it with me yet, that's okay. Would you pray and think about sharing it with someone whom we both know loves Jesus and cares about you?
 - Are you okay with me checking in with you about it next week?

ELABORATING PHRASES - helps you gain more context and understanding while showing care and attentiveness

- That's interesting - what makes you say that?
- You mentioned _____. Tell me more about that.
- I'd love to hear more about that. How did you decide that?

RESOURCES

FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES



FOR STUDENTS

*Resonate is not affiliated with any of these resources.

[Know God: A 28-Day Devotional Experience for Kids by Lauren Terrell](#)

- **FOR:** Elementary-aged kids
- **WHAT:** 28-day devotional for kids to do independently
- **AMP'S REVIEW:** [For sample, click here.](#) Not recommended to do both (referring to next book rec); check out samples and select based on student maturity. Moderate amount of engaging reading and structure. Not difficult for parents to jump in but does require some homework.

[Know God: A 28-Day Devotional Experience for Students by Ben Crawshaw](#)

- **FOR:** 6th-12th grade students
- **WHAT:** 28-day devotional for kids to do independently
- **AMP'S REVIEW:** [For sample, click here.](#) See above.

FOR FAMILIES

[Exploring the Bible Together: A 52-Week Family Worship Plan by David Murray](#)

- **FOR:** Families
- **WHAT:** 1-year, no-prep family worship plan that takes readers through a survey of the entire Bible
- **AMP'S REVIEW:** This has not been released yet but is a family experience based on its popular and impactful counterpart mentioned above.

[Exploring the Bible: A Bible Reading Plan for Kids by David Murray](#)

- **FOR:** Children ages 6-12
- **WHAT:** 1-year reading plan that takes readers through a survey of the entire Bible
- **AMP'S REVIEW:** Though the recommended age range is 6-12, it is beneficial to anyone including adults. The reflection questions offer a range of depth, depending on the user. For middle schoolers, this is likely a quick 5-10 minute quiet time.

[Meeting with Jesus: A Daily Bible Reading Plan for Kids by David Murray](#)

- **FOR:** Children ages 8-12 (Amazon has conflicting information here)
- **WHAT:** 1-year reading plan that centers on Jesus
- **AMP'S REVIEW:** Newly released but has received rave reviews from other trusted, gospel-centered authors. This is getting recommended based on David Murray's (author) reputation.

[New Morning Mercies by Paul David Tripp](#)

- **FOR:** Adults
- **WHAT:** Yearlong, one-page daily devotional
- **AMP'S REVIEW:** This is a great resource if you want to build family devotions into your rhythm. I find this to be adaptable to students and kids. Excellent Gospel fluency content/training.