



## REMEMBER

- Your first job is to care about the person, not find the perfect answer.
- Jesus was the master of answering questions with questions that moved the conversation to the heart of the issue.
- Be aware that “right answer” anxiety may turn a great conversation into a really bad sermon.
- Often we feel the responsibility of making the faith look “credible” with our amazing definitive answers but God doesn’t need your help to make him look good. He can take care of Himself!
- 1 Peter 3:15-16: "If someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way" (NLT).



## RECOGNIZE

- Tough questions can come from a lot of different places.
  - ▶ Sometimes the questions are simply a back door way of connecting with you.
  - ▶ Sometimes the question is a reflection of their frustration or anger toward God and the church.
  - ▶ Sometimes they don't have the words for their true question, so they ask one they've heard from someone else.
  - ▶ Sometimes they are curious and just want more information.
- Questions about how suffering is possible if God is good are overwhelmingly the most pressing for teens who are thinking about faith.
- God is neither put out or worried about their questions. He invites us to join him in the faith exploration of others because he knows how good it will be for us!



## RESPOND

- **Ask yourself: “Is this a heart question or a head question?”.**
  - ▶ *Heart questions are often in response to a difficult experience encountered by them or someone they love. If it's a heart question, information isn't what they need as much as a compassionate ear. Our job isn't to defend God but to care for the questioner as an expression of God's care for them.*
  - ▶ *If it's a head question, our goal is to give them our best understanding of truth from the context of God's loving heart for them and the world. We're not talking them into seeing things as we do, just offering another way of seeing.*

- **Explore what their question means to them.** Teens often have a hard time articulating their true questions. They may not even have a question - just a feeling that they don't like or agree with something about our faith. Take time to get to know their faith story so far, with responses such as:
  - ▶ “Great question. Can I ask why you want to know?”, “How long have you wondered about this?”, “Have you asked others - what have you heard from them?”, “What do you suspect the answer is?”.
- **Listen carefully to their responses.** Rather than planning out what you are going to say next instead, reflect the true heart of the God they are questioning - the God who cares about what they have to say.
- **Answer humbly.** When it's your turn to speak don't pretend you are the expert.
- **Keep your answer brief.** Give them the opportunity to let you know if you are tracking with them by asking if you're headed the same direction they were with your response.
- **Tell them how the truth you have told them impacts your life.** Why does what you have said matter to you and your faith every day?



# TOUGH QUESTIONS



## RESOURCES

- [fulleryouthinstitute.org](http://fulleryouthinstitute.org) - Search “doubt” for some great articles on walking with youth through uncertainty.
- [thelife.com/10-spiritual-questions-and-their-answers](http://thelife.com/10-spiritual-questions-and-their-answers) - Simply communicated answers to 10 Spiritual Questions.
- [www.apologeticscanada.com](http://www.apologeticscanada.com) - Check out the podcasts and the free Thinking Series videos.