

## TEACHERS AND LEADERS: MIDDLE SCHOOL

FAITH DEVELOPMENT – STAGE THREE- “I BELIEVE WHAT THE CHURCH BELIEVES”

Begins about age twelve

The material below is based on the work of James Fowler as it is described in the LEAD book Faith Passages and Patterns by Thomas A. Droege (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

At this age: People/youth rely on authorities for what they believe. There is little critical examination of beliefs at the early point of this stage. Their widening contacts begin to expose them to conflicting authorities, but their beliefs and understandings of God tend to be as the church teaches.

Factors which affect this expression of faith:

1. Can begin to think abstractly.
2. Desire organized patterns of thinking.
3. Have a quest for religious knowledge.
4. Can articulate what they've been taught, but are not able to develop their own point of view.
5. Need acceptance and self-esteem.
6. Look for identity from others; peers are important teaching styles such as teamwork, projects, etc.
7. Have strong feelings of trust.
8. Are easily indoctrinated.

Implications for leaders:

1. Encourage their developing ability to question and think for themselves.
2. Provide increasingly complex ideas to fit their expanding world.
3. Recognize their growing understanding of God as a personal friend
4. Help them feel good about what they know. Use factual information and encourage the expression of opinions.
5. Affirm and encourage them as individuals and stress God's grace.
6. Give special attention to relationship building. Use group-oriented
7. Encourage their prayer and devotional life.
8. Don't take advantage of their willingness to rely on authorities. Express your own Christian witness and faith experiences. Help them see the faith experiences of other Christians.