



## REMEMBER

- Research says that youth who stay with their faith have 4 things in common.
  - Experience of a tangible God.
  - Belonging to a genuine faith community.
  - Exposure to empowering teaching and beliefs.
  - The modelling of parents/mentors who live out and speak about their faith.
- Parents & loving adults often feel helpless when youth question or seemingly walk away from faith--but God hasn't gone anywhere. His love and care for all of us is constant. He's not shocked by anyone's doubts and He keeps making himself known. Let's help teens notice! Remember that God showed us his heart in Luke 15 through three stories of lost things being found. God doesn't give up on those who walk away. Like the prodigal son's father, he can't wait for his children to come back home.



## RECOGNIZE

- Doubts are real; they're a part of healthy adolescent independence-seeking, and can actually serve to strengthen faith. Our job is to help youth acknowledge and walk through their doubts, not get lost in them.
- Young people report the lowest levels of religious connection in Canada. The time and place teens leave the church is most often during transition periods of life. The challenge of transitions stirs up faith questions. Recognize that these are important times to explore spiritual uncertainties.
- Many teens walk away from faith because it stops "feeling" true for them. How they experience faith content determines its reality to them, leaving them judging truth by their own personal narrative rather than by faith and reason.
- Teens aren't interested in a faith that seems to repress those who are different. This misunderstanding of the heart of God pushes many teens away from him. We must be an embodied apologetic, showing them what God's heart for others looks like in the way we treat those around us.



## RESPOND

- **Don't panic.** It's really important for teens to know that God - and you - aren't afraid of doubts. If a teen was doubting that ice cream would melt in the heat you wouldn't panic because you would know that time would show truth. Our job is to help them watch and wait.
  - **Start the conversation.** Teens may not feel like it's ok to say that they have doubts. Let them know that doubting is actually part of growing faith. They can have doubts and still walk with Jesus. Let them know he's ok with that and so are you.
  - **Encourage teens to talk to God openly about doubts.** Help them find a way to do this that fits for them (eg. a letter, a picture, a list, a conversation).
  - **Ask teens to make a list.** What might they might lose if they walked away from God? What would they gain? This list will help identify what they value, and help you explore with them where those values may take them if they continue to pursue them.
- **Clarify what they are choosing between.** At its essence, the choice is between "You are God and I am not" and "I am god and you are not". The rest is details.
  - **Tell the teen about the things you see in them.** How are they a reflection of God (since they're made in his image)? Remind them that they bear the image of their Father. Whether they choose to walk with him or not, they are His - and He will always be waiting for them.
  - **Share your own stories of faith and doubt.** What led you to believe this was true? Why do you hold onto Jesus?
  - **Invite them to watch and question you as you live out your faith.** Keep walking with them even if they aren't interested in walking with Jesus.



## LOSING FAITH

lifeteams  
resources



## RESOURCES

- [thegospelcoalition.org/article/students-leave-faith](http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/students-leave-faith) - Four ways to respond to young people walking away from their faith.
- [fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/dont-believe-anymore-](http://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/dont-believe-anymore-) Becoming a safe place for teens to doubt.
- [axis.org/blog/15-resources-for-a-doubting-teen](http://axis.org/blog/15-resources-for-a-doubting-teen) - A collection of great resources to direct teens to before they shut the door. Also a good place to honestly explore some of our own faith questions.