

# Family Ministry – Training Teenagers

**Introduction** – Surpassing the myth today that spanking young children equates with child abuse is the myth that teenagers must rebel against their parents. Our youth-worship culture only promotes the lie. The blight of the modern evangelical church is it's catering to the folly of youth rather than commanding the respect of elders. What we want to do is think biblically about this time of life for our sons and daughters and seek how we might best shepherd them as parents.

**Natural Rebels?** (Rom 6:1-14) – Teenagers are not exempt from obedience to God. There is no genetic or psychological reason that justifies sin. Paul teaches here that you do not have to sin in order to grow in grace. What a teenager does have is more knowledge, imagination, strength, and a host of new temptations. One result of this is that your teenager needs a father and a mother more than ever before even though he or she looks more self-sufficient.

**Remember the Goal** (Psalm 127:3-5, Mal 2:15) – These individuals are not autonomous beings, but members of covenant households who are to mature in their understanding of the promises and obligations laid upon them. The goal is faithful, godly offspring, standing at your side against the darkness and walking in the light. The war is not with flesh and blood but against the seed of the serpent manifested in our world of unbelief (Eph 6:12, 2 Cor 10:3-6). We are called to call our children, as they mature, into that battle with us.

**Loving Teenagers** – What is the second greatest commandment? And who is your neighbor? The answer is the teenager living in your home, who often appears to be less lovable than when he was a cute, little toddler. 1 Tim 5:8 teaches us that the commandments of God are even more important in the home. Loving them should be a response of our obedience to the Lord, and not how we are feeling toward them. Therefore...

**Forgiveness** (Col 3:13) – They appear more responsible, and so their sins or shortcomings seem somehow more personally offensive. You must discipline for the sin, but not take it personally.

**Affection** – Pour it on, and don't wait for them to ask for it. Sure, it is different now – but all the more reason you must pour it on in appropriate ways. They are young enough to be insecure, but old enough to hide it from you.

**Be a Parent, not a Peer** – Don't try to be their best friend. Be their father or mother. We have this mixed up in our egalitarian society and in our relationship towards God our Father. There should be intimacy, but not equality. At the same time, fathers are not preachers and mothers are not lecturers. They are fathers and mothers and instruction comes throughout the day (Deut 6).

**Spreading Their Wings** (Deut 32:10-12) – This fatherly-picture of God towards His people shows us how we should act towards our growing children. We will be teaching them the necessity of taking responsibility. This should be done in an atmosphere of willingness to sacrifice for them.

**Training For Maturity** – There is too much here, so we will simply touch on several principles.

**Fear God** (Prov 1:7) – They don't need flashy testimonies. They need faithful obedience – that will be flashy enough in today's culture. Do not trust their regeneration to a slender thread – “she made a commitment when she was...”, or “he was baptized...”.

**Adorned With Instruction** (Prov 1:8-9) – They must learn to consciously seek their parents' instruction and wisdom. And part of that should be a rigorous pursuit of education.

**Avoid Evil Companions** (Prov 1:10-14) – They must learn to choose their friends, and you must have oversight over this (1 Cor 15:33).

**Going Pert** (Prov 27:17) – Learn to enjoy a good argument, showing respect to elders, learning to listen, when to be vigorous, etc. You want them thinking....

**Encourage Submission/Oppose Over-dependence** – This is difficult. There is a time for doing what you are told, and there is a time to do what you think is right even if you were not told. As they grow up, you want less restrictions, not more.

**New Forms of Discipline** – At some point, spanking is out. But sin must still have consequences and you want to magnify those consequences for the sake of teaching. Do not subsidize sin, rebellion, or laziness, with free room and board (2 Thess 3:10). It may mean losing privileges (keys to car, tonight's dinner, etc.), but these things should not be 'grounding'. Restitution should be paid, public confessions for public sins need to be made, and all with a thankful spirit.

**Forms of Courtesy** – This is 'love in the trifles', and is a key to maturity. For the teen, it is a physical way to remember who they are. This covers learning not to talk too much, table manners, personal hygiene, how to use humor.

**Boys** – Need to be taught to be covenant heads. It should be practiced on how they treat their mother (with great respect) and their sisters (with caring devotion). And a boy who has no time for little children is not prepared for marriage.

**Girls** – Need to learn how to live under and alongside a covenant head, willing to receive physical affection, emotional protection and sustained leadership from her father, she knows she is looking for a man she can respect as much as her Dad. And in that security, she learns how to give herself away for the sake of others. In that security as well, she learns the importance of godly modesty.

**Imitate the Message** (Deut 7:9-11) – In summary, everything a teenager does is manifesting the immense power of the blessings of the promise upon the one who keeps God's commands, or it is manifesting the great curses promised just as strongly to those who reject God. Make sure both parts of the message are clearly stated, imitated, and promoted in your home.

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