

Teenagers (The Parent Trap)

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Recommended reading: Age of Opportunity by Paul Tripp

1. As a parent, Christ must be YOUR first priority in YOUR LIFE. Many parents have goals of:
 - Comfort (I want life that is easier, more peaceful, and a little more predictable)
 - Appreciation (“Is this the thanks I get for all my hard work?”)
 - Success (Do you realize how your behavior is making me look in the eyes of others?)
 - Control (Encounters with teens become power struggles like king of the hill)
2. Focusing on behavior will not bring lasting change. Lasting change will only come when thoughts and motives of the heart are addressed. We must go beyond the rhetorical question “What were you thinking?” and truly get them to voice what is/was running through their minds.
3. The highest agenda most teenagers have is this: “I just want to be happy.” This is a moving target since what makes them happy changes frequently. In addition they usually chase happiness in places that will only lead to sorrow. No individual can be happy unless he/she sees their lives embedded in Christ and lives out of gratitude for being in Him.
4. Teens are not looking for wisdom or correction.
 - Teens tend to be defensive
 - Teens tend to want to engage parents in debate when parents bring up any subject considered controversial by the teen. In fact, just when you wondered if they had lost their ability to reason, they turn into Harvard lawyers
 - Teens tend to be very self-protective. They retreat to their rooms and build a moat around it.
 - Teens tend to be selective listeners as well as legalists, doing only what you say while disregarding the spirit of the law
 - Teens tend to push the envelope
 - Teens are not always wise in their choice of companions, but they will defend them to the end
 - Teens are hormones in tennis shoes
 - Teens are shockingly present focused
 - Teens are more focused on the physical than the spiritual as a general rule

SO NOW THAT WE HAVE STATED THE OBVIOUS, WHAT SHOULD WE AS PARENTS DO?

5. Set Godly Goals (REMEMBER: You can't set goals for your teens that you don't pursue yourself)
 - a. Build in wisdom and drive out foolishness
 - b. Teach them convictions
 - i. Based on God's will in the situations of everyday life
 - ii. Convictions are predetermined by God. We are called to obey
 - iii. Convictions don't change with circumstances
 - iv. Convictions are non-negotiable
 - c. Help them aim for a high agenda and set their sights on far reaching consequences
 - d. Model virtues for them
 - e. Live for things with eternal value
 - f. Resist over-simplification such as "evil is in things, so avoid certain things." Our primary struggle is not with what is outside, but with what is inside.
 - g. Initiate communication and pursue relationship with your teen. Be persistent.
 - h. Don't settle for non-answers from your teen (grunts, groans, or statements such as "I don't know.")
 - i. Be positive. Catch them doing things that are good – not just things that are bad.
 - j. Ask forgiveness when you blow it.

6. The Ultimate Goal
 - Psalm 27:4
 - Psalm 84:1-4, 10

If we want to point them to a living and vibrant relationship with God in which they are captivated by His glory and greatness, we must avoid:

1. Hypocrisy
2. A "Ho-Hum attitude toward the Sovereign God of the Universe
3. A lifestyle with little or no personal worship
4. A Sunday only Christianity