

Developing A Heart For God In Our Teenagers

Ephesians 6:4 "... bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom..." (knowledge 1:7)

Psalms 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart...such is the generation of those who seek him."



Godly Instruction:

Teaching: causing another to know (knowledge/mind)

Training: causing another to do (skills/shapes habits)

Which comes first? Can they be separated?

The Problem:

It is the desire of every Christian parent to raise their children up in the knowledge of God so that through their teen years and into their young adult years their kids are genuinely excited about their personal relationship with God. Why is this not the case with so many Christian families? How do Christian parents who love God raise kids who are spiritually disinterested? What wasn't passed on? What teaching was missing in the home? What influences made a greater impact on the life of those teenagers than the spiritual foundation of their parents? You can't give away something you personally don't possess. Many teenagers hit college & never to return to church. Why?

Generation Decline: (Israel)

1st generation - experienced God first hand (Moses, Exodus)

2nd generation - second hand religion/loss of distinctiveness (Joshua, Conquest) ("heard about" parent's faith/Deut. 8)

3rd generation - rejected/forgot God (Judges 2:10-12,16,17,19)

Our Main Duty As Parents Is To Train And Instruct Our Teenagers In The Lord:

Deuteronomy 4:9,10 "Be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them... hear my words so that they may teach them to their children."

Deuteronomy 6:2,6-9 "...so that you, your children, and their children after them may fear the Lord your God...by keeping all his decrees... so that you may enjoy long life.... These words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 11:18-20 "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children..."

Deuteronomy 29:29 "...the things revealed belong to us and to our children... that we may follow all the words of this law."

Deuteronomy 31:12,13 "...so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God..."

Psalms 78:3-8 "What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him."

Titus 2:3,4 “Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.”

1 Thessalonians 2:11,12 “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God...”

2 Timothy 3:14-17 “Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

What Hinders Us As Parents From Passing On Our Spiritual Convictions To Our Children?

- We spend so little time together as a family (barrenness of busy lives /substitute parents/electronic parents). A lifestyle of separation affects our ability to nurture our teenagers as God desires. You can not disciple or mentor someone you are seldom around.
- We talk so little as a family about God and what He has done in our lives. (fast food Christianity)
- We have delegated the teaching of our teenagers to Sunday School teachers, youth pastors, Christian Schools, grandparents, & Christian videos.
- Church, personal Bible study, and personal holiness have become somewhat optional (Hebrews 10:24).
- We have become secularized by the prevailing culture, we have lost our distinction/saltiness. (Deut. 7:26; 8:10-12 Lev. 18:3-5)
- We live a life of contradiction. (Ti. 1:16; Matt. 15:8; 23:3,23,25,27,28) (inconsistency, double standard, hypocrisy)

Questions About Influence:

Culture sets the pace (style, technology), defines (morality, marriage, sexuality, what is natural/normal)

When teenagers are not present with parents, parents are still responsible for what the teen is being taught in their absence. Who is the major influences in your teen’s life? How is the secular culture influencing your teenager? What are the outside

influences teaching your teen when you are not around? (school, friends, TV/movies, music, magazines, internet, books)
How do you counter unbiblical thinking your teenager is exposed to?
How are you providing a Christ-centered education for your teen?
How can we as parents guard and protect our teens to avoid either extreme: isolation –v- assimilation/secular/carnal?

Evaluation Questions For Parents:

1. Is your life as you live it before your kids a validation or a contradiction of God's Truth? (Luke 6:46; 1 Jn. 2:6)
2. Are you a stumbling block or a signpost to your kids' future faith?
3. Do you regularly worship God together as a family?
4. Do your kids reflect your personal values/priorities/spiritual health? (Kids are great mirrors.)
5. How often do you read the Bible together or share something about God with your kids?
6. What deep spiritual truths have you taught to your kids?
7. If a person came into your home, would they know you were a believer? What visible symbols would they see? What visible signs would point otherwise?
8. Do you know for certain that your teenager is saved? What is the visible evidence they know Christ as Savior and Lord? Have they professed their faith in Christ publicly in baptism? How is God's Truth reflected in the choices your teens are making?
9. How do your teens reflect the character of Christ? How do you?
10. How are you improving in your knowledge of God so you are able to teach your teenagers diligently? (Heb. 5:11-14; Col. 3:16)
11. How often do your kids see you reading your Bible?

Suggestions To Instruct Your Teenagers In The Lord:

- Turn off the TV and spend some quality time together as a family.
- Read the Bible and pray together as a family before the kids go to bed. (not just at meals)(discuss what you read)(Proverbs)
- Memorize Scripture together (put Scripture to music).
- View Christian videos/websites together and discuss their content. Apologetics (debates); Creation/Evolution Debate
- Sing together (use your musical gifts together as a family)
- Read to your kids autobiographies of godly people.
Jesus Freaks by DC Talk
- Read Christian books together and discuss their content.
Emotional Purity by Heather Paulsen
Boy Meet Girl by Joshua Harris
When God Writes Your Love Story
Do Hard Things by the Harris brothers

Sex Is Not The Problem – Lust Is by Joshua Harris

- Guard your home from anything that would erode Biblical standards (music, TV, video, internet, cable) You are the gatekeepers. How are you protecting your home from destructive influences?
- Talk about Youth group lessons with your kids around the dinner table. (eat together)
- Express verbal thanks for what God has done in your lives together. Admit your areas of weakness and point to God's grace.
- Make your home a visible demonstration of your love for Christ!
- Practice hospitality.
- Sit together as a family in church! Serve together at church.
- Sponsor a child from Compassion or go on a mission trip together.
- Take your teenager with you when you witness. Let them see real Christianity lived out through your life.

Challenge To Parents: Dewey Bertollini Back To The Heart Of Youth

Work "How can we exert a godly influence if we ourselves are not godly? Answer: "We can't." How can we set a godly standard if we ourselves are not godly? Answer: "We can't." How can we communicate a godly message if we ourselves are not godly? Answer: "we can't." "The young people whom God has committed to our spiritual oversight will never develop such a heart if we do not possess one ourselves."

Developing A Heart For God: (1 Timothy 4:12 "Living Proof")

What does a heart for God look like in a teenager?

- Fear/love of God. Desire for true worship & bringing God glory
- Hunger for God's Word. Desire to mature and apply Truth
- Burden for lost people. Desire to share Christ with unbelievers
- Hatred of sin. Desire for righteousness/obedience/godliness
- Love for God's people. Desire to pursue Christian friendships
- Focus on others rather than self. Desire to serve
- Open to talk about spiritual things. Desire to know/teachable

(Read p.180 Age of Opportunity by Paul Tripp)

"We want God to use us to develop in our teenagers a personal pursuit of God, a seriousness about relationship with him that is internally motivated. This teenager will be a spiritual self-starter. He will not need to be coerced or manipulated. He will involve himself in spiritual things because he genuinely wants to, because they are important to him. What we are describing is a personal pursuit of God. Pursuit has to do with running after something. This teenager is a seeker. He is hungry. He is looking for situations, locations and relationships that will help him to do what is most important to him – to know God. He will find time. He will go out of his way. He will be decisive and intentional in

his faith. He will be open and teachable. He will not be looking for excuses for missing a service or a Bible Study. He will read, study, meditate, and memorize. He will independently, of his own volition, run after God."

If teenagers don't hate sin, they won't run from it. How do they view their sin/other's sin?

We need to move our teens from head knowledge to a personal heart conviction and application of Biblical truth/action (Ja. 1:22-25).

They need to think Biblically)(2 Cor. 10:5; Col. 2:8; Rom. 12:2)

They need to internalize Biblical convictions (unpressured, independently, with personal restraint, as second nature)(Prov. 4:23; 20:5)

Luke 10:27 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind..." (Deut. 6:5; 11:13)

2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."

1 Samuel 16:7 "...The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1 Samuel 13:14 "the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart."

1 Chronicles 28:9 "...acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with whole-hearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever."

- What is keeping teenagers from having a heart for God?
 - Distraction
 - Neglect
 - Love the world (1 Jn. 2:15)
 - Wrong priorities/empty pursuits
 - Un-confessed sin

Training Teens In Godly Wisdom And Character:

Parents responsibility is to impart wisdom to their children: Proverbs 1:2-8; 2:1-12; 3:1,2; 4:1-7,10-13,20; 5:1,2; 6:20,21,23; 7:1; 9:10

Teach Them Diligently:

- To fear God (Psalms 51:3,4)
 - Psalms 111:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 1:7,29-31; 2:5,6; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:16,26,27; 15:16; 16:6; 19:23)
- To guard their heart and mind

Proverbs 4:23 "Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life." (Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5)

Proverbs 23:7 "As he thinks in his heart, so is he."

Psalms 101:3,4 "I will set before my eyes no vile thing." "I will have nothing to do with evil."

- To obey their parents
(Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; Prov. 4:1-4; 6:20-23)
- To choose their friends wisely (1 Cor. 15:33)
Proverbs 13:20 "He who walks with wise men grows wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm."
Proverbs 12:26 "A righteous man is cautious in friendship."
(Prov. 1:10-19; 2:10-15; 4:14,15; 14:7; 22:24; 23:17; 19:4; 24:1)
* Children are more prone to follow a bad example than to set a good example.
- To control the flesh (youthful lust/unrighteous desire)
(Prov. 6:23,24,25,32,33; Titus 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Thess. 4:3-7)
Proverbs 20:11 "Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right."
- To honor God with their bodies and be faithful to protect their future marriage. (Prov. 18:22; 5:15-19; Hebrews 13:4)
- To control their tongue and speak the truth in love (Prov. 4:24; 8:6-8; 10:19,32; 12:18,19,22; 13:3; 15:1,7; 17:27,28; 18:21; 21:23)
- To work hard (Prov. 6:6-11; 10:4,22; 13:4,21; 14:23; 28:20)
- To manage their money wisely, stewardship, and about giving to the Lord. (Prov. 3:9; 10:4,5,22; 11:24,28; 13:8,11,22; 14:23; 15:27; 21:5,17,20; 22:1,7,26,27; 23:4,5)
- To treat others as you would want to be treated. To love your neighbor as yourself. To love your enemies. (Prov. 3:27,28; 25:21,22; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44-48; 22:39; 1 Jn. 2:9-11; 4:19,20)

** It does no good to teach our teenager sound wisdom and then live a life that contradicts what we are teaching. Solomon's content of instruction to his son was sound. He failed in his example of living out what he knew to be true. Rehoboam rejected the wisdom of his father (1 Kg. 11:1,2,9-14;12:6-13) and split the kingdom.

The Call For Children To Be Teachable:

Proverbs 1:8 "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."

Proverbs 23:22 "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."

Proverbs 4:1-7,20-27; 5:1,2; 6:20,21; 7:3; 9:8,9; 12:15; 15:32; 19:27

Remember, there is hope and a chance to begin again. The childhood years and the future parent-teen years can be a joy, not a disaster, if we don't lose heart and are faithful to discipline and instruct our children in the Lord! Every day is a new day for obedience. Don't miss your opportunity. Proverbs 23:25 "May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice."

Parent Hall Of Fame: 2 Timothy 1:5 "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded now lives in you also." (4:14,15)
You are your children's primary spiritual guide. Never back away from that role and responsibility or pass it to anyone else.

"We must teach our children to love the Scriptures. We must teach the promises along with the warnings. We must teach the perfect sacrifice of Christ for sin along with the description of our sinfulness. We must let our children hear how God's law is sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. By it we are warned, and by keeping it there is great reward (Ps. 19:10,11). The most effective way to teach our children to love the Scriptures is to love it ourselves. They will see us longing to read it, hear it, and understand it, and learn that it is valuable." (Instructing A Child's Heart, Tripp, p. 21)

Closing: How are you passing the baton to the next generation?
Passing Zone (limited time/space – danger of disqualification)
(example of track relay race)

Deuteronomy 32:47 "These are not idle words... they are your life! By them you will live long..." Joshua 24:14,15 "... if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."