

“The Top Twenty List”

One of the most important services which I undertake as pastor is that of equipping Christians for Bible-based, God-honoring, fruitful parenting. That is why in my next few blogs I would like to share the top twenty principles for parenting teens. I hope in these blogs we can take some of the anxiety out of this privilege God has given to moms and dads. These blogs will come to you bathed in prayer that the Spirit of God will use them to encourage and equip you for strong parenting throughout this season of life.

Here are the first four.

1. Your home should be a place where the Bible is taught formally (family devotionals) and informally (by example and in discussions).

Dads, you should take the lead in this. Deut. 6:6-9 sets the foundation when it reads: “And these words that I command you...shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and...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...shall write them on the doorposts of your house...” (See also Proverbs 22:6; Eph. 6:4)

God saves us (Rom. 1:16; James 1:18) and grows us through His word (John 17:17), as well as equipping us for life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). What is more, this is how our children keep from conforming to the world and are transformed by the renewing of their mind (Rom. 12:1-2). All of this cries out for us to make sure that the truth of God’s Word is taught to sons and daughters through family devotions, as well as through mom and dad’s life, decisions, and in those times when teachable moments emerge.

Not only the scriptures, but also experience has convinced me that this is the most important component for raising children of all ages. I have often told dads that you don’t have to turn cartwheels or do hand stands with family devotions. Just make sure you are doing something. If you don’t know what to do or where to start, look on our church web site (mindenefc.org) Resource page at the book *The Parents’ Game Plan*. Chapter five will give you practical tips on how to do devotions and when. The bibliography at the end of the book will give devotional resources to use that are geared for jr. and sr.highers (as well as those who are younger).

Additionally, when it comes to family devotions, you must fight through the feeling that something so simple is not enough and we need an action point more complex. Understand that the example you will set for your children regarding the importance of the Bible, as well as what they learn, will make a life time and an eternity of difference.

Finally, here is a word of encouragement to single moms or those moms where a husband is not taking the lead in this matter. It appears that Timothy was spiritually impacted by his mom and grandmother in a home where, at the very least, the father was not spiritually engaged (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5). So, understand that God can work mightily through you in this area as well.

2. Pray for your children.

Pray regularly for them on your own and with your spouse. Pray for their walk with Christ, their future spouse, and their future children, especially. Also, pray for your fruitfulness in parenting and that they would have a heart for God.

Paul tells us that the natural man will never see the need for or importance of God's Word (1 Cor. 2:14) and that left to themselves, no one ever seeks after God (Rom. 3:10f.). If people are to be changed, it must be God's Spirit working in them through His word in response to prayer (cf. Eph. 6:18-20). The same is true of our children. As parents we can do nothing of eternal significance apart from Christ (John 15:5) and the primary way we appropriate His power by faith is through prayer (John 14:12-14). So, a close second place behind teaching the scriptures is bathing our children in prayer and bathing ourselves as we parent.

3. You must first look at your own lives and hearts.

Your parenting must be shaped by your walk with Christ and your knowledge of God. Parenting is not just about learning parenting techniques. It is first and foremost about who you are.

Before God through Moses tells Israel to teach their children, He first tells them "And these words that I command you...shall be on your heart." (Deut. 6:6) We must first take in, believe, and live out the Word before teaching our children. This is not only true because it is imperative for us to set an example for them. It is also crucial because whether or not we parent in faith, love, and wisdom, or in fear, frustration, and foolishness will be largely determined by our knowledge of and walk with Christ. That is why, as we seek to give you guidance for parenting teens, we cannot simply give you parenting techniques. We must also encourage you to grow your walk with Christ and your passion for Him. Without this, all the techniques in the world will do no good. So, pursue hard after God!

4. You retain responsibility to disciple your teens.

What this looks like is that the older they become, the more you should move in the direction of being a coach. As a coach you remain intentional in guiding them toward Christ-like adulthood. Your intentional discipling of children through the teen years must include a gradual launching of them and a gradual letting go. That means that to exercise the same passion and intentionality with your seventeen year old that you did with your seven year old will require a different approach and a new hat to wear for you.

Joyfully passing on the Baton with you,
Tom