

POP-UP CONVERSATIONS

My Kid Doesn't Want to Go to Church Anymore

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• **Intro:** Welcome to our Pop-Up Parent Conversation—"My Kid Doesn't Want to Go to Church Anymore"! We're so grateful for your presence, and for investing your time in this hour-long guided conversation on behalf of your kids. Today we're going to dive into a topic that really hits close to home—more and more, kids in our culture are telling their parents they just don't want to continue going to church. As parents, this is a very painful, frustrating conversation. We've asked Dr. Cindy Wilson to offer a short onramp into this struggle, offering context and support for us as we engage our kids about church. Dr. Wilson is a leader with Connected Families, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing parents and kids with practical tools for growing in their relationship with each other while they deepen their relationship with God. Let's watch... *(Or share the video with parents ahead of time, so that they can come together and discuss what they saw.)*

• **Dr. Cindy Wilson (Video - 10 minutes):** "Why Kids Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore."

• **Ask (5 minutes):** First, what are your initial reactions to what you just heard? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

• **Say:** Life is busy, and the culture has become less and less "Christian" as our kids get older. That means kids who go to church feel more and more different from their friends at school, and the messages they often hear in the culture about church are negative. We want our kids to make choices they can own, and not just do things because we say so. But we also want them to know that investing in a church community is important to us, and impacts every aspect of our life. As Dr. Wilson says, we want to explore the underlying issues at work here: "The issue isn't just that they have to go to church, the issue is their heart... We don't want to win the battle over church, but lose their heart for Jesus."

• **Let's Talk (Pairs or Trios - 15 minutes):** We're going to split into Pairs/Trios now for a 15-minute conversation, then we'll gather back together to debrief what each Pair/Trio talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we'd like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you're leading this online)*

- **How do your kids feel about going to church, and why?**
- **What conversations have you had with your kids about going to church—what is encouraging or discouraging to you about them?**
- **How have you tried to address the importance of church participation with your kids?**

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• **Debrief (Whole Group – 7 minutes):** Gather back together and **ask:** What stuck out to you in your conversations, and why? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

• **Say:** Dr. Wilson focused on “middle ground” strategies with kids who are struggling with church—exploring other church options that fit our kids better, or being more intentional about discussing what everyone hears and experiences at church. She also dives into the factors that help us create safety in our homes—safe spaces for kids to talk about their feelings and opinions, and honestly sharing our own story and struggles with church. She reminds us to ask for God's guidance as we guide our kids on their faith journey, while we respect their growing responsibility in that journey. Let's spend some time talking with your partner(s) about our own experience of guiding our kids into a deeper relationship with God...

• **Let's Talk (Pairs or Trios – 10 minutes):** We're going to split back into Pairs/Trios now for a 10-minute conversation, then we'll gather back together to debrief what each Pair/Trio talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we'd like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you're leading this online)*

- **When you consider your own story, how would you characterize your relationship with the church?**
- **What sort of message do our kids get about participating in church, either intended or unintended?**
- **What do you think are the root causes of your kids' disillusionment about church, and how have you tried to address those issues?**
- **What does “following Jesus” look like as you engage your kids about their relationship with church?**

• **Debrief (Whole Group – 7 minutes):** Gather back together and **ask:** What's something you heard, or said, in your Pair/Trio that offers real help for you as you parent kids struggling to navigate a polarizing culture? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

• **Closing Prayer:** God, it can feel heartbreaking to see our kids disappointed in church. It's hard to strike a balance between giving our kids space to own their choices, and emphasizing to them what is most important to us. We need your help and guidance to influence our kids toward you, in the same freedom you've given us.