



The Partnering Stage

During the **Partnering Stage** (ages 8–12), children long for increased independence yet still need guidance as they learn how their choices shape who they are becoming. This is a pivotal time where you can help them understand that following Jesus is not merely about rules—it is about being formed into His likeness day by day. Scripture reminds us that transformation begins from within.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”

Romans 12:2

Tips for Caregivers

- Use simple metaphors—like oil and water—to help your child connect spiritual truths to everyday life.
- Invite your child to talk openly about choices that promote healthy growth and choices that cause distractions in his or her relationship with Christ.
- Reinforce that God’s grace covers every mistake; what matters most is turning back to Him again and again.
- Encourage your child to pray for the strength to make Christ-centered decisions, reminding him or her that God is always near.
- Celebrate moments of growth as you notice them, affirming that spiritual maturity develops in small choices and everyday moments.

Growth Model



Plant

Children begin noticing what influences shape their growth in Christ.



Root

Children start practicing activities that encourage Christlikeness, such as praying, serving others, and reading Scripture.



Growth

Children are mindful about actively choosing to step away from activities or influences that distract them from Christ, pursuing the things that help them grow in their faith instead.



Fruit

Children confidently talk about how Jesus is shaping their character and choices, and they are able to more easily identify and turn from distractions to focus on God.

Activity: Oil and Water

STEP 1 (The Why)

Romans 12:2 reminds us: *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”*

During the **Partnering Stage**, children are learning that their choices shape who they are becoming. Some actions and influences help them grow more like Jesus, while others distract or pull them away. This simple oil-and-water activity gives them a helpful visual of what it means to be formed in Christ’s likeness. Just as water takes the shape of its container, our lives take the shape of the One guiding us. And just as oil refuses to blend with water, some choices simply do not mix with the life Jesus calls us to.

This visual helps children begin recognizing the difference—and invites meaningful conversation about how Jesus can transform their hearts and minds.

STEP 2 (Activity Directions)

1 Gather Supplies

- You will need the following supplies: a clear container with a lid, 1-2 cups of water (depending on size of container), and 2 tablespoons cooking oil.

2 Observe the Water

- Pour the water into the container. Notice how it fills the space and takes the shape of its container—just as we are molded in God’s image and we become more like Christ when we follow His example.

3 Add the Oil

- Pour in the oil and give it a good shake! Watch how it stays separate from the water, even when shaken. This shows how, if we are pursuing Christ, distractions and bad influences don’t fit with that pursuit. God loves when we draw closer to Him.

4 Talk Together

- Discuss what activities are like “water” (helping us grow closer to Jesus) and which might be like “oil” (things that don’t mix with a Christlike life).

5 Pray as a Family

- Ask God to help your child choose activities that shape him or her to be more like Jesus and understand what choices might be causing distractions in his or her pursuit of Christ.

Encouragement

Your child may not always see how daily choices shape his or her heart and character—but these simple conversations and shared moments help make it clear. As you walk beside your child with patience and grace, you are planting deep roots of faith. Trust that God will use these small lessons to form a lasting love for Jesus in your child’s life.