

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 2.9



The *Dawn Treader* sets course this month to look at faith in and knowledge of God. Faith and knowledge are always connected, but how do they relate in our walk with God as we follow Christ?

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: FAITH IN AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

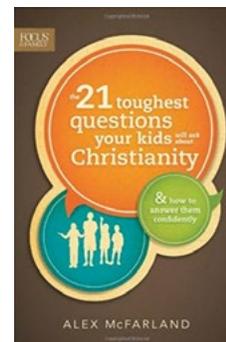
Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children in important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

We know we are supposed to “live by faith” (Romans 1:17, Hebrews 10:39) as followers of Jesus. But what many believers don’t realize is that faith leads to and is inseparably linked with the knowledge of God. Proverbs speaks repeatedly about the need for wisdom in order to have a complete relationship with God. So how do we develop knowledge of God in our children, in building their faith walk? *For week one, ask the first question over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the different reasons highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance.) Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.*

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Resource of the Month

The 21 Toughest Questions Your Kids Will Ask about Christianity: & How to Answer Them Confidently – Alex McFarland



University apologist, director, and popular speaker Alex McFarland has spent the last two decades answering questions about Christian world-view and the Bible from children, teens, and parents. In *The 21 Toughest Questions Your Kids*

Will Ask about Christianity, he summarizes questions today’s children and teens are asking about God, the Bible, and the problem of evil.

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FOCUS OF THE MONTH: FAITH IN AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Week One: What is knowledge? (Proverbs 1:7, 3:1-35, and 19:20, Galatians 5:22-6:10)

- Knowledge is understanding — recognizing how things in the creation relate to one another and how we are to make the best use of them.
- All knowledge is rooted in God's knowledge, as He is the Creator of all things and knows all things.
- Knowledge is a virtue — it is one of the many characteristics that God expects us to cultivate as His followers, as (along with all the other virtues such as faith, love, kindness, patience, and the rest of the fruits of the Spirit) it makes our lives much better as we get to know Him!
- In order to develop knowledge, we have to cultivate a curious and excited approach to life, remembering that God has wonderful things waiting for us at every turn, so learning becomes something fun and desirable.
- Knowledge also involves paying attention to and growing in our relationships with other people, especially other believers, because we gain in understanding as we see how others from different backgrounds and situations react to the ordinary events of our lives.

Week Two: How does faith relate to knowledge? (Proverbs 9:10, Romans 11:33-36, James 1:5-6)

- The first step in knowing something is to believe that something exists (fairly obvious, but an essential step to consider nonetheless).
- All knowledge, whether it involves simply learning about something or discovering truths about people and cultures, requires a basic foundation of trust: apart from a few individual “discoveries,” most of what we come to know in life is initially accepted on the authority of what others with more experience have told us, from which we then can draw informed conclusions.
- Accordingly, the greatest knowledge, knowledge of God, requires us first to trust in Him and believe what He says — for we can only know God from what He reveals about Himself to us (Luke 10:22, John 1:18).
- Faith in God leads to knowledge in all areas, for only when we have committed our lives to God can we see and understand the way the world really is.

Week Three: How do faith in and knowledge of God transform our lives? (Daniel 1:8-21, Ephesians 4:13-16, Philippians 1:9-11, 1 Peter 1:13-16)

- The more we trust in and know about God, the more confident we become in following Him and doing His Will in our lives, even if that goes against what other people or our circumstances seem to expect us to do.
- Faith gives us a sharper vision of what can happen if we follow God's instructions, so we become more obedient and productive disciples.
- Knowledge of God, from the Bible, makes us realize how holy He is and how holy we must become in order to be good witnesses to His Glory here on earth.
- Knowledge tells us what God expects His children to do, deepening our convictions of what is right and wrong; and faith in Him gives us the strength and assurance we need to act on our knowledge of what is right in His sight.

Week Four: How can we develop our faith and knowledge as growing disciples of Jesus? (Proverbs 2:1-9, Galatians 6:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:11-16, 2 Peter 1:3-21)

- Pray for God's guidance; ask that He will fill us with faith and wisdom and readiness to hear His direction.
- Read the Bible: “hide the Word in your heart” (Psalm 119:11), and deepen your knowledge and understanding of God. Pray that the Holy Spirit help you to recognize His Voice.
- Learn from other Christians — not only those you know personally, but from other places and other times: reading the history of our faith and about its many instrumental followers is a great aid to us in understanding and acting out our own faith in Christ.
- Be willing to be corrected: we grow in knowledge when we replace a wrong way of doing things with a right way!

Resource of the Month (CONT'D)

The 21 Toughest Questions Your Kids Will Ask about Christianity: & How to Answer Them Confidently – Alex McFarland

Alex's experiences have taught him that *how* adults answer questions about God is as important as, if not more important than, *what* kids ask. He provides parents with teaching strategies that will help them reach their children intellectually and spiritually. Today's kids and teens are looking for authenticity, integrity, and straightforward truth. Alex comes alongside parents and gives them tools to effectively answer not only their children's toughest academic questions but also the questions that plague their hearts.

<https://www.amazon.com/Toughest-Questions-Your-about-Christianity/dp/1589976789>

Apologist Polly Conversation Corner

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: HOW IS KNOWING CONNECTED WITH DOING?



Ernest: Good morning, Polly!

Polly: Good morning, Ernest! How are things?

Ernest: Going all right, I guess. Ever since I became a believer in Jesus, I've been looking at everything rather differently. It's great, of course, but also . . . a little overwhelming sometimes, if you know what I mean.

Pol: Well, I'm not sure. If you mean that you don't always feel just as wholeheartedly enthusiastic as you did right after you came to faith—that's perfectly normal. C.S. Lewis stated: "[T]he point at which faith comes in . . . I can tell that man what is going to happen to him in the next few weeks. There will come a moment when there is bad news, or he is in trouble, or is living among a lot of other people who do not believe it, and all at once his emotions will rise up and carry out a sort of blitz on his belief . . . Now Faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods."¹

Ern: Yes, that makes sense . . . I understand that, but I was really talking about something else. You see, a lot of my believing friends, who are trying to help me now that I'm a new believer . . . well, I appreciate it a lot, but I feel like I'm getting mixed messages. Some people seem to be advising me to do one thing, others another.

Pol: Or they're just expressing the same thing in different ways. What exactly is it you're puzzling over?

Ern: Your talking about faith brought it up for me—some of my friends have been giving me advice about Christian behavior. I realize that that's important, but I don't quite understand why. If faith in Jesus is what saves us, then where does what we do fit in? I thought it all came down to knowing that He had died for us and loves us and saves us.

Pol: Right. But . . . how do you know that?

Ern: Through faith, right?

Pol: Definitely. But "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). You have to act in order to receive the gift of faith from God. You have to know Who He is, and what He wants you to do. Reading the Bible and prayer is the foundation of gaining this knowledge, which is listed among the virtues in 1 Peter 1:5: "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." So you see that it all ties in together: faith and knowledge and Christian behavior. As C.S. Lewis explained, you can't stick with the "view I call Christianity-and-water — the view that simply says there is a good God in Heaven and everything is all right"² — a sort of vague faith in something you don't understand. You have to apply yourself diligently — work hard — to get to really *know* God and His plans for you, and then you have to go out and act on them in faith. Knowing is connected with doing. You wouldn't think much of a scientist who did all kinds of medical

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), p. 140.

² *Ibid.* p. 40.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: HOW IS KNOWING CONNECTED WITH DOING?

research and didn't then apply that knowledge he'd gained in medical practice.

Ern: No, I guess I wouldn't at that. But how do I know what God wants me to do? What if He doesn't want me to do anything? I don't feel anything telling me He does.

Pol: Turn to Matthew 28:29-30. That message is for every Christian believer: "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." You see, that's where the doing part comes in. It's twofold, really. First of all, Jesus has commanded us to observe certain ways of thinking and acting, because we are followers of Him now and not of the world, and secondly, we need to demonstrate a difference in our behavior if we are to draw the rest of the world to want to come to know Him as their Savior, too.



Ern: But shouldn't that just come naturally? I mean, if we believe and trust in Jesus, won't we want to behave as He would want us to?

Pol: Of course we *want* to, but wanting doesn't get anyone very far if they don't do something about it! Faith in Jesus isn't wishing on a star. "Even so, faith, if it does not have works, is dead, being alone. A man may say, 'You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works'" (James 2:17-18). Knowledge of God teaches us what kind of behavior will best demonstrate our faith relationship with Him. To use a human analogy, if you want to show that you trust and love your sister, you would first have to know her quite well — know the sort of things that she deserves to be trusted in — and then act on it, by giving her the right to help you or to take the responsibility for something that you know she can be trusted with. Faith in and knowledge of God works the same way, just on a bigger scale: we know by faith that He can be trusted with *everything*, that we can always depend on Him to help us and give us the right direction in every circumstance and decision of our lives, and then we act on that faith and knowledge by obeying His directions and accepting His help toward living a holy life — just like you accept your sister's help and advice with your mathematics homework!

Ern: But don't I need to do something?

Pol: In a way, yes. C.S. Lewis explained: "[H]anding everything over to Christ does not, of course, mean that you stop trying. To trust Him means, of course, trying to do all He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus, if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him ... Not doing these thing in order to be saved, but because He has saved you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you."³

Ern: And that gleam of Heaven comes from knowing God? Knowing and learning more about what He is like and has planned for us?

Pol: Yes. And then acting on it. And that's what your friends have all been trying to tell you. Lewis observed: "In the attempt to express it different churches say different things. But you will find that even those who insist most strongly on the importance of good actions tell you that you need Faith; and even those who insist most strongly on Faith tell you to do good actions. At any rate that is as far as I can go."⁴

Ask your children: What do you think about Polly's answers to Ernest's questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give, if someone asked them a question like Ernest's.

³ Ibid. pp. 147-148.

⁴ Ibid. p. 149.

Prayer of the Month

TAKE MY LIFE

For this month, the selected prayer is actually a hymn by Frances Ridley Havergal. But it can very easily be learned and said as a prayer, without any need of knowing the tune! The message contained in its beautiful verses reminds us that all we have is devoted to the Lord, including our minds and thoughts and knowledge.

*Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.*

*Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.*

*Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.
Amen*



Activity of the Month

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW?



The activity for this month is a fun way to recognize how we grow in knowledge. Similar to “Twenty Questions” or games of that sort, each family member secretly chooses a person (someone you know, a Biblical or other historical

figure, perhaps even another family member!) and then “gives” that identity to another player. Without using the name of the person, the first player will direct the second player on how to act as the chosen figure. Whoever guesses who the person is acting out from the fewest actions wins! A certain number of questions could also be incorporated into the game to deepen the amount of “knowledge” gained about people that we may have thought we knew better than we did. This activity will help to vividly illustrate that growing in the knowledge of God is regularly obtained by imitating Christ Himself, and that the more we learn about what Jesus does, the better we will come to know Him.



What is Keeping the Faith? The Keeping the Faith program is a unique study-plus-fellowship experience featuring the Aslan Academy Small Group model centered around the Keeping the Faith guidebook. It is designed to equip parents, grandparents and other caring adults for intentional discipleship of their children and teens. Dawn Treader is a monthly newsletter filled with activities and ideas geared to help you to disciple the children in your lives from preschool through the teen years. To learn more about the program, go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/KTFResources