

# Any Questions?

An exceptional opportunity for your preteen ministry

BY JIM KAST-KEAT

### ALREADY THERE?

If you work with preteens, you know that they are full of questions. Whether it is something they see, hear, or experience, they will often be quick to ask why this or that happened, curious to know more and eager to share their thoughts.

The journey of the preteen years amazes me—so many new experiences and so many unique questions. Why does the sun come up over here and go down over there? Why can't I stay up later? Who invented windshield wipers? Why do we go to church? Are other religions true? Where is God? Is Jesus real? How do I know that God loves me? How do I know that you love me? What do I want to be when I grow up?

The journey of the preteen years is riddled with questions. Whether at home, with friends, or at church, these questions will emerge. And while we are scrambling to come up with the next exceptional opportunity for our ministries, we are overlooking what is already there: the questions they are asking.

Rather than trying to read their minds and write the perfect discussion questions or spending all our time and energy on pyrotechnics or more lights than a Coldplay concert, what if we simply allowed their questions to fuel the experience? God is (already) at work in the questions they ask. We simply need to create space for them to ask. And every question they ask deserves a response, and sometimes that response is even an answer. (My favorite response is, "Hmmm, what do you think?")

Their questions are already there. We simply tell stories, facilitate experiences, and create environments where they know they are safe to ask any question they want. When we create space for their questions they are learning how to learn; whereas, when we give all the answers we are simply telling them what to learn. Questions are the gas pedal

that moves formation forward while answers can too often be the emergency brakes that stop the journey before we've even begun.

### TRY THIS...

- Watch a movie together, pausing at different points for everyone to think of and share a question.
- Read a story (from the Bible, from a chapter book, or make up your own) and invite everyone to ask a question.
- Create a "question box" where any question can be asked, because every question matters.
- Ask a question and invite everyone to answer it. Only their answer has to be another question.
- After the lesson, but before small groups, invite everyone to write down a question. Start each small group by sharing every question. Then collect the questions they wrote/asked so you can see how they change, deepen, and develop over the year.

## SIXTEEN OR SIX?

The difference between a sixteen-year-old and a six-year-old is obvious. One can drive; one needs to be driven. One will talk quietly about their latest crush; one will run quickly from their fear of cooties. One is looking towards a life beyond high school; one is looking towards a life beyond nap time.

Preteens are neither six nor sixteen, but directly in between. At the ages of nine, ten, eleven, and twelve, they are learning and growing, developing and deepening in ways that move them from six to sixteen and beyond. And a preteen ministry has the exceptional opportunity to journey with this unique age of students, providing environments and resources for their ongoing and holistic formation.

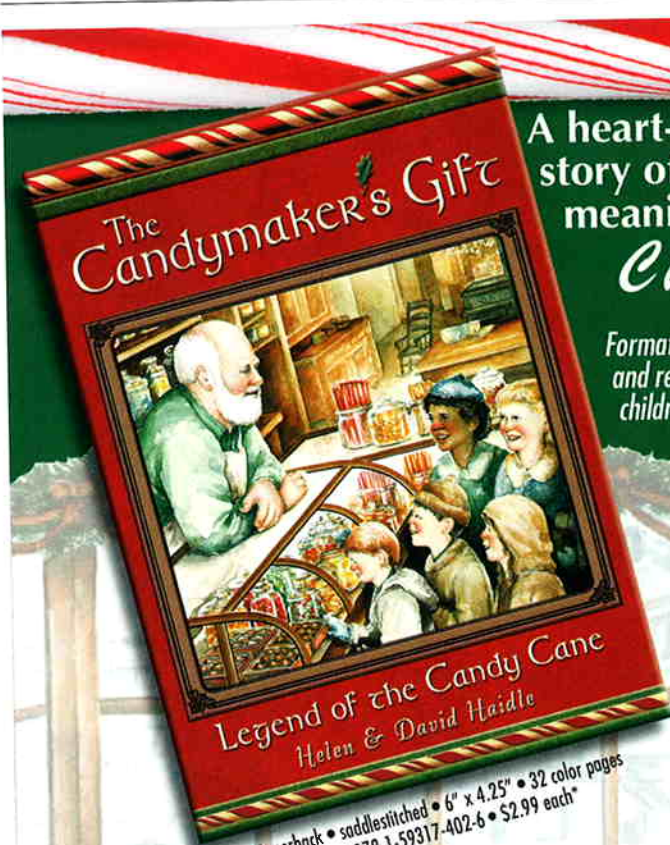
The questions they ask may at times seem more fitting for a six-year-old or a sixteen-year-old, but these questions emerge from who they are and where they are in their thinking. They will ask about life and faith and friends and movies. Their questions reveal a glimpse at the inner working of their heart and mind, what they capture and notice along the way.

Every question matters, as well as every response we provide. Because God is at work in the questions they ask, whether silly or serious, deep or distracting. Their questions create space for their faith to grow, to deepen, and to develop now and into the future.

This is an exceptional opportunity for your preteen ministry and for the preteens in it. Any questions? ❧

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