

### **3 Traits Of Kids Who Do Not Lose Their Faith**

Every congregation has a story to tell about a “good Christian” child, raised in a good home and in their congregation, who walked away from their faith during college. These children, from all outward appearances, looked as strong in the faith as humanly possible, but now they want nothing to do with it anymore.

The daunting statistics about the faith of our young people are unnerving at best. What are we doing wrong in our congregations? There is no one solution for bringing all of those “lost” children back to God. However, we can all look at the young adults in our congregations who are faithful and involved. The following are three observations that set apart the children who truly labor for the Lord.

#### ***They Are Converted***

The apostle Paul does not use phrases like “nominal Christian” or “pretty good kid.” When we read the testimony of scripture on the topic of conversion, we find very little wiggle room. Salvation is a turning from wickedness that comes from the glorious power of God through the His word (cp. Acts 19:18-20).

We need to stop talking about “good kids.” We need to stop being pleased with only attendance at our assemblies and Bible classes. We need to be fervently praying that the scriptures will work in their young hearts (James 1:25). In short, we need to get back to a focus on conversion.

Conversion is a change of mind. The sinner, being of the world and alienated from God, listens to the gospel from the lips of the preacher of righteousness (Romans 1:16; 10:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

Conversion is a change of attitude. Moved by a knowledge of God’s will (Matthew 11:21-24; Luke 16:30-31; John 20:30-31), the sorrow of past sins (2 Corinthians 7:9-10), the goodness and mercy of God (Romans 2:4), the bliss of Heaven (Revelation 22:1-5), and the fear of final judgment (Acts 17:30-31), they change their attitude from disobedience to obedience.

Conversion is a change of relationship. A person shows their faith and repentance by the overt act of baptism which is necessary to salvation (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21).

When they are converted — when the “old” goes and the “new” comes — we will not be dealing with a group of “nominal Christians.” We will be ready to prepare a generation of future leaders and workers — “new creations” — who are hungry to know and spread God’s word. It is converted children who go on to love the Lord and serve His church.

### ***They Have Been Equipped, Not Entertained***

I am not against having fun with the young people in the congregation, but we need to keep repeating the words of Ephesians 4:11-12. Christ gave teachers to the church, not for entertainment, encouragement, examples, or even primarily friendship. He gave us to the church to “equip” the saints to serve in order that the church of Christ may be built up.

If I have not equipped the children to teach the gospel, edify a younger Christian, and lead a Bible study, then I have not fulfilled my work to them, no matter how good my sermons have been. We pray for conversion, but after conversion, it is our Christ-given duty to help fan a flame of faith.

The Bible has great examples of young people who served God (Psalm 71:5, 17; Ecclesiastes 12:1). You cannot get the strength and spiritual fortitude of Joseph (Genesis 39:9), David (1 Samuel 17:37), or Daniel (Daniel 1:1-4, 8) by entertaining kids. Our children now can have the same faith, courage, and integrity as these two (cp. 1 Timothy 4:12).

Are we sending out from our congregation students who will show up to college in a different state, join a congregation, and begin doing the work of the gospel there without ever being asked? We do not need “youth group junkies;” we need to be edifying young Christians who are equipped to teach, lead, and serve. We need to start looking at these adolescents and asking, “How can I spend a few years with them, helping them become the best servants they can be ten years down the road?” If our students leave high school without good Bible habits and skills, and good examples of being a disciple, we will likely lose them.

### ***Their Parents Preached The Gospel To Them***

It is impossible for all of us to equip all of the congregation’s children if our work is not being reinforced tenfold in the home. The common thread that binds together almost every service-minded 20-something is abundantly clear: a home where the gospel was not peripheral, but absolutely central — who are serving, leading, and driving the work in congregations.

First, they are kids whose parents made them go to Bible classes and worship assemblies (Hebrews 10:25). Second, they are kids whose parents punished them and held them accountable when they were rebellious (Proverbs 19:18). Third, they are kids whose parents read the Bible to them and prayed with them at home (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). Fourth, they are kids whose parents were tough but who extolled Christ as the basis for peace with God and forgiveness toward one another (Romans 5:1).

This last observation is not part of a precise formula. Children from wonderful gospel-centered homes leave the Lord; people from terrible family backgrounds find eternal life in Christ and have beautiful marriages and families.

But this observation is also not completely random. In general, children who are led in their faith during their younger years by parents who love Jesus deeply, serve their congregation actively, and saturate their home with the gospel completely, grow up to love God and His church (Luke 1:6).

The words of Proverbs 22:6 do not constitute a formula that is true all of the time, but they do provide us with a principle that comes from the gracious plan of God, the God who delights to see His wonderful word passed from generation to generation (Psalm 78:4-8; Isaiah 28:9; 38:19).

Pray with all your might for true conversion; that is the gospel's work. Equip the saints for the work of the ministry; that is the congregation's work. Parents, preach and live the gospel for your children — our work depends on you.

Adapted from Jon Nielson