

A PARENT'S GUIDE
TO RAISING
GODLY TEENAGERS



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The title of this little book, “Raising Godly Teenagers” is a bit laughable. I mean teenagers are anything but godly, and if someone is godly they cannot be a teenager, right? After all isn’t the word teenager defined by sin, rebellion, & reckless living?

Before we begin discussing this insane topic of raising godly teenagers, it’s important to understand that we live in a culture that does not expect teenagers to be godly, or much of anything for that matter. Our low cultural view of teenagers stems from an acceptance of what has been called the **Myth of adolescence**.

I have heard the term adolescence humorously defined as the “temporary gap of insanity between being a child and becoming an adult.” Some of you are shaking your heads in agreement.

Here is the shocking truth about adolescence, it is a new invention.

Before the 1900’s there were only two categories of people: Children (ages 0-12) and adults (ages 13-death). Within the last 100 years we have added a third category called adolescence, or the teenage years.

In this new category, “teens” are expected to live unproductive lives, sow their wild oats, and rebel against mom and dad (and everyone else).

During these years, parenting often becomes survival and we hope and pray our kids will just get through the teen years in one piece. But is parenting teens really only about survival?

Before we answer the question of parenting teens, let’s think about teenagers in general.

Thinking Biblically about Your Teenager

You may be surprised to hear that the Bible does not give your teenager a hall pass from living for God’s glory during their teenage years. On the contrary, God expects and commands them to live for His glory *during* their teenage years.

1 Timothy 4:12 *“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”*

2 Timothy 2:22 “*So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*”

In addition to verses like these, the bible gives examples of youth who did big things for the kingdom of God, during their youth. David fought and defeated Goliath. Daniel resolved in his heart he would not defile the Lord.

On the contrary, we have youth in the Bible who tried to use their youth as an excuse before God, and they were quickly rebuked for it. Jeremiah was one such person who said to God, “I am only a youth”, to excuse himself from God’s mission. But instead of God accepting his excuse, God answered, “Do not say, “I am only a youth!” (**Jeremiah 1:6-7**)

As you have examined your teenager in light of scripture, it is crucial that you see God expects and demands your teen to use this season of his/her life for His honor and glory.

Now that we have talked about your teenager, let’s now talk about parenting your teenager, which starts by raising the bar.

Raising the Bar

In his book *Age of Opportunity*, Paul Tripp argues that parenting teenagers is NOT a period of mere survival, but rather a period of great **opportunity!**

(And just a FYI on Paul Tripp, most of the content in this little booklet comes from either his book or the Bible, so I want to give him credit and recommend his book to you.)

Your children’s teenage years are not for surviving but thriving as you engage your teen and lay hold of the great opportunity this season of parenting can bring.

The teen years, more than any other years, serve as the season to grab your child’s heart and **teach** and **mentor** them **towards maturity**.

The truth is your child’s teen years will be the launching pad for the rest of their lives. So seize this great opportunity to impact your teens for the rest of their lives.

So what does the Bible say about parenting teens?

To answer this question let's examine Proverbs Chapter 1. In this text, King Solomon is speaking to his sons and to youth age persons in general.

King Solomon begins telling his purpose which is *"to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth."* (Proverbs 1:4)

Prudence means "intelligence that manifests itself in wise behavior", as opposed to **simple** which means "apt to be deceived, or silly living".

Solomon writes Proverbs because he wants his sons to think and act wisely in a foolish world! And since you are reading this, I know you want that for your sons and daughters too!

Your Role during the Teenage Years.

During the teenage years, your role as a parent is to be your child's **Teacher/Mentor**. Your goal is to grab their heart with instruction and their eyes through your example. They need to see and hear from you during these confusing years of their lives.

Proverbs 23:28: *"My son, give me your **heart**, and let your **eyes** observe my ways."*

The first step is to gain their heart by your love and acceptance.

As a parent you must show unconditional love to your teenager. This means loving them for who they are (your child), and not for what they do. There is a good chance your child is going to make some mistakes during these years (maybe even some big ones), and they need to know your love for them doesn't change according to their behavior.

In addition to unconditional love, you need to accept your teenager's unique personality and likes and let them develop into the person God desires, not the person you want them to be. Dads, this means your little sports star might want to play piano instead. That's ok. Moms, your little dancer might not like to dance. That's ok too.

Parents, your teenager may be different than you, and as long as their uniqueness is not sinful before God, you need to accept them for who God has made them to be.

The second step is to enter their world as their teacher and mentor.

As their teacher/mentor, you must teach them with your words and mentor them by your life and example. This means you must both show them and tell them how to mature into adulthood. In order to do this well, you must understand what makes your teenage tick.

Understanding Your Teenager.

Paul Tripp gives four truths about teenagers that you must know and understand.

1. **Teenagers are made for worship.** They were created by God for God. Designed to worship and be satisfied in Him forever. Because teenagers are made for worship, they will either worship God or something else. This means as a parent you must be looking for idols that are capturing your teens affections in a way that only God is meant to. These may include sports, relationships, iPhone's, popularity, etc. Your job is to notice when they are worshiping something as God, and turn their attention away from that to the true God.

2. **Teenagers are made for community.** Think of your teen as a little social butterfly. One of the reasons social media has exploded is because humans are made for community and connection with one another. In community, your teenager is commanded to love and serve others, but their great temptation will be to love self and use others. You must guide and direct them in their relationship so they love and serve, rather than lust and use.

3. **Teenagers interpret the world.** Your teenager is thinking and interpreting the world they see around them. They will either see and interpret it through a biblical worldview or sinful worldview. Your job is to help shape them to see the world through the lens of Christ, and interpret what they see through a Biblical worldview.

4. **Teenagers behave from the heart.** It's important to understand and remember that all behavior comes from the heart. For this reason you cannot merely parent for external behavior, but rather you must shepherd your teenager's heart!

Now that we understand who teenagers are as image bearers of God, let's return to Proverbs 1 for direction in parenting them towards Christ.

Three Things to Teach Your Teenager.

In Proverbs 1 Solomon tells his sons to do three things: **FEAR** the Lord, **HEAR** parental instruction, and **STEER** away from evil influences. As a parent you must help your teenager do these as well.

1. Fear the Lord

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)

As a parent you must lead your teenager to fear the Lord. Fearing the Lord does not mean teenagers are scared of God and run away from Him. Fear means they are in awe and reverence of Him, and run to Him. Fearing God means developing a heart for God.

Tom Constable says, “Fear” includes not only a correct way of thinking about God but a correct relationship with Yahweh. It is an **affectionate reverence** that results in **humbly bowing to the Father’s will**. It is a desire not to sin against Him because His wrath is so awful and His love is so awesome.

Fearing God means.

- Correct thinking: Knowing who God is through His Word.
- Correct relationship: Loving Him with all your heart.
- Correct living: Humbly bowing to the Father’s will rather than your own.
- Correct motivation: Understanding both God’s awful wrath and His awesome love.

Remember, it's not enough for you to merely teach these things to your teenagers, you must model a life lived under the fear of God as well so they will see it.

2. Hear Parental Instruction.

“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”
(Proverbs 1:8)

If teenagers are commanded to listen to your teaching, then as a parent you must be teaching them the way they should go. You are the one God has called to show them right and wrong and to teach them how to live for the glory of Christ. This might seem like a daunting task, so here are four steps to follow.

Teaching your teen by Entering, Interpreting, Developing, and Preparing.

- **Entering their world.** This one is all about TIME. Parents you must spend quality time with teenagers to show you love them and observe the world from their eyes. The truth is your teenager needs YOU more than their peers, sports, or hobbies. Don’t allow them to always be away from you, but intentionally carve out regular time to spend together. If you are not with them, you cannot teach them. And if you are not teaching them, then who is?
- **Help Interpret their world for them.** This is where you get to help your teenager to think Biblically about all of life. Situations at school or headline news issues are great times to help your teenager interpret life’s situations through gospel glasses. Help them see the themes of grace, forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation, sin, and new life as they naturally come up through everyday events. This happens by knowing their struggles through constant conversations and interpreting them through the lens of Christ.
- **Develop Biblical conviction.** The goal is not just outward conformity, but deep convictions that have been formed by the scriptures taking root in their hearts. By this, you are there to help them learn how to behave biblically. Pointing out their sin and teaching them repentance and grace. When they fail, you are teaching them about consequences and the need to trust God at His word. It’s important during the teen years to not make all their decisions for them! Let them have freedom to decide some things, and when they make a bad decision, use it to teach and establish deep convictions.
- **Prepare them to leave your home and start their own.** Dads teach your sons to do what you do! Help them become biblical men and prepare them to be future

husbands and fathers. Teach them to mow the yard, change fuses, hold a job, grill a steak, etc. Moms, teach your daughters to do what you do! Help them mature as godly women and prepare them to be wives and mothers. Teach them how to clean the house, fix a meal, grocery shop, budget money, etc. Moms and Dads, if you are not showing them how to be spouses and parents, who will?

3. Steer away from evil influences.

“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. My son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths.” (Proverbs 1:10, 15)

Parents it is your job to set up boundaries to help protect your teen (and yes they will hate you for it)! Boundaries are to guard their hearts which flows out all of their life. Although it is true you cannot keep your teenager away from all sin, you can keep some sin away from your teenager. The goal is to minimize the snares they will encounter during these years.

Here are some common snares to watch out for from Proverbs:

- Sexual immorality (proverbs 5,6,7)
- Trusting self over God
- Being wise in their own eyes
- Focusing on temporal things instead of eternal things.

Please be aware that one of the greatest, potentially sinful, influences your teenager will ever face might be in their back pocket! Those beloved iPhones that every teenager must have, might also be the very thing that is killing them.

Parents, if you allow your teenager to possess such a potentially dangerous device, please make sure you set boundaries and monitor their activity to help safeguard them from pornography and predators. I advise you at the very least to disable safari and any other web browser from their phone

(<http://www.internetsafety.com/support/article.php?id=556>). If your teenager has unrestricted access to the internet, it is almost certain they will see and possibly indulge in pornography.

Dr. Moore says giving your son unrestricted access on a phone or device is like sending him “to a strip-club for the night because you trust him not to look up from his Bible.” It’s insanity, and I deal with teenagers across my desk all the time who are helpless

addicted to pornography because they were trusted with an iPod or iPhone. (access Dr. Moore's full article here:

<http://www.russellmoore.com/2015/06/02/smartphones-tablets-and-christian-parenting/>)

Parents don't forget, King David, a man after God's own heart and who wrote part of the Bible, fell into sexual sin after glancing at a woman bathing. So if David fell, so can your sons and daughters.

Teenage parents, you have been given the task of raising godly teenagers. The question is how will you view this task before you? Will they be years of mere surviving or years of thriving for the glory of God and the good of your teenager?

God wants you to thrive as a parent as you teach your teenagers to be wise in this foolish age. And to do this you must remember to help your teen to FEAR God, HEAR your instruction, and STEER away from evil influences.

Parents, your teenagers need you to lead, teach, and protect them. This is no time to bury your head in the sand and merely survive. This is a season of great opportunity to teach and mentor your teenager into the man or woman God intended him/her to be.

Yes, you will make some mistakes in your parenting. Yes, your teenager will make some mistakes in their living. But you serve a God who makes no mistakes! By His grace, He is going to use you to guide your teenager to live a life that brings honor and glory to Him.

Additional resources from my blog:

<http://www.korywcunningham.com/parents-read-the-bible-to-your-kids/>

<http://www.korywcunningham.com/3-simple-ways-to-hear-from-god/>

<http://www.korywcunningham.com/the-broad-road-of-gender/>

Internet safeguards:

<http://www.mobicip.com/>

Additional Book Resources from the pros:

[Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens, Second Edition \(Resources for Changing Lives\)](#) by [Paul David Tripp](#) (Paperback - Jun 2001)

[ApParent Privilege](#) by [Steve Wright](#) (Hardcover - Nov 1, 2008)

[Shepherding a Child's Heart](#) by [Tedd Tripp](#) (Paperback - 1995)