

PARENT/STUDENT IDENTITY GUIDE

7th Grade Conversation

OBJECTIVE

Have a conversation with your student about their identity in Christ.

THE 411

As you are well aware, your teenager's life could easily be summed up with one word, "Change." Although there are numerous amounts of changes that occur, one could argue that the most significant change most teenagers face is the change in their bodies. Puberty marks the onset of pimples, oily faces, body odor, disgusting mini-mustaches, and nearly uncontrollable hormones. These changes in body type and hormone levels often lead students to question, "Who am I," and, "Where do I really fit in." The teenage years are tough and this confusion many students face may lead them to live double lives. It's very easy to say that many teenagers develop the ability to be "bicultural" during this period of their lives. Now to be sure, being able to adapt between two different cultures is an important lesson for each of our kids to learn, however this quickly becomes a problem if our students are assuming different identities in each of the different cultures they live in. For example, many 7th grade students begin to develop different vocabularies depending on the culture they find themselves in. When they are at home or church, they have one language. However, when they are in the locker room or when they are engaging in texting or social media, they have an entirely different standard for their vocabulary. The 7th grade year is an amazing opportunity to discuss with your child the importance of maintaining a sense of our identity in Christ in every culture we find ourselves in.

SUGGESTION

Take your child out to eat at a restaurant that features food from a different culture than yours — for example, a place that serves Chinese food or a Mexican restaurant. If you don't want to spend the money to go out and eat, prepare a meal at home from a different culture. The meal will provide you with an opportunity to highlight other cultures, but it will also set you up to share with your student the importance of remaining true to God's kingdom culture. Use the discussion guide below to help with your conversation.

DISCUSSION

- ASK: What are some of the differences you see between our culture and the culture that is represented by the food we are eating?
- What are your favorite things about the culture we live in?
- If you could change anything about our culture, what would it be?
- Can you think of anything you would love to adapt from the culture that is represented by the food we are eating?



SAY SOMETHING LIKE: This food is a good example to remind us of different ethnic cultures; however, you and I actually find ourselves living in different subcultures every day. For example, I experience a different culture at my workplace than we experience at home. *Share some of the differences between those cultures.*

ASK: What are some different subcultures you find yourself in?
Do you find yourself acting differently to adapt to those cultures?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: I recognize that it's often hard to be yourself in two different cultures. (Share an example here of how it is hard for you to be yourself at work.) However, how would you feel if I always changed myself to fit into your culture? What if, although I live in an adult culture, I changed myself to fit into your teen culture every time your friends were around? So, let's pretend that at your next sleepover, I spent the night with you and your friends, I wore only your clothes, and I pretended to be a teenager again.

ASK: Would you like it if I tried to fit in with you and your friends like that?

READ: **Romans 12:2 (NIV)**
“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

1 Peter 2:11-12 (CEV)
“Dear friends, you are foreigners and strangers on this earth. So I beg you not to surrender to those desires that fight against you. Always let others see you behaving properly, even though they may still accuse you of doing wrong. Then on the day of judgment, they will honor God by telling the good things they saw you do.”

ASK: What do these verses tell us about living a life for God in the middle of a culture that tries to pull us in a different direction?
How can you be an example to the other students at your school?
What friends do you currently have who help you live as a Christian every day?

PRAY

Spend some time praying that God would give your student the strength to stand up to the pressures they will face in middle school. Also ask God to give them the confidence to know that they were created in His image and are created for the good works He has prepared for them to do.

