

G.A.P.

A POWERFUL AND PRACTICAL PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

Mark Your Calendar for this New Class at Cottonwood

Sunday, January 13, 4:00 – 5:30 PM

Same Schedule as AWANA

Why the G.A.P. curriculum is important for today's parents page 2

About the book page 3

Foreword by J Warner Wallace page 4

Table of contents of the book page 5

About the class leaders page 6

WHY THE GAP PROGRAM IS NEEDED

Today's Reality:

The culture in America today is more anti-Christian than ever before. It's often called "post-Christian" America! The questions, criticisms and attacks are everywhere, especially in the 'social media', entertainment and news media, and throughout the internet. Our church leaders may get our kids' attention a couple of hours a week, but the culture gets them much of the remaining time, even for home schoolers and Christian academy students.

Alarming Trend:

Pastor John Mark has often quoted the alarming statistics of the high percentage of young Christians who abandon their faith after high school. Various surveys confirm that somewhere between 70% and 90% of 'Sunday school kids' walk away from their faith after high school. Some go all the way to atheism; some just become "nones", claiming "none" as their faith affiliation.

Unanswered Questions:

Perhaps more alarming, those who walk away will usually say, when asked, that they had questions and doubts as early as elementary school. Too often, they say their parents or church leaders were not able to answer the tough questions about God, the Bible, evolution, miracles and other topics. Knowing **what** we believe is often not enough in today's culture. We also need to know **why** it's true. (This is not a criticism of our children and youth programs. It's just that there is no substitute for the intentional involvement of parents in "inoculating" our kids against the attacks we know they will face.)

Parents Can Fight Back and Win:

Natasha Crain, a committed young Christian mom, started a blog several years ago, hoping to encourage and support other young moms as they struggle to raise committed, God-fearing young Christians. She was surprised when critics attacked her blog site. What's more, she found herself doubting some of her own beliefs because of the questions and criticisms that came pouring in. But rather than letting those questions gnaw away at her faith, she decided to find out if there are good answers to the criticisms. That led her on a journey that has become a nationwide ministry to help parents keep their kids on God's side.

We Are Commanded to Know Why We Are Christians:

Proverb 18:17 tells us that the case for the prosecution sounds very persuasive until we hear the case for the defense. Natasha's ministry provides the case for the defense of Christianity, in a down-to-earth practical way that we all can use to obey the command of 1 Peter 3:15-16. That command is to always be ready, with love and grace, to provide reasons and evidence for our faith, just as Paul and Peter and all the apostles did in the first century.

GAP Classes:

Based on her first book, "Keeping Your Kids On God's Side" (KYKOGS for short), churches all over North America are offering a series of classes designed to help parents have intentional discussions with their kids, discussions that **enable parents to bridge the gap** between what kids learn at church and what they see and hear in the culture. What could be more important than teaching our kids why Christianity is true as we prepare to launch them into today's anti-Christian world.

It's All About the Great Commission:

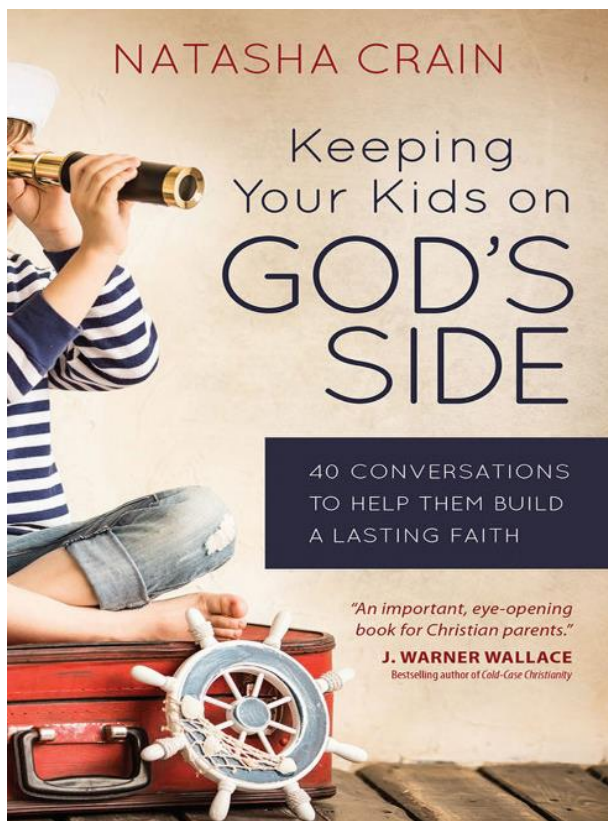
We are commanded to take the gospel to the world by making disciples who will make disciples. The command of 1st Peter 3:15 is one of the best ways to turbo-charge discipleship. The GAP program is one of the best ways to begin to obey that command.

We CAN keep many more of our kids on God's side. G.A.P. is an important step in the right direction.

The G.A.P. program is based on the book, "Keeping Your Kids On God's Side", by Natasha Crain

About the Book

Note: Book title is abbreviated as “KYKOGS”



Amazon Description:

“Empower Your Kids to Respond Well to the Hard Questions That Threaten Their Faith

It's no secret that children of all ages are being exposed to negative criticism of Christianity as they spend time at school, with friends, or online. Are you prepared to talk with your kids about how they can effectively answer the tough questions that come their way?

In *Keeping Your Kids on God's Side*, you'll find 40 of the most common challenges kids face—along with clear, easy-to-understand responses you can discuss together. This book will help you...

- encourage open dialogue on issues your kids might hesitate to talk about
- replace your children's doubts with the confidence only God's truth can give
- equip your kids to build the good thinking skills essential for today

"I almost wish my children were young again so I could use Natasha Crain's book with them."

Nancy Pearcey, bestselling author of *Total Truth*

Foreword to KYKOGS

J Warner Wallace, our favorite cold case homicide detective, wrote this foreword for Natasha's book: (emphasis added)

"As a youth pastor, my first class of graduating seniors proved how difficult it can be to keep your kids on God's side. By the time they first returned from university (at Christmas break in their freshman year), **most were no longer Christians**. I couldn't believe it, and I felt like a terrible pastor. I had these students for their entire senior year of high school, yet nothing I taught them seemed to make an impact on the decisions they made in the first ten weeks at university. It was then that I realized the error of my inaugural year as a youth pastor. I had entertained them, helped them to form friendships in our youth group, and maybe even inspired them to be better human beings. But I hadn't given them sufficient reason to believe Christianity was true.

I quickly shifted gears. I was a part-time pastor and full-time homicide detective; my journey to faith was characterized by a careful examination of the evidence related to the existence of God and the reliability of the New Testament. Why hadn't I taken this approach with the students in my youth group? In many ways I simply got caught up in what has become the norm for many youth ministries. I wanted my group to grow, I wanted my students to like me, and I placed the bar very low in terms of what I required from them.

After that first year, I decided my students' future certainty was far more important than their present entertainment. That's why I love what Natasha Crain has done in her first book. As a parent, she gets it. Youth pastors simply can't do what each of us, as parents, must. The spiritual growth of our kids is our responsibility; we can't assign it to someone else. **If you want to keep your kids in the truth, you're going to have to teach them why Christianity is true**, and you're not going to be able to teach them unless you are willing to learn. Most of us, if pressed to defend what we believe as Christians, find ourselves woefully ill-equipped. [But] **How** are we ever going to prepare our kids if we aren't first prepared?

If you're a Christian parent but you haven't yet mastered the rich case for God's existence and the truth of the Christian worldview, this book is an excellent place to start. In fact, I consider Keeping Your Kids on God's Side to be an important, eye-opening "gateway" book. Natasha has done a wonderful job of quickly introducing the important issues and evidences from the perspective of a parent. She's engaging, thoughtful, and she knows how to throw the ball so you can catch it.

Take the time to read this book and absorb the evidence Natasha presents; then visit Natasha's website to see her recommendations for additional reading. Let Keeping Your Kids on God's Side serve as an introduction to **the most important work you will ever do as a parent.**"

KYKOGS CONTENTS:

Foreword by J. Warner Wallace, What Your Kids Need for a Confident Faith

Part 1: Conversations About God

1. What evidence is there for God's existence?
2. How could a good God allow evil and suffering?
3. Why would God command the genocide of the Canaanites?
4. How can a loving God send people to hell?
5. How can God judge people who have never even heard about Jesus?
6. Why would God need people to worship Him?
7. Why is God so hidden?
8. Is faith in God the opposite of reason?

Part 2: Conversations About Truth and Worldviews

9. What is the difference between objective and subjective truth?
10. Do all religions point to the same truth?
11. How can Christians claim they know what is objectively true?
12. How can personal experience help determine what is true?
13. How can common sense help determine what is true?
14. If Christianity is true, why are there so many denominations?
15. Is Christianity responsible for millions of deaths in history?
16. Are Christians less intelligent than atheists?

Part 3: Conversations About Jesus

17. How do we know Jesus existed?
18. Did Jesus really claim to be God?
19. Did Jesus' followers really believe He was God?
20. Why did Jesus need to die on the cross for our sins?
21. What are the historical facts of the resurrection that nearly every scholar agrees on?
22. What are the major theories people use to explain those facts?
23. Why do Christians believe a supernatural resurrection best explains the facts?

24. How can Christians believe miracles are even possible?
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Part 4: Conversations About the Bible

25. How were the books in the Bible selected?
26. Why were books left out of the Bible?
27. How do we know we can trust the Bible's authors?
28. How do we know the Bible we have today says what the authors originally wrote?
29. Does the Bible have errors and contradictions?
30. Does the Bible support slavery?
31. Does the Bible support rape?
32. Does the Bible support human sacrifice?

Part 5: Conversations About Science

33. Why do Christians have varying views on how and when God created the world?
34. What is young-Earth creationism?
35. How do mainstream scientists estimate the age of the Earth?
36. What is old-Earth creationism?
37. What is evolution?
38. What are the major pieces of evidence for evolution?
39. What are the major challenges to evolution?
40. What is intelligent design?

Ten Tips for Having Deeper Faith Conversations with Your Kids

About the Class Leaders

Ron and Diane Woodruff are parents of two grown daughters. They have lived and worked in numerous locations throughout the U.S. and the world. Ron studied business and chemistry in his undergrad work and then earned an MBA with a focus on information science. He has spent most of his career working in various management positions with Beckman Coulter, Inc., a major medical device company.

Ron has been leading various Bible classes and study groups for the past 20 years. He has a special passion for building more confident disciples by equipping others to become more effective ambassadors* for Christ. To that end, he has been certified as the director of the Collin County Reasonable Faith chapter*, an active group with regular meetings. He is also a graduate of Cottonwood Creek's 'Ministry Academy' and the 'Parent Ambassador' for Natasha Crain's GAP campaign.

Ron's belief is that only God can save and that our efforts to build more confident disciples must always be both subordinate to and aligned with the work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, we are commanded to always be ready to defend our faith when questioned and even when criticized. In other words, God is in charge and will always do His part, but He has given us the responsibility to do our part as well. This reminds us of the Christian who leaned on his shovel and prayed for a hole in the ground. Our responsibility to do our part, to have a ready defense, is not only a Biblical command, it is also repeatedly modeled for us by the apostles, the early church fathers and even by Jesus. The bottom line: Evidence matters and evidence defeats doubt.

While the evidence and answers are important, it's even more important that we learn the skills of an ambassador, including tact, grace and 'conversation management'. In other words, how we respond is much more important than how much we know. Ron believes and teaches that the worst way to respond to questions and criticisms is to reactively argue for our position. Being right is seldom enough, by itself, in our desire to persuade others. Instead, asking non-threatening questions is almost always the best way to respond. After gathering a deeper understanding of the reasons for a question or criticism, the next best step is usually a short but personal story. These are vitally important skills that we will learn together in the GAP series.

Several other parents have offered to help lead the class but we won't share that information until their commitment is fully confirmed. Meanwhile, feel free to reach out to Ron.

Ron Woodruff
 GAP 'Parent Ambassador'
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 ronwemail@gmail.com

* The "Ambassador's Creed" and additional chapter information can be found at the Reasonable Faith Collin County chapter web site, rfcctx.com

Final note:

KYKOGS is not a book to be read and put away. Instead, it is more of a user manual to be applied one conversation at a time, intentionally, and adapted to each family's dynamics. The purpose of the GAP classes is to do more than read and learn. Our purpose is to talk through, chew on and apply these ideas with other parents and grandparents. In the process, we will become more confident in our own faith and better equipped to do the same for our kids.