



# 5 TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH STUDENTS

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Psalm 145:4 says, “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.” The implication of this verse is that one generation has experienced the greatness of God in a real and tangible way.

Perhaps you, too, have seen and savored him firsthand and are ready to share what you have learned with the emerging generations. Thank you! We’re so glad that you have accepted the invitation to invest in the next generation.

But bridging the gap between generations can be challenging and intimidating—no matter what age you are—so here are a few tips to help you begin that process with ease.

## 1. BE IN PRAYER

Think back to the story of Nehemiah told in Nehemiah 1. When this cup bearer finds out that the walls are broken down around Jerusalem and the city is vulnerable, he wants to help and prays for favor with the King of Persia.

His prayer concludes with the following words: “O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” Just as Nehemiah covered his relationships in prayer, we too should approach any new relationship this way.

## 2. BE PREPARED TO ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Be ready to take on the role of listener as you get to know your student better. Students will want to know if you genuinely care about them and believe that their stories are worthwhile and meaningful. Ask questions that open the door to good conversation. These types of questions will likely be easy to answer and will not make the student feel as if there is a “right” answer to give.

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For example, you could ask, “What were some of your favorite parts of the weekend retreat?” Giving the student freedom to reply with more answers and more information will help the conversation flow more naturally. Always make it a habit to ask: “What is the best way I can be praying for you this week?”

## 3. KEEP OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

When you see your student at church, engage—ask a couple questions about their week, and then let the friendship grow at its own pace throughout the year.

Connect with your student’s parents, and ask them how your student might contact you outside of church. With their parent’s permission, perhaps a student can text or email you throughout the week with anything they might need prayer for. You may be able to communicate over Facebook, or you may choose to grab lunch with the family after church.

As you strive to keep open lines of communication, make sure that you’re always operating within the guidelines, policies, and procedures of your church.

## 4. AFFIRM AND ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT

Look for natural ways to encourage your student during your conversations. Pay attention to how God is working in their lives at school, at home, at church, and with their friends. Affirm the good things you see. Think about writing your student a note to share a word of Scripture or let them know the areas in which you’ve seen them grow. Students will feel more connected to you as you encourage them.

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## 5. SHARE STORIES FROM YOUR LIFE

Begin thinking about how God has worked in your life through his Word and his people. Collect several stories of where you have seen God show up in your life. Think of how you saw God's faithfulness at work during different stages of your life, too. As your friendship grows, God can open up avenues for you to be able to share your story. Your story may be just what your student needs to hear as they walk through a particular situation.

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Engaging with your student may not come easily or naturally at first. Don't worry! Persevere in the work of engaging with your student. Pray regularly. Ask good questions. Communicate and give encouragement often. And don't be afraid to share lessons from your own life.

These are all clear ways to fulfill Psalm 71:17-18, "O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come."

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