



5 STEPS TO
BUILD FAITH
that lasts
a lifetime



WELCOME



Forming a life-long faith can be the most daunting thing for a parent since potty-training. Developing a genuine love for God, self, and the church seems nearly impossible. Hillcrest recently celebrated a milestone in 100 years of tackling faith with students and families. With relevant mentor practices our students are standing strong in colleges and universities as missionaries to restricted access countries and worship leaders, pastors, and involved parishioners in the local church. There are five essential habits we identify that build life-long faith in students. This resource is designed to give you a simple approach to engage your student's faith. This document will outline:

- How to Create a Living Faith that's Lived Out
- How to Find Your Child's 6 Meaningful Mentors
- How to Set a Natural Faith Foundation
- Finding Whole Institutions of Faith
- How to Move From Faith Caretaker to Coach



Live Out Living Faith

1.

Ask any student how they want to grow in their faith and they'll give you a list of spiritual disciplines. Developmentally, most students are in a phase of wanting to practice what they believe. For many, they aren't able to handle the philosophical questions of faith because they haven't had a solid grasp on what it actually looks like to practice their faith. The first thing you can do to build faith in your student is to give them a picture of their family's living faith that is lived out by explaining and living out a living faith.

At Hillcrest, every Friday, the senior class calls a classmate to the stage in Chapel to share their testimony. It's a special time where the student body gets to see their natural student leaders expressing their living faith. We outline this time as a sacred space, where technology is not allowed to interfere. This is very important in our world of avoidance and distraction. Sharing our faith can be awkward and uncomfortable, both for the person sharing and the listener.

For your family, it would be beneficial to start a new habit of rallying together to talk about some ways each individual is growing in their faith. If it's awkward, own it. Say, "this is going to be awkward. I haven't done this before, but I really care about your faith. So, I need to share with you the difference God has made and is making in my life." The first rally might just be you sharing, but tell your student you want them to share next time. Don't push it if they don't have anything to share. The practice isn't to draw out their faith, but is instead designed for you to show them a living faith.

Find 6 Meaningful Mentors



2.

The studies are in and mentors are the thing. No matter what Christian research group you read, the resounding call from all of them is students need meaningful mentors to build a life-long faith. Family involvement, church participation, and tradition aren't enough, according to the research. At Hillcrest we do assessments of the student body to ensure that students have six meaningful mentors either in the dormitory or during their school day. These are people the student feels are walking through life with them in a physical, emotional and spiritual way. So, where do you find these people?

Naturally, kids spend at least 35 hours per week at school. School accounts for the majority of their waking time during their most important psychological and sociological development phase. They're building their framework of the world and how they're going to live within it. That means that the habits, thinking processes, and loves students build during these years will be there for the rest of their life. So, who your kids find as mentors during this time is very important to their faith formation.

It is important for you, then, to put your kids around people who love the Lord and have an active faith. They will naturally pick mentors from school because of the sheer amount of time they spend there. So, if you want to build faith in your kids you'll need to make sure they're around people who value faith, and studies show it needs to be around six meaningful non-parent adults. Take a look at their school, do they have people who model faith for them? Education is a transfer of a way of living, that's what we believe at Hillcrest, so all of our staff are hired because of how they live, which informs how they teach.

3.

Make Faith Natural



The problem for most students is that church, and faith in general, seems unnatural to them. Many don't see the connection between faith and the world they're living in. Little do they know that the foundation of modern civilization was established by the faith of individuals working in the church and social institutions. Human rights, modern economics, technology, and many other marks of western civilization were built with the lumber of faith founded in the Bible. In the modern world, however, students rarely hear this. Students are almost never taught the powerful influence of faith and the church on modern civilization. Faith seems unnatural to them because they are being trained to see that a good, productive, and positive world can exist without God's involvement.

We need to make faith more natural for students. If we don't do this, God is a totem we teach our kids to carry to bring on good feelings, but isn't something that impacts daily life. God needs to be real to our students. This means that they attribute the many things that enable human flourishing to the source of goodness.

Making faith natural can be hard if your students are in a public or private school that doesn't base all knowledge upon the Bible. We believe students become experts in school. They are trained to see the world in a certain way in the 10,000 hours of education from sixth grade through twelfth grade. According to Malcolm Gladwell, this is enough time for them to become experts. So, it is imperative that your student becomes an expert in seeing the world from God's perspective. Put your students in places where they see that faith is natural, and pull them from places that don't.



Find Whole Institutions for Faith

4.

At Hillcrest we are desperately concerned that students develop an understanding, love, and commitment to the church. Institutions are incubators for practice. Students develop muscles and learn to navigate community inside institutions. That said, Hillcrest seeks to be a guiding institution that pushes students toward faith formation, and ultimately service and engagement in the church. It is important that as you place your student in institutions that develop muscles for faith. The main institution students are in right now are schools, which can often stand in opposition to faith formation. It is imperative that your student is familiar and comfortable inside faith-forming institutions.

As you build the faith of your student you need to find whole institutions, institutions that address the entire person: body, soul, and mind. As Christians, we need to seek institutions that address the whole person for the enhancement and glorification of Christ. In many ways, this is the church, but sometimes your local church may be difficult to plug into for young people. We haven't made it easy for young people to receive Christian leadership training, especially with how busy students are. Church is often left on the cutting room floor as students cut out things from their calendars as they organize life. This is detrimental to their faith formation.

It is important for you to find institutions that will give your student opportunities to lead, struggle, and fail with consistent Christian mentorship. Hillcrest is one of many places that specialize in Christian leadership training. Make places like this a time priority for your family.

5.

Move From Caretaker to Coach



One of the lesser known facts of parenting is that you never stop being one. You will always be your kid's mom or dad. That said, it can be hard to move from directing their life to shaping their flourishing. It is imperative for your student's development that you give them space to practice what you've said.

At Hillcrest we call this moving from caretaker to coach. We see ourselves as a primary support for parents, never replacing parents, but helping them navigate the teenage years well. This navigation includes walking alongside students and parents during the high school years for faith formation.

As students move to college they need space to practice making decisions. Most college settings don't necessarily care about the decisions students make regarding their faith. No college program is going to help your student practice getting up for church on Sunday morning, reading their Bible daily, and even how they should interact with the opposite sex in a respectful manner. Students need to practice these things in an environment that teaches them God's design and correct way of living, so they build healthy habits that will guide their flourishing. The intimate mentor setting at Hillcrest provides an opportunity for mom and dad to simply coach, with Hillcrest staff helping students practice right thinking and right practices that are built on the Bible and mom and dad's foundation. It's important in your students faith formation that you shift from caretaker to coach. Supports to do this with you, like youth groups, Christian high schools, or Hillcrest Academy, make this transition a bit easier and help your student see consistency in Christianity.

Hillcrest is the mid-west's premiere worldview and discipleship training school. Recognized for an intentional mentor-focused program, students engage in apologetics and worldview in every class, hearing a reasoned explanation for the world from God's perspective.

The staff at Hillcrest Academy are dedicated to providing students with the highest quality Christian education available anywhere at the junior and senior high school level. A liberal arts curriculum with the Bible as its cornerstone provides a comprehensive educational program that is unique and challenging.

In Hillcrest's full-functioning, time-tested dormitory program that has been training students for over 100 years, students are provided experiences for learning in a wide variety of areas, preparing them for the rigors of university life. The school program is well-balanced with strong academic structure for all students, regardless of their individual educational abilities, with a dormitory environment that many students would say is second to none. The academic program offers three educational paths: a college credit program with advanced placement and mentored online college classes as its nucleus; a college preparatory program that naturally incorporates Christian apologetics into the curriculum; and a program for students needing help in specific skill areas. In each instance students receive the care and attention they need to succeed in the classroom built upon the spiritual foundation needed to integrate their faith into their future goals.

As our world grows smaller and becomes increasingly diverse, there is a greater need than ever to be able to understand, communicate, and work with countries and cultures different from our own. At Hillcrest students attend class and dorm with students from Europe, Asia, and Africa, as well as many from around the United States. We are providing our students with an international education to prepare them for their most productive work years in the 21st century. In addition to broadening our students' concern for the world with its diverse peoples and cultures, Hillcrest Academy provides the setting and atmosphere where every individual in our student body and staff enjoys a sense of community and belonging -- the feeling of being valued and treated fairly by all.

We encourage you to consider Hillcrest in helping shape your student's faith formation. Please contact us for a personalized education consultation.



HILLCREST ACADEMY

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