



## Help! I Have a Teenager!

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By Barry Bandara, Senior Pastor

The teenage years often terrify parents. Many times it's because you remember what you did and how you acted when you were a teenager. Think of these adolescent years like a zip line across a canyon. On one side is childhood while the other side is adulthood. There are no other options. They must cross over to the other side. Put your harness on, hook your carabiner to Christ and hold on for the ride! You can get to the other side in one piece if you have the proper perspective, plan, and attitude. Enjoy the ride!

### The Proper Perspective

Your teenager is caught in a unique time in their lives. Their body is changing, hormones are flying, and they go back and forth between being immature and mature all in the span of 30 minutes! That is normal. Expect it. Maintain the proper perspective that many things they are going through are normal phases for most teenagers. You must understand that it is normal for them to have tunnel vision with limited perspective on how their decisions have lasting consequences. They don't "get it" many times because they don't have the life experience to see beyond next period in school. Teenagers are often very selfish during the adolescent years because everything in their life is heightened and charged. That is why they can be authentically worshipping God in youth group one moment and in a cat fight with their sister five minutes later.

Does this mean that you do not correct or punish inappropriate behavior? No. It means that you, as parents, must maintain the proper perspective of what is normal with many teenagers so that you do not lose your mind! I have often said to my teenager, "You are acting just like a 16 year old!" and she replies, "Dad, but I am 16!" Exactly!

### The Proper Plan

You have to adjust your parenting plan for your teenager. No longer is it acceptable for you to lay out their clothes for school, make their bed, and send them off with a "My Little Pony" lunch pail. Not cool! Meaning: they need to be treated like young adults. This involves added responsibility, freedom, and respect. Parents have to begin the process of "letting them go" and have a plan to give them:

**Roots:** Family memories, character training, life skills, and a Biblical foundation. These roots must be deep enough for them to withstand the storms of the adult world. *Memories* involve time with the family, vacation, holidays, laughter, and pictures. *Character training* involves majoring on the majors of honesty, trust, integrity, and purity. *Life skills* involve conflict resolution, communicating your thoughts and feelings, keys to finding and being a good friend and what to look for in a future spouse. A *Biblical foundation* involves God's redemption, reliability of scripture, how to share my faith, tithe, prayer, etc.

**Wings:** Your teenager was designed to eventually fly on their own. They must be taught to fly before they leave the nest though. This is started by giving them responsibilities along with the consequences of not following through with them. Have a plan to teach them: how to balance a checkbook, the dangers of credit cards, doing their own laundry, how to say "no" to peer pressure, tips for a job interview, cook, etc. Think of what they need to succeed as an adult and give them the tools necessary for when they need them. Help them not just fly but soar when the time comes for them to fly on their own.

### The Proper Attitude

Teenagers often get in trouble because of their bad attitudes. Parents can also have attitudes that need to be adjusted. Having the proper attitude about them and with them is vital to having a healthy relationship with your teenager.

**About Them:** The proper attitude parents should have about all of their children is this: *They are not yours!* They belong to God and we are just stewards of them. We need to remember that they are "moral free agents" who will eventually decide, on their own, whether or not they will follow God. This is both healthy and scary. In the time we have them under our roof, we must do all we can to point them in the right direction and be positive and consistent role models for them. Although their friends are powerful influences in their lives, parents, by far, are the most influential people in their life!

**With Them:** Respect is vital for a healthy relationship with your teenager. They need to respect you but you also must respect them. Ask for their input, honor their privacy \*, find out what things they enjoy and engage them there. As they get older expand their freedom as they prove that they can handle more. Give them extra privileges as they mature and grow up.

One final piece of advice: encourage, encourage, encourage! The teenage years are often filled with doubt, fear, and insecurity. Be their rock and encourage them at every turn. Breathe courage into them as they zip across the adolescent canyon. As encouragement is oxygen to their soul!

\* I have often been asked about guidelines for privacy with teenagers. I believe if a parent has any suspicion that their teenager is involved in anything that would harm them, the parent should investigate and take action if needed. After all...you are the parent and are accountable to God for them!

## Going Further – Resources

### Recommended Books:

- *Hurt: Inside Today's Teenager* by Dr. Chap Clark
- *Emotionally Healthy Teenagers* by Jay Kessler
- *After You Drop them Off* by Jeremy Clark
- *Teaching Your Kids the Truth About Consequences* by Daniel Hahn
- *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and Why it Matters* by David Kinnaman

### Books for Girls:

- *Every Thought Captive: Battling the Toxic Beliefs That Separate Us From the Life We Crave* by Jerusha Clark
- *Lies Young Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free* by Dannah Gresh and Nancy Leigh DeMoss

### Books for Guys:

- *Every Young Man's Battle: Strategies for Victory in the Real World of Sexual Temptation* by Stephen Arterburn
- *Don't Waste Your Life* by John Piper

### Recommended Websites:

- [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org) An easy to use site that contains answers to thousands of theological and biblical questions.
- [www.cpyu.org](http://www.cpyu.org) The Center for Parent and Youth Understanding

### Recommended Audio:

- *Fathers and Sons* (Men's Fraternity) March 3, 2009 can be listened to or downloaded from our Men's Fraternity page at [www.silverdalebaptist.com](http://www.silverdalebaptist.com)
- *Fathers and Daughters* (Men's Fraternity) March 10, 2009 can be listened to or downloaded from our Men's Fraternity page at [www.silverdalebaptist.com](http://www.silverdalebaptist.com)