
parent cue

CLOSE



WE'RE TEACHING THIS

Do you have any close friends? Ones you feel completely comfortable around? Friends you can talk to for hours? If so, you're lucky. Friends like that are awesome. But chances are you have other friends too. Maybe you grew up around each other. Maybe you work at the same job or go to the same school. It's not that you don't like them. They're great. You just aren't that close. For most of us, our relationship with God feels like it swings between those two extremes. Maybe you can remember a time, after a retreat or a church camp, when God felt super real and personal. You were BFFs. But

then, somehow, things drifted in the other direction. There was distance. And, while you're definitely not against God, you wouldn't describe yourself as "close" anymore. We all go through times when our relationship with God seems more "far" than "near", but what do we do about it? Why does it feel so complicated? And is there anything we can do to keep the drift from happening? Thankfully, in His word, God makes it super clear that His desire is to be close with us. And as we journey back toward Him, we may just find Him running in our direction as well.

THINK ABOUT THIS

By Tim Walker

As I stood at the entrance to the gym, I saw the coach walking with my teenage son, and heading straight for me. I took a deep breath and prepared for the words that would come next.

"Your son did awesome today in practice. He just needs to work on his shots. When you are at home shooting, make sure he works on how he's positioning his hand." I nodded in agreement, as my son and I gave each other a knowing glance.

We got in the car and on the drive home, I said, "that was funny. He actually thinks you and I are going to practice basketball together."

"Yeah, I know," my son replied.

It happens all the time. I have three sons and every single one of them is a good athlete—at least that's what numerous coaches have said.

I'm not athletic. At one of my son's baseball's games, I threw

a foul ball back on to the field. It hit the first baseman.

My sons are not mini versions of me—and that's okay. As my children have grown, I have seen firsthand how God has uniquely created them to be individuals. So it's an ongoing, ever changing challenge for me to find ways to connect with them.

Here are few things I've learned along the way:

1. Be realistic, not frustrated.

Don't let the frustrations of their differences trip you up. Your differences give them room to grow. At some point, being around someone different from you is always a little unnerving—even if it's your own kid, but try not to let it frustrate you. Instead, think of understanding them like putting together a puzzle—one piece at a time. and if you feel adventurous, even try something new.

2. Be a student, not a poser.

You don't have to be good at something to be interested. Let your kids teach you about what they enjoy—whether it's cooking, sports, filmmaking or repairing cars. Only

occasionally will I actually make a shot in basketball. But there is a blissfulness in ignorance, as you can learn something from your son or daughter that is completely new to you. And they're sure to appreciate you taking an interest, even if it isn't traditionally "your thing".

3. Be resourceful, not guilty.

Don't feel like a failure if you can't be everything for your kid. You were never meant to be—that's God's job. But even if you don't understand how to build your own computer or can't catch a football, you might know someone who does. An aunt or uncle, a small group leader, a grandparent, a neighbor. I had two neighbors who loved to throw a football to my boys, and my boys enjoyed it. And it was a great opportunity to widen the circle of influence for my own students.

I want to be connected with my sons. I want to have a relationship with them, but that doesn't mean that we have to enjoy all the same things. Sometimes it means we just focus on what we do have in common—like a love of pizza. But other times, it means that I intentionally look opportunities to show them that I care about the things that matter to them.

TRY THIS

Chances are there are some interests and hobbies your son or daughter enjoys that completely baffle you. This week, try to take an interest in what interests them.

Maybe for you that means:

- Asking what musical artist they're into and why they like them.
- Going to a sporting, musical or theater event together.
- Watching a TV show together that they really like.
- Visiting a museum together that celebrates what they're into and asking them to show you around.
- Asking them to give you a lesson on how to do their favorite hobby.

No matter how different you are, you can always value their interests by asking questions and paying attention to the things they care about. In doing so, you're modeling the way for them to take an interest in the interests of others as well.