

DETAILS



Faith that Lasts

A Father and Son on Cultivating Lifelong Belief

January 26, 2021 | \$17, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4814-0

Spiritual Maturity Is a Journey of the Heart

Given the swelling number of religious nones who grew up in Christian homes, it's clear that parents are struggling to cultivate lasting faith in their children. This book recognizes the unique challenges faced by both parents and kids in Christian households and offers a vision of a household shaped by Christ and the church, rather than the surrounding culture. This book:

- Addresses the felt need of parents who worry that their children will abandon the faith
- Outlines three dangerous myths that we all too easily buy into—1) that fear can protect our children, 2) that information can save them, and 3) that spiritual education belongs to the experts
- Includes personal stories from both a father (Stuart, who was converted as a young adult in Glasgow) and a son (Cameron, who was raised in the church) on their different journeys to faith.
- Shares wisdom from two apologists who are familiar with common arguments against Christian faith

Stuart writes, “I turned to my son as he was making breakfast before school one day and asked him, ‘Why do you call yourself a Christian?’ Notice that I didn’t ask him what he thought about Christianity, or whether he understood it. Again, those are important questions, but I wanted to hear why he lived the way he did. I wanted him to deal with his actions, not his words. Though the question angered him at the time—heart questions are prone to do that—it proved instrumental in turning his life around.

To this day, Cameron names this as one of the most important moments in the recovery of his faith. I must confess that at the time it simply felt like another strained conversation that ended on an abrupt note. Nothing quite prepares us for the spiritual challenge of seeing our kids flounder in their relationship with Christ. To make matters worse, there is no fail-safe formula, no expert, no conference, no podcast that can preclude this struggle. There is, however, the vital perspective of recognizing the primacy of love in human life, and we would do well to begin by addressing the heart.”

—Excerpt taken from chapter five, “Cultivating Love”



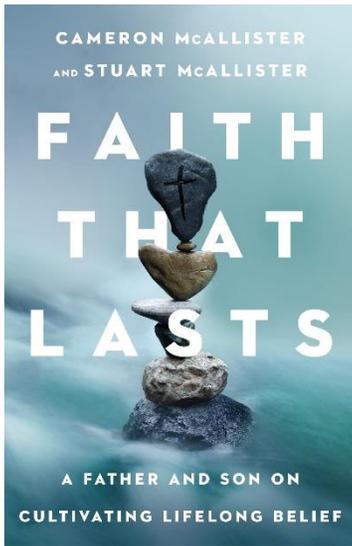
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Stuart McAllister has worked with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries since 1998 and currently serves as global support specialist. With a heavy travel schedule that takes him all over the globe, Stuart regularly speaks in churches, universities, and other forums. He is a frequent contributor to *A Slice of Infinity*, *Just Thinking*, and *Engage*. Stuart is father to Cameron McAllister, coauthor of *Faith That Lasts*.

Information Is Necessary, But Not Sufficient

Many Christian parents believe that information alone can secure the stability of their kids' faith. We call this misconception the "information saves" mindset, and the thinking goes something like this: If we do all that we can to ensure that our children have all the necessary information about Christianity, then the rest of their lives will fall into place. They will be able to answer their atheist professor's loud objections to their faith. They will resist the manifold temptations that come their way. They will get plugged in to the right churches, and they will stay in those churches.

But information alone, no matter how accurate and precise, can no more form Christian disciples than YouTube tutorials can form carpenters. And the missing pieces are the same: the master and the tradition. Christians who wish to give nothing more than intellectual lip service to Christ are a bit like musicians who read only sheet music but refuse to play any actual instruments. From carpentry to Christianity, education is always an expansive endeavor, one that involves the whole person; it always moves beyond theory to practice.

James K. A. Smith sounds a lot like Polanyi in his helpful overview: "An education, then, is a constellation of practices, rituals, and routines that inculcates a particular vision of the good life by inscribing or infusing that vision into the heart (the gut) by means of material, embodied practices." Joining your dad in the kitchen to learn the subtleties of a cherished family recipe; shuffling forward on your march to take communion on a Sunday morning; practicing a song on the piano until its melody is practically part of your DNA; experiencing your child's baptism: these are all embodied practices that aptly demonstrate that learning goes way beyond the mastery of information. Along with his wedding, Cameron counts the blinking look of astonishment on his children's faces as the baptismal waters touched their heads as the most beautiful moments of his life and, as any parent in this position will tell you, the experience is much more than intellectual.

And yet many parents continue to believe that the longevity of their child's faith depends on the right books, curriculums, conferences, or podcasts. One well-meaning mother recently told us that her teenage son gets to enjoy a litany of "edifying" podcasts whenever he's a passenger in her car. "Teachable moments with my captive audience," as she says. We're not disparaging any of these resources, of course. Used properly, they can help to cultivate a more robust understanding of the Christian worldview. When they're seen as ends rather than means, however, these same tools can become distractions at best, obstacles at worst. After some conversations with this lady's son, it quickly became apparent that he had zero interest in any of these extensive podcasts, and that he regarded the lengthy excursions with Mom as nothing more than a teeth-gritting test of endurance. Needless to say, this captive audience member wasn't taking any notes.

In this sense, many Christian parents implicitly disagree with Blaise Pascal's famous dictum that the "heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing." Instead, they opt to prioritize mind over heart. Despite its fame, Pascal's quote doesn't take care of itself. Without context, it seems to be an eloquent expression of the law of most Disney movies—namely, "follow your heart." Pascal is wiser than that, though, and has a holistic understanding of the heart.

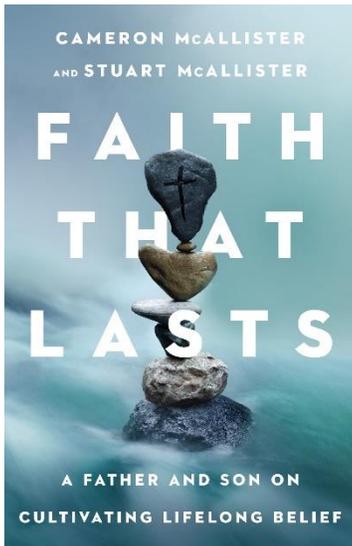


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Cameron McAllister is an itinerant speaker at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. He is also host of the *Vital Signs* podcast and cohost of the *Thinking Out Loud* podcast. Cameron's writing has appeared in *Christ and Pop Culture*, *Christianity Today*, and *Think Christian*. Cameron is the son of Stuart McAllister, coauthor of *Faith That Lasts*.

How many of our kids know all *about* Christianity, but don't really know Christ? As Pascal has it, the vision of the heart is not unlike the knowing glance of a trusted friend. This is knowledge by acquaintance rather than mere propositional knowledge. The only way to truly know anything or anyone is to move beyond description to an experiential level.

Think of the awkward social dance that starts at the beginning of a friendship. There's a reason so many comedies, romantic and otherwise, zero in on the clumsy motions of this dance. Our faltering steps toward intimacy are as funny as they are touching. Let's call this clumsy back-and-forth *the friendship dance*. The friendship dance is all about the things we love rather than our intellectual commitments. We're much more likely to ask our new dance partner about what they like doing (eating, listening, watching, etc.) because we instinctively know that their habits, hobbies, and routines will tell us all about who they really are.

A sociologist will hand you a survey, but someone trying to know you will ask you about which songs you jam out to in the car while you're heading to your favorite coffee shop. Practically speaking, if you want to do anything with someone else, you have to locate common interests. If you hate disc golf (guilty), for instance, that may pull you off the dance floor with certain folks before the friendship can even get started.

There's a very real sense in which someone's love of fly-fishing or *Dungeons and Dragons* will tell you more about who they are than a survey of their supposed intellectual commitments ever will. People will offer all sorts of knowledgeable advice on healthy eating habits, for instance, but if you want to know what they really think, take a look in their fridge. A key aspect of the Christian life involves bridging the gap between the head and the heart. Mere information can't perform the vital service of reforming our desires, of bringing us to the place where our desires match our virtues. James K. A. Smith says,

Being a disciple of Jesus is not primarily a matter of getting the right ideas and doctrines and beliefs into your head in order to guarantee proper behavior; rather, it's a matter of being the kind of person who *loves* rightly—who loves God and neighbor and is oriented to the world by the primacy of that love.

We cannot love anything rightly unless we move beyond mere information. Cameron can watch all the online tutorials he wants, but until he picks up a hammer and develops some calluses of his own, his knowledge will remain purely theoretical. Information is necessary but not sufficient. Similarly, if Christian parents want to help to cultivate spiritual maturity in their children, they need to do much more than instill correct thinking; they need to introduce their children to the Master and the tradition—to Christ and his church.

—Excerpt taken from chapter two, "Information Saves"



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