

PARENTING 15-18

Communication, Convictions and Wisdom

SESSION ONE

I. OUR HEARTFELT DESIRE

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." (3 John 4)

A. Two Common Mistakes Parenting Teens:

1. God will take care of my kids. I can't do much.
2. If I do everything right, my kids are going to be great!

"I have been asked, 'Don't you think that if you raise your children in the right way, God has promised to save them?' If such a promise existed, it wouldn't comfort me. I have not raised them well enough. Looking over their lives, I want to join the ranks of parents who would like to do it over again. I'm keenly aware of shortcomings and limitations."¹

B. God's Part: Only God can Regenerate.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3)

"Father or mother, can you impart spiritual life to your child? The answer is that you cannot. You can teach them. You can train them. You can preach to them the same gospel that saved you. But you cannot give new life. Do not place yourself in the role reserved for the Spirit of God Almighty. Only he can awaken the dead. Why carry the burden of a task that you cannot accomplish? Call upon the Lord and acknowledge your desperate need. Intercede on behalf of your children to the One who is full of mercy and steadfast love. Let the conversion of your children be cause for humble, patient dependence on the Lord, not anxious toil and striving." (Joshua Harris)

C. Our part: Parents have a huge part to play in their teen's life.

"Beware of that miserable delusion into which some have fallen, - that parents can do nothing for their children, that you must leave them alone, wait for grace, and sit still. These persons have wished for their children in Balaam's fashion, - they would like them to die the death of the righteous man, but they do nothing to make them live his life. They desire much, and have nothing. And the devil rejoices to see such reasoning, just as he always does over anything, which seems to excuse indolence, or to encourage neglect of means. (J.C. Ryle)

"I heard of a man who said that he did not like to prejudice his boy, so he would not say anything to him about religion. The devil, however, was quite willing to prejudice

¹ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995) 225.

the lad, so very early in life he learned to swear, although his father had a foolish objection to teaching him to pray. If ever you feel it incumbent upon you not to prejudice a piece of ground by sowing good seed into it, you may rest assured that the weeds will not imitate your impartiality. Where the plow does not go and the seed is not sown, the weeds are sure to multiply. And if children are left untrained, all sorts of evil will spring up in their hearts and lives.” (Charles Spurgeon)

D. God remains Faithful

- God’s promises: The giver of the task will give us what we need for the task. (2 Peter 1:3)
- God’s Word is authoritative and sufficient to address every situation we face with our teenager. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)
- God Himself is our source of both mercy and help

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)

II. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE TASK

A. Our Teens: Work in progress

“The proverbs...to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—“ Proverbs 1:1,4

- Teens are Covenantal Beings.
- Teens are Social Beings.
- Teens are interpreters.
- Teens behave out of the Heart (Lk 6:43-45)

C. Our Goal in these Years

“We all know that God’s goal for our parenting is that we work ourselves out of a job. His plan is that we would be his instruments in producing children who are biblically mature, ready to face life in the fallen world, ready to be salt and light, ready to be contributors to his kingdom work, no longer needing the day-by-day guidance that we have given them for so many years.” ²

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

“Through Moses, God gave parents a long-term vision in this passage. His focus is not survival or even getting through the week. The callings of spiritual leadership are

² Paul David Tripp. *Age of Opportunity*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1997) 208.

so that (verse 2) you and your son and your son's son may know and fear the Lord. This three-generation vision will help you resist the temptations to fall into the expediencies of the moment. As parents we have bigger concerns than the moment; we are concerned with where our grandchildren will be fifty years from now."³

B. 15-18 are Transitional Years

- Teens should submit to their parent's authority.

"If your authority over your teen is not established, you must take the time to seek God and work back through your life with your teen. Confess, rethink, and establish your authority and their responsibility based on God's Word to both of you. There is no shortcut to your right as their shepherd or your teen's desire to be shepherded. The only route to those things is repentance and faith."⁴

- All the instruction related to the heart, friends, God, parents, continues to apply.

"Your concern to be a constructive force in your child's life has been established and demonstrated as you have sought to deal with his character in the middle years of childhood. Your shepherding now is simply an extension of those previous roles in your child's life."⁵

- Your children are aware that change is coming.
- Are you positioning yourself for maximum influence in the future?
- Parenting teens requires grace, hard work, courage and biblical convictions.

III. THEIR HEART AND YOUR WAYS

"My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways." (Proverbs 23:26)

"The preface, give me your heart, guides parents in their nurturing task: their target must ever be the deepest core of the child's inner life (their heart). Observe my ways further guides parents. They must aim to embody the virtues they commend." (ESV Study Bible)

A. Winning Your Teen's Heart – Increasing Your Influence

*"My son, **give me your heart**, and let your eyes observe my ways." (Proverbs 23:26)*

- Your teen's heart must be your target.
 - Discipline needs to always target the heart.
 - You must recognize the importance of winning your teen's heart as you instruct and discipline him.
 - Do you have your teen's heart presently?
- Strategies for winning your teen's heart:
 - Love: Do your children know you love them and want their best?
 - Listen, don't lecture.
 - Stay engaged in your teen's life.

³ Tedd Tripp, *Hints for Parents*, (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2004) 63.

⁴ Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* 227.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Tripp, 227.

- When your teen sins, is it easy for him/her to come to you and confess?
- Prioritize the issues with your teen.
- Identify evidences of grace.
- Teach them to value humility/fellowship.
- Consistently ask your teen for observations.
- Teach them to love the local church. (1 Tim 3:15)

B. Your Ways

"My son, give me your heart, and **let your eyes observe my ways.**" (Proverbs 23:26)

"It is in these years that parents hear themselves saying things that they never thought they would say. Parents find themselves reacting with accusations, guilt manipulation, and ultimatums, responding with a level of anger that they would not have thought possible."⁶

"Our example can either have a gracious restraining effect in the lives of our teens or it can tempt them to rebellion." (C.J. Mahaney)

- If our goal is to teach them to be spiritually mature men/women we must **examine our own hearts** for idols before pursuing the hearts of our children.
 - Common parenting idols:
 - Comfort
 - Success

"When they fail to live up to our expectations, we find ourselves not grieving for them and fighting for them, but angry at them, fighting against them, and, in fact, grieving for ourselves and our loss."⁷

- Appreciation
- Respect
- Control

"It is my experience that when parents begin to recognize, own, confess and turn from their own wrong heart attitudes and the wrong actions that flow from them, the result is a marked difference in their relationship to their teen and in the way they view the struggles of the teen years. When we look with concerned eyes toward the teen years, we need to look not only at our children, but also at ourselves. Parents who are humbly willing to change, position themselves to be God's instruments of change."⁸

- Do you have any observations for me as a dad/mom?
- Is there anything I have said or done that would cause you to struggle or you would want to bring to my attention?
- Do you feel that mom or I have treated you unfairly in any situation or circumstance that you would want to bring to my attention right now?
- Is there anything in my parenting that you would like to discuss with (mom/dad/pastor/care group leader)?

⁶ Tripp, Age of Opportunity 35.

⁷ Ibid., Tripp, 35.

⁸ Ibid., Tripp, 18.

SESSION TWO

I. WHAT IS OUR TASK?

“As we are preparing our teenage children to go out into this darkened, fallen world and live a godly life, it is mandatory that we make the development of internalized convictions one of our primary goals.”⁹

A. Cultivate Biblical Convictions

1. “A heart committed to doing God’s will regardless of the consequences.”¹⁰
2. “It matters greatly what we believe. It isn’t enough to just attend church regularly or be around people who have biblical values. Our attitudes and behaviors flow from **our** beliefs and **our** values and not from the beliefs and values of those around us. Therefore our hearts need to be shaped by the Word of God. We need biblical convictions.”¹¹
3. The tendency of kids from Christian homes is to do the right thing, but not always from a personal or a biblical conviction. If biblical convictions do not exist or are weak, increased temptation can lead to sin and sorrow.
4. Convictions need to be biblical: “Parents often correct their children from preference and church culture rather than God’s Word. The youth ministry is where you see the fruit of that kind of instruction. And the fruit of this kind of instruction is moralism and exasperated teenagers.” (Dave Brewer)
5. A conviction includes what we believe, why we believe it, and how committed we are to keeping it.
6. Help them discern the difference between their subjective sense and the objective truth of God’s word.
7. This process begins with an assessment of your teen’s spiritual condition.

B. Cultivate a Heart of Wisdom

- We must help our teens need understand the importance of wisdom and how they are to acquire it.
- “God’s laws do not cover everything in the daily experience of life. They are like a fence surrounding a broad fertile pasture, given to keep us within the boundaries of his blessing. Wisdom covers all the experiences of life that fall within the boundaries of law, leading you to a fruitful life and protecting you from ultimately violating God’s commands through foolishness.” (John Loftness)
- Wisdom covers things like: how to form friendship, with whom to form friendships, how to earn money, how to use money, how to bargain for a fair price, how to evaluate a potential spouse, how to live in community with others, how to speak, how to recognize wicked people who look appealing, how to listen, how to negotiate conflict, how to treat those less fortunate than you, and especially, how to get wisdom.” (John Loftness)
- Three simple questions:
 - Does it please God?
 - Will it cause someone to stumble?

⁹ Ibid., Tripp, 128.

¹⁰ Ibid., Tripp, 131.

¹¹ Karl Graustein, *Growing up Christian*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2005) 102.

- Is this decision/activity putting the first and second great commandments in their proper place in my life?
- A few major principles for pursuing wisdom and convictions:
 - **Priority of Wisdom/Humility:** Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance. (Proverbs 1:5)
 - **Relationship with God:** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)
 - **Relationship with Parents:** Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. (Proverbs 1:8,9)
 - **Godly Peers:** My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. (Proverbs 1:10)
 - **Humility:** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes but the wise man listens to advice. (Proverbs 12:15)

II. A TEEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- The importance of the question, "Is your child saved?"
- The importance of their relationship with the Lord.

A. Conversion

- The Gospel: The gospel is the holy history of Jesus Christ--His person and His work. This includes his incarnation (taking on Himself human flesh), his sinless life which fulfilled the perfect law of God, his substitutionary death which paid the penalty for man's sin and satisfied the righteous wrath of God, his resurrection, demonstrating God's satisfaction with the cross, and his ascension and glorification to the right hand of the father where he now reigns interceding for the church. (Romans 1:16)
- The Gospel Call: Is *the verbal message of the gospel proclaimed to sinners*. It includes a basic explanation of the facts concerning salvation, that all people have sinned (Ro 3:23), that the penalty for sin is death (Ro 6:23), and that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Ro 5:8). The gospel call also includes the invitation to respond personally in repentance and faith (Acts 20:21, John 1:11-12), as well as the promise of forgiveness and eternal life to all who do (John 3:16, Acts 3:19).¹²
- Our response to the gospel:
 - **Repentance** involves sorrow for sin, changing one's mind about sin, and turning from sin.
 - **Faith** is trusting in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus alone for salvation from sin.
- True biblical convictions begin with genuine conversion.
- We are to call our teens/children to respond to the gospel, and then live in the good of it.

¹² These definitions are from Jeff Purswell.

B. Cautions and Questions About Your Child's Conversion

- Do I treat my child like a believer in need of sanctification or like a sinner in need of salvation?
- Caution 1: Don't use question of conversion to manipulate your teens behavior
- Caution 2: During this season, don't evaluate on the basis of one episode of sin, but look at their behavior and responses over time.

- Are you encouraging false assurance in your child?
- Are you encouraging genuine assurance in your child?
 - *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life."* (1 John 5:13)
- Despite the challenges involved in discerning whether conversion has occurred or not, God calls us to be "fruit inspectors." Jesus made it clear that genuine conversion should be visibly evident through good fruit
 - *"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. (Luke 6:43-44)*

- Biblical categories to examine:
 - **Obedience to God's Commands:** *"And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments."* (1 John 2:3)
 - **Loving Others:** *"By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother."* (1 John 3:10)
 - **Sound Doctrine:** *"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."* (1 John 4:15)
 - **Loving God:** *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments."* (1 John 5:2)

- Be on the lookout for bad fruit:
 - Patterns of deception: continually being found out in sin
 - Significant disrespect toward parents or other authorities
 - A love for the things of the world

C. If Your Child Claims to be a Christian, Help Them to Understand and Develop Their Relationship with God

- "Make sure they understand the gospel from God's word."
 - Can they describe the truth of the gospel from God's word directly? (Gal 3:13; Ps 103:12; Is 43:25, Is 53:6; Ro 4:7,8; Ro 8:1; Micah 7:19; Col 2:13,14; Heb 8:12)
 - What do they believe about God? What do they believe about their sin and their status before God? What Scriptures do they turn to and why? You must help them root their relationship with God in his word!
 - Do they have a grasp of the gospel in a way that it can function in their daily lives? Do they have a personal and real relationship with God?
 - Do they understand the difference between justification and adoption?

- Make sure their relationship with God functions in their daily lives.

“Internalization of the gospel is the process of your children embracing the things of God as their own living faith. Your wish during this period is to see your children develop autonomous identities as persons under God.”¹³

- Do they make choices that reflect a heart to obey God, and love others?
- Do they walk in the light, confessing sins with you?
- Are they ensnared in any patterns of sin with others, including bitterness, unkindness, gossip? Are they seeking to make their way out of those things? How, who is helping them? Are they seeking help?
- Christians fellowship; they talk about the work of God in their lives.
- Do they receive forgiveness for their sins? And do they cultivate conviction and faith to change?
- **Principle:** Internalizing the gospel requires the Holy Spirit’s work, but God honors means, and you must instruct your teens in how to trust in the power of the gospel and cultivate the means that God gives to grow in their relationship to God.

D. The Importance of Spiritual Disciplines

- Help them to **know and study God’s word.**
 - Encourage them to have a Bible reading plan.
 - < <http://www.navpress.com/dj/content.aspx?id=138>>
- Help them to **understand and practice prayer.**
 - Godly parents will send their converted teens to the prayer closet to consider what they have instructed them, and to ask God to help them.
 - Do your teens know how to pray?

E. Talking through an Issue of Sin with a Teen: Cultivating and Examining Convictions at a Heart Level

1. An incident of sin
 - Your child deceives you by using his or her cell phone to text with a boy/girl in their class or from church. You find out through a friend’s mom, who communicates that her son/daughter spoke to your son, and she informs you that her son/daughter is confused, and did not know what to do. What do you do?
 - What you feel like saying to the mom:
 - You’ve got to be kidding me. That is not how we have taught him.
 - I can’t believe my teen would ever do that.
 - They’ve never lied to me before.
 - I can’t believe this kid did this again!
 - I don’t know what to do with this boy/girl. They just do whatever they want!

¹³ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* 224.

- What you feel like saying to your son/daughter:
 - How many times have I told you not to lie?
 - How could you embarrass your mother and father like this?
 - Have you not learned anything about humility?
 - Why do you keep doing these things that dishonor God?

 - What you should remember and do before you speak:
 - God is the Lord of your teen's life, and you cannot control them.
 - Ask yourself if the Holy Spirit is ruling your heart right now?
 - Remind yourself that you must love your teen, if they are going to open their life up to you. The Holy Spirit must help them to experience conviction and remorse.
 - Pray for yourself, and your teen, that God would help you both.

 - Always take time to make sure you have all the facts:
 - Many times we move too quickly, and we fail to get to the hearts of our children. Ask good questions.
 - Disclosure can be the first step toward repentance.
 - Speak patiently and gather the facts.
 - What have you been doing? For how long? How many times did you do this?
 - When did this begin? How did it begin? Why do you enjoy it?

 - Find out what they think of the boy/girl they have been texting with:
 - Do you like them? How do you feel about them?
 - Why have you not brought them to me before?
 - What is the purpose of the texts? Have you communicated any special feelings?
 - Would you feel free to discuss your feelings with me? Why or why not? Is there anything I am doing that would make it difficult for you to share these issues with me? Or are you simply trying to avoid conviction? Do you have convictions related to how you interact with guys/girls?
2. Have these violated a biblical principle or standard that you have talked about in the past?
- Ask them did you consider our former conversations about this issue?
 - When did you think about the fact that you were disobeying?
 - How did you overcome your conscience in that moment? (1 Cor 10:13)
 - Did you think about it again after that?
 - Help them to identify what has occurred in their conscience that allowed them to break previously communicated convictions.

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:12-13)

3. Move from the what to the why:

- Why did you do what you did? What was it you were wanting? Was that a good desire? What made it wrong? [OPEN THE BIBLE]
- Did you want that more than you wanted to love God and follow your convictions? How do you know? [OPEN THE BIBLE]
- Why is that sin? Why does the Bible call that sin? What Scriptures did you disobey? [OPEN THE BIBLE]
- How did you feel about doing this when you did it? If you did not feel bad, why is that bad? What should have authority in your life, your feelings or Scripture? [OPEN THE BIBLE]
- What other sins did you commit (deception, pride in relationship to friend)? [OPEN THE BIBLE]
- Speak to the heart's desires: What did you want when you were...lying about those texts, cheating on your test, writing notes to that girl/boy, listening to that music? Distinguish between wrong and right.

4. Help them to pursue God's Word and Spirit to cultivate conviction.

- Create some plan from Scripture that will help them cultivate conviction and avoid future temptation.
- Begin with are you convicted?
- If no, are you concerned that your heart is not lining up with Scripture? [OPEN THE BIBLE!]
- If yes, how can you deepen in your conviction? (2 Cor 7:10) [OPEN THE BIBLE]
- Apply the gospel to the past and to the future.

5. Make sure they understand and grab hold of the gospel.

SESSION THREE: THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN A TEEN'S LIFE

I. A TEEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX

A. Consider their environment

- Our culture celebrates sex, sexuality at younger and younger ages.
- Our culture celebrates sex outside of marriage (TV shows, movies, HS culture).
- Our culture celebrates teen dating and teen relationships. This reality must be understood and acknowledged, and talked about if you are going to lead your children to a biblical conviction.
- Principle: It is easier to have discussions with teens on these issues before they begin to cultivate relationships with the opposite sex than after.

B. Convictions to cultivate in your teens:

- You are to live your teen years in absolute sexual purity (1 Thess 4:1-7)
- Parental input and authority (Eph 6:1-3)
- God has called us to holy living (1 Thess 4:7, 2 Tim 2:9, 1 Cor 6:8)
- Doctrine of indwelling sin (Galatians 5, Eph 4:22, Jer 17:9)
- Sexual temptation is strong (Pr 6:27, 28; 2 Timothy 2:22)
- Love God (Mt 22:7) You are to love God more than anything else. Any relationship you pursue should help you to love and obey God more.
- You are called to love others and to always put the interests of others before your own (Philippians 2:3-5)
- Marriage is a sweet gift from God. The opposite sex is a gift from God, and it is good for your teen to desire a relationship that will lead to the blessing of marriage. (Proverbs 12:4; Proverbs 18:22)
- A marriage covenant is the context for sex to be enjoyed in (I Cor 6:18; Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 5:18).
- Sex outside of marriage is forbidden (I Cor 6: 18; Hebrews 13:4)
- If you are a believer you are to marry a believer (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- You are to remain faithful to your husband/wife when you marry and not pursue sex with anyone else (Exodus 20:14).
- The person you choose to marry will be the 2nd most important decision in your life (Pr 31:10), after your decision to follow Jesus.
- Sexual temptation will not go away when you get married, so it is important to learn self control as a single (Matthew 5:27,28).
- You are to take a husband/wife in sexual purity (1 Thess 4:1-7)

C. Important wisdom principles derived from Scripture:

- The preparation principle:
 - Be prepared for this season of life. Are you ready for what a relationship is leading you towards? (Proverbs 24:7)
 - Good marriages don't just happen; they require biblical convictions, spiritual maturity and good character (see Eph 5:22-33; Pr 31:16; 1 Peter 3:1-7).
 - Teenagers are still growing in character and maturity.
 - It is wise for the guy to have some ability to provide and lead before pursuing marriage.

- It is important to be prepared for the responsibilities of being a parent when we marry.
- The purity principle:
 - Intimate relationships typically lead to physical intimacy.
 - Physical contact to communicate special affection with a person you are attracted to will tend to arouse sexual feelings in one another.
- The accountability principle:
 - If a person has compromised, it is easier to fall into the same sin again, and more accountability is usually helpful and wise.
 - There are people that Scripture warns us against who seek to corrupt others and will be a source of temptation.
 - Christians never want to be a source of temptation to others, so they must carefully consider their relationships, dress and demeanor toward the opposite sex.
 - I will speak to my parents about my feelings for guys/girls so that I can pray with them for grace.

D. The question should not be, “Can I have a relationship?”

- Is a relationship with a guy/girl going to serve us in our relationship to the Lord right now? How?
- Will I be able to glorify God as faithfully through pursuing this relationship at this time?
- Have I asked the necessary questions about myself and the person I am thinking about being in a relationship with to know this is wise?
- Who have I processed these questions with that I trust, is wise and who agrees with me? What do my parents think and desire?
- When considering all these things, it has served many to wait to pursue guy/girl relationships until after high school.

II. A TEEN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PARENTS

A. According to Scripture one of the most important sources of wisdom is one’s father:

Here, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight. (Proverbs 4:1)

B. All Christians Including Teenagers Must Honor Their Parents (Mark 7:9-20)

“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first command with a promise) “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:2-4)

- Teens who desire to love God will desire to honor their parents.
- Honoring parents means showing respect in attitude and heart toward them.
- Teens should obey their parents in the Lord.

1. What about when you disagree?
 - What do you disagree with specifically? Is it the principle or the practice?
 - What do you believe is the correct course of action?
 - Why do you believe this is the right thing to do?
 - Can you think of any verses of Scripture that speak to this issue either directly or using principles of wisdom?
 - What other wise people agree with you?
 - Would you be willing to speak to a pastor, friend or parent that you respect and get their input?
 - When do you bring others into the discussion?

2. Any ongoing concerns that you or your spouse share as you think of your teenagers?
 - Do your children seek you for counsel? Do they look to you for guidance? If so give thanks, if not ask why not, and how can you help them to seek this grace?
 - Remember this is a challenging and spiritual task. You need God to do this.

III. A TEEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FRIENDS AND MEDIA

"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." (Proverbs 13:20)

"Nothing perhaps affects man's character more than the company he keeps. We catch the ways and tone of those we live and talk with, and unhappily get harm far more easily than good. Disease is infectious, but health is not. Now, if a professing Christian deliberately chooses to be intimate with those who are not friends of God and who cling to the world, his soul is sure to take harm. It is hard enough to serve Christ under any circumstances in such a world as this. But it is doubly hard to do it if we are friends of the thoughtless and ungodly. Mistakes in friendships are the whole reason why some have entirely ceased to grow." (J.C. Ryle, "The Duties of Parents")

A. Qualities of a True Friend

- Fears God and keeps his commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- Honors his parents (Ephesians 6:3)
- Submits to authorities (Hebrews 13:17)
- Seeks to keep his friends from sinning (James 5:19-20)
- *"And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God."* (1 Samuel 23:16 NIV)

B. Good Friends Don't Just Happen

- Convictions to cultivate in your child
- Convictions to cultivate as parents
 - God has given me authority to oversee my child's friendships.
 - *"Train up a child in the way he should go..."* (Proverbs 22:6)

- *“Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge.” (Proverbs 14:7)*
- I will use biblical criteria to evaluate my child’s friendships.
- I will not let my child’s complaints stop me from evaluating his/her friendships.
- *“Teenagers tend to be prickly and protective when it comes to discussion of their friends. It is as if the operational rule is this: ‘To reject my friends is to reject me.’”¹⁴*
- I will not let fear of child keep me from upholding my parental responsibilities!
 - One ungodly friendship could sabotage the years I have spent in disciplining my child.
 - *“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’” (1 Cor. 15:33)*
- **Practical tips**
 - Cultivate convictions related to the importance of friendships, using Scriptures.
 - Ask your children what they do with and talk about with their friends.
 - Encourage them to do spiritual activities with one another.
 - Talk to them about their conversations after each context.
 - Have your children invite their friends to your house.
 - Work with your children on honoring your requests for being home at a certain time when they are 15 so that you can continue to influence them when they are 17.
 - Role-play situations to help your child consider how he/she would respond in different situations involving peer pressure.
 - Smoking
 - Gossip/slander
 - R-rated movie
 - Alcohol
 - Online pornography
 - Sexual activity
- **Search and Rescue**
 - Guidelines for intervening in an unfruitful friendship
 - Communicate directly with parents of other child.
 - Affirm your love for their child.
 - Explain that your actions are motivated by concern for your child (not theirs).
 - Care for your child during this transition
 - Invest extra time in your relationship.
 - Facilitate interaction with other friends.
 - Affirm your love and inquire how he/she is doing.

¹⁴ Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 84.

C. What if My Teen is in Rebellion?

- Increase the amount of time you give to prayer.
- Involve others.
 - A rebellious teen is a prime opportunity to discover who I'm trusting, what's in my heart, where my parenting is flawed, how much I believe God's Word, and more.
 - We're wise to open up our lives to counsel before a crisis comes.
- Respond in ways that demonstrate a trust in God.
 - Draw together as a couple, thank God for the work he's doing, think of how God can use this.
 - If necessary or advisable, decrease work/other responsibilities to devote greater time to your family.
 - Continue to trust in God's faithful sovereignty and the power of the Spirit, working through his Word and the gospel, to change hearts.
- Take time to evaluate your heart and your parenting.

D. What if a Friend's Teen is in Rebellion?

- Walking with parents through a season of teen rebellion:
 - Come alongside of them. Communicate sorrow and compassion.
 - Pray for them and their teen.
 - Call them, text them, let them know you are praying for their teen (and them).
 - Let them know you are with them and will pray for them at any time.
 - Where you can, encourage them.
 - Correct when appropriate, but make sure it is not the constant focus of your relationship.
- How to serve teens in a season of rebellion:
 - Remember the prodigal son.
 - Greet them. Show them love.
 - Love and truth
 - Where possible (and redemptive) include them in with your family (and their family).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

(Available in the CLC bookstore unless otherwise noted)

- Age of Opportunity (Paul David Tripp)
- Big Truths for Young Hearts (Bruce Ware)
- Get Outta My Face! (Rick Horne)
- Girl Talk (Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Whitacre)
- Ten Questions To Diagnose Your Spiritual Health (Donald Whitney)
- How Can I Be Sure I'm A Christian? (Donald Whitney)
- Growing up Christian (Karl Graustein)

- The Duties of Parents (J.C. Ryle)
- Feminine Appeal (Carolyn Mahaney)
- Hints for Parents (Tedd Tripp and Gardiner Spring)
- Humility (C.J. Mahaney)
- I Kissed Dating Goodbye (Joshua Harris)
- Proverbs (Charles Bridges) - *Not currently in CLC bookstore*
- Proverbs: An Introduction & Commentary (Derek Kidner) - *Not currently in CLC bookstore*
- Sex Isn't the Problem, Lust Is (Joshua Harris)
- Instructing a Child's Heart (Tedd and Margy Tripp)
- Living the Cross Centered Life (C.J. Mahaney)
- War of Words (Paul David Tripp)
- When People are Big and God is Small (Edward Welch)
- Worldliness (C.J. Mahaney, Editor)

- "The Pastor and His Older Children" Audio message by Bob Kauflin (Sovereign Grace Ministries Pastors Conference, April 2009) Available for free download at <http://www.SovereignGraceMinistries.org/Events/PastorsConference.aspx>

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

These questions can be used to serve parents of teenagers to help them cultivate influence and relationship, as they help their teens move toward spiritual maturity. They are intended to be used in the context of regular conversations, not all in one sitting.

General Relationship Questions

Let me share with you ways that I am encouraged about your progress...

Take time to share ways you have seen your teen grow in:

- Responding to the Holy Spirit
- Servanthood in the home
- Expressiveness in worship
- Godliness in relationships
- Affections/humility in their relationship with you
- Character, diligence, faithfulness
- Their pursuit of God, his Word or prayer
- Their pursuit of change
- Serving in the church
- Or any other evidence of grace in their life

Own Their Faith

What things have been repeatedly on your mind during the past week or two? What have you been thinking about? What things specifically?

Are you carrying any burdens on your could that have been distracting you from other things? Is there anything you are tempted to worry about? Can I pray with you about that?

What has been the main focus of your Bible reading recently? What are the things you are praying about? Are you enjoying/finding satisfaction/getting fed spiritually from your devotional times or are you doing them primarily out of obligation? What is your Bible reading plan for the next few weeks/months?

How do you feel about your relationship with God right now? Are you feeling passion for him and his kingdom? Is there anything competing for your affections right now that would hinder you from loving God with all your heart? What Scriptures are you turning to, to help you?

Is there any thought on your mind that you feel bad about or that you know is wrong but you are having a hard time with?

What things are you struggling with? Are you discouraged or encouraged more often in your struggle? What have you done to work on your areas of weakness/sin? Have you turned to God's word to help you cultivate faith and conviction? Have you worked on a plan that involves prayer and the word? Would you please share that with me so I can help you?

How are you seeking to grow/be diligent in managing your personal life? Devotional times, chores in the home, schoolwork, budget? What can I do to help you in these areas? Is there someone else you would prefer to pursue for help?

Parents Before Peers

Do you have any observations for me as a dad/mom?

Do you know how much I love you and am grateful that God has brought you to our family? Do you believe that my biggest desire for you is to know and love God from your heart? Is there anything you can share with me that would help me to communicate or demonstrate my love for you more?

Is there anything I have said or done that has caused you to struggle or you would want to bring to my attention?

Do you feel that mom or I have treated you unfairly in any situation or circumstance that you would want to bring to share with me? Is there an issue in our relationship where you believe I am not hearing you or treating you fairly where you would want to invite another adult or pastor to help us? Who would you be comfortable pursuing?

What have you and your friends been talking about recently? What are you looking forward to? Are there any upcoming changes or activities that you are worried about? Why?

Have you had any conversation with friends regarding issues or expressing thoughts, which you know I would be concerned about or want to know about?

Have you engaged in any activities which you know your mom and I would not approve of that you have not informed me about?

Are there any unresolved relational issues between you and our family or your friends?

Are there any girls/boys that you are having a hard time not thinking about? What are you thinking about them? Do you have any questions about relationships with guys or girls?

Be Distinct From the World

What music are you enjoying right now? Why are you enjoying it? Would you share with me the music you are most excited about?

Are there any bands that you are listening to, that are not distinctly Christian? Who are they and can we look at their lyrics, and/or listen to their music together?

Have you visited any websites with immodest images, or viewed any inappropriate images, or read any inappropriate material since we last met? Are you cultivating a love for holiness/purity in your life? What scriptures are helping you?

Have you been in any context where people have been engaging in activities that the Bible would not approve of? When was that, and what was going on?

Are you aware of any sins among your friends, that you have not been faithful to confront them in, or made sure they shared those issues with their parents (Galatians 6:1-3)?

Future

What are your hopes for the future? Marriage, family, career? Are there any ways I can help you prepare for these things more effectively?

QUESTIONS FOR TEENS TO ASK PARENTS

Where do you see me growing in my relationship with the Lord?

Based on my conversations, and enthusiasm, what would you say I most passionate about? Do you think my priorities reflect Matthew 6:33 that I am seeking first the kingdom of God in my life? In what specific ways would you encourage me to make my relationship with God the highest priority in my life? How would you recommend I pursue growth in my relationship with God? Would there be any books or Scriptures you would want to recommend for me to read?

Where do you see God at work in my life?

Have you observed any patterns of sin in my relationships with friends, my relationship with you, or my pursuit of the world that you have been trying to get my attention on? How well do I respond to you, when you try to bring these questions/concerns to me? What Scriptures could I read to pursue change in these areas?

As you observe my life, is there one particular area that you would say I need to grow in? Can you please share with me examples of where you have noticed this and also help me with a plan to change?

On a scale of 0-10 (0 = humble and diligent at all, 10 = independent and defensive), how diligently and humbly do I pursue your guidance and counsel? What kind of questions should I be asking and what situations would you like to see me pursuing you regarding issues/relationships/or anything in my life? Do you have any Scriptures that would help me to pursue greater humility in these things?

Do you think that I value your wisdom more than my friend's opinions? Can you share with me examples of how I am valuing my friend's opinions too highly? Can you share with me examples of where I am appropriately valuing your wisdom more than my friends?

As you observe my life do you think I form my convictions based on Scripture or personal desires and preference?

How would you describe my attitude toward your authority? In what ways have I grown in showing you and mom my respect? In what ways would you like to see growth in the area of honoring and respecting my parents, and/or other authorities in my life?

Have I sinned against you in any way and not sought forgiveness?

How can I grow in serving the family? Is there one person in the family (dad/mom/sibling) that I need to be more intentional with in regards to serving?