

## CONVERSATION CHART

<p><b>Faith</b></p>	<p>Middle schoolers will have more exposure to other religious beliefs and will begin to connect faith to real life. They are usually able to think through ideological topics, argue a position, and challenge adults' thinking and perceptions. Older middle schoolers are able to go deeper than you would expect in a theological discussion about Scripture and the gospel. Middle schoolers are eager to learn about topics they find interesting and useful, especially ones that are personally relevant. They like active learning experiences, visual illustrations, and prefer interactions with peers during educational activities. This should shape the way we teach them the Bible. Point out the benefits of walking in God's truth and applying the gospel to their lives, frequently sharing examples of how the gospel has changed your life. Encourage personal faith and be ready to answer questions.</p>
<p><b>Relationships</b></p>	<p>At this stage, most middle schoolers will struggle with peer pressure and social skills in friendships and relationships with the opposite sex. Rapid increase in brain development and hormones can make middle schoolers moody, restless, and display inconsistent behavior. They are often self-conscious and sensitive to criticism which may impact their relationships with others. This can be a tumultuous time in their relationships with their parents. While they begin middle school still seeing parents as heroes and fully accepting their authority, that can change as they get older. In their eyes, parents can be seen as stifling who they are and denying them the freedom they feel entitled to. Remember that you are your middle schooler's model for how to relate to others (spouse, children, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and church). Be sure to present a Christ-like example. Have conversations about how and when dating will take place.</p>
<p><b>Technology</b></p>	<p>Most middle schoolers will feel pressure from their peer groups to become more involved on social media, and begin to see social media as a rite of passage in today's culture. Since middle school is a time of major social and emotional growth, self-image can take a hit through negative feedback on social platforms. Social media is not all negative, but it can be a destructive force if not regulated. Parents should set definitive rules for technology use as well as set the example. Technology restrictions for the teen should resemble similar, self-imposed restrictions for the parents. For most teens, viewing pornography and sexting with peers will begin at this stage and will increase through high school. Remember, if you provide your middle schooler with a phone, it's not theirs, it's yours. That gives you the right to know how it's being used. Consistent and wise conversations about the use of technology is pivotal.</p>
<p><b>Identity</b></p>	<p>Your middle schooler will feel pressure to acquire peer approval and affirmation, as well as struggle with issues of personal identity. These years can be a difficult time of life. Be a good listener, be patient, and be willing to walk with your child through this awkward time. Use this opportunity to pour out much love and encouragement, continually assuring their worth and value to you and God. Middle schoolers learn best when they see the practical side and how it impacts them directly. Make a point to talk about how proper understanding of their identity in Christ impacts every part of their life. Conversations about biblical manhood and womanhood are important during this stage. Remember, your middle schooler will learn about biblical manhood, biblical womanhood, and their identity in Christ not only from what they hear, but also from what they see.</p>
<p><b>Sexuality</b></p>	<p>With the onset of puberty comes emerging sexuality and sexual attraction. Most middle schoolers will begin to turn their attraction away from same-gender friendships to relationships with the opposite sex. Middle schoolers may begin to compare what they are hearing from the culture about sex with what's being taught to them by parents and other authority figures. Your middle schooler and their peers will begin discussing sexuality much more than in past stages, which means conversations with your middle schooler about sexuality should heavily increase as well. Work to create an environment where your child can ask or talk to you about anything. It's imperative that conversations take place about biblical standards for sexuality. It's important that you don't portray the message that sex is bad. Point out Genesis 1-2 where God created everything and called it good, including sexual relations between a man and woman in a covenant relationship of marriage.</p>