

Talking faith - dads and sons

By Mark Witheridge - 30/04/2014

A dad shares some thoughts about how he has chatted about faith with his son through the years. Key was spending time to get to know his son, so he was then able to take opportunities to talk about God and his involvement in his life. There are lots of ideas here that might help others to step out to share their faith, whether it is a dad, a grandad, an uncle or other male carer.

When I was asked to write about how I as a father have been able to talk about faith with my son, it was not immediately obvious that we had had many specific conversations about faith. Then I realised that there have been significant times and experiences - and it's not all about big conversations.

As my son (now 16) has grown the nature of these times has changed but here are some examples I believe have helped.

Spending time together

I remember a talk at a Christian holiday in the context of fathers and sons where the speaker quoted:

Time wasted together buys you communication credit.

I agree with that. For example, sharing my hobby of astronomy, I remember my son saying 'I am so glad you have this hobby' as he marvelled at the view of Saturn and the moon. Maybe it was doing DIY together giving him the opportunity to make holes in walls, or working in the garden which he loves, when suddenly out of the blue there was a deep question. I can't remember the details but I remember thinking wow, stop, listen and take time to respond - don't just get on with the next thing on the to-do list or give a quick answer.

Using experiences to talk about God

This might be having a discussion about issues on the news and being prepared to give an opinion on what is happening and what God might be thinking about it. I remember on a holiday in America there were several special moments we termed 'God moments' and we made sure we gave God the honour - an unexpected upgrade on a flight (when we were tired and frazzled), an opportunity to pray for a fellow passenger, an aeroplane spelling out the word 'JESUS' in the sky.

Being willing to talk about anything

I specifically told my son I was happy to talk about any issues without being shocked or embarrassed. We have had some really deep conversations - whether in response to a question or by making the opportunity to discuss an important issue.

Setting aside time over a meal on a Sunday

Each week, we chat over a meal for a few minutes and share something we can thank God for, or something we can pray for in the week. This gives me an opportunity to talk about how I have seen God at work in my life in the week - maybe an answer to prayer, talking to a colleague about my faith, a difficulty to work through, an important event or decision - and to be honest when I find something hard.

It will be different in every father-son relationship, and will also depend on how old your son is, but for me the key is to start by spending time to get to know your son and for him to get to know you. This then allows you to take opportunities to talk about God and his involvement in your life: take risks in discussing anything, be ready and willing to answer questions, and be an example of how God is working in your life today through the difficulties and the successes.