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SUCCESS WITH TEENAGERS

21 ways to win your teen's
love and admiration

THINGS AREN'T FOREVER— CHILDREN ARE!

Mother or toddler—
Who's the teacher here?

ENDTIME TIMELINE

Key events of the future at a
glance

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Personally speaking

“When I was a boy of 14,” the American author and humorist Mark Twain (1835–1910) recalled, “my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.” His father would probably tell the story differently!

This seems to be a timeless truth: Raising teenagers could be the greatest challenge most parents ever face. Even with 12 years to get ready for it, few parents feel prepared. Some sink under the weight. Some abdicate. Some hold their breath and hope for the best. Some are too busy with other things to even notice what is happening to their children. But other parents see the need, redouble their commitment, search out solutions to their teens’ problems, and guide them through those turbulent years.

Being a parent of teens isn’t easy, but any parent can get all the help they need, one day and one problem at a time, if they know where to turn. God, who made us all, also set up the system by which we grow and mature—and He doesn’t make mistakes. He knows what each of us need at each stage of our lives and equips us accordingly.

So if you’re a parent and are finding it increasingly difficult to meet your growing children’s needs, turn to the One who cannot fail. For every problem, He has a solution. For every question, He has the answer. For every seemingly insurmountable obstacle, He will make a way over, around, or through. For every sacrifice you will ever make for your children, He has a reward waiting. He loves you and your children, and He’s always there for you.

Keith Phillips

For the *Activated* family

What a parent's love can do

A partially deaf boy came home from school one day carrying a note from officials at the school. The note suggested that the parents take the boy out of school, claiming that he was “too stupid to learn.”

The boy's mother read the note and said, “My son Tom isn't ‘too stupid to learn.’ I'll teach him myself.” And so she did.



When Tom died many years later, the people of the United States of America paid tribute to him by turning off the nation's lights for one full minute. You see, this Tom had

invented the light bulb—and not only that, but also motion pictures and the record player. In all, Thomas Edison had more than one thousand patents to his credit.

—GOD'S LITTLE DEVOTIONAL BOOK FOR MOMS

* * *

“My mother was the making of me. She was so true and so sure of me, I felt that I had someone to live for—someone I must not disappoint. The memory of my mother will always be a blessing to me.”

—THOMAS A. EDISON (1847–1931)

When he was a teenager, Jim worked for a grocer in Hamilton, Missouri. He liked the work and had plans to make a career of it. One night he came home and proudly told his family about his sly employer. The grocer had a practice of mixing low quality coffee with the expensive brand and thus increasing his profit. Jim laughed as he told the story at the supper table.

His father didn't see anything funny about the practice. “Tell me,” he said, “if the grocer found someone palming off an inferior article on him for the price of the best, do you think he would think they were just being sly, and laugh about it?”

Jim could see his father was disappointed in him. “I guess not,” he replied. “I guess I just didn't think about it that way.”

Jim's father instructed him to go to the grocer the next day and collect whatever money was due him and tell the grocer he wouldn't be working for him any longer. Jobs were not plentiful in Hamilton, but Jim's father would rather his son be unemployed than associated with a crooked businessman.

J.C. Penny came that close to becoming a grocer. Instead he founded the retail chain that still bears his name. He shares the secret of his success in the title of his autobiography: *Fifty Years with the Golden Rule*.

“Go home and love your family.”

—MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA (1910–1997), WHEN RECEIVING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE IN 1979, IN REPLY TO THE QUESTION “WHAT CAN WE DO TO PROMOTE WORLD PEACE?”



There's no question about it. Raising teenagers is one of life's special challenges. The teen years are difficult, and often teens will "share" those difficulties with those living around them.

Their sometimes crusty, disrespectful, or rebellious exteriors can be intimidating and leave parents in a state of shocked confusion, wondering where they went wrong. This is when many parents, not knowing how to try to help their teens, pull back. That's a tragic mistake, because all the while, inside, their teens are desperate for direction, encouragement, love, support, understanding, and guidance. Teens have an intense need to feel secure and loved unconditionally. They need to know someone notices their problems and is concerned enough to help them at any cost. It's not an easy ride by any means, but parents who hang on and keep loving and reaching out to their teens are far more likely to see them through to victory than those who take a less active role.

Here are 21 tried and true ways to improve your relationship with your teen.

1 Accept your changing role.

The transition from childhood to young adulthood is so gradual that many parents don't see the need to stop treating their teens like children until it's long overdue. Teens are in the process of discovering their own personalities, abilities, and goals, and separating themselves to a greater extent from their parents is part of that process. Teens want to be treated as emerging adults and respected for the individuals they are. In their quest for independence, teens put up their guard against their parents' "parenting." If you can learn to treat your teens as friends when appropriate, they'll be much more likely to drop their guard.

2 Put yourself in your teen's place.

Feelings of insecurity are normal during the teen years. Teens are no longer children, but neither are they fully adults. Their bodies are going through huge changes, and their emotions and hormones are running wild. They are



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BROOKES

ways to win your teen's love and admiration



learning to handle more independence and the responsibility that comes with it, and they face decisions and pressures they've never faced before. Remembering these things should help you to not take their emotional and verbal outbursts personally. If you sincerely try to empathize, you'll gain a better understanding of them and their problems and they will feel they have an ally in you.

3 Keep your cool. Don't allow yourself to be offended by some of the outlandish things they say or do. Sometimes teens say and do odd things just to see what kind of reaction they'll get. Sometimes they're trying to express what's going on inside, but don't know how or don't understand themselves. Other times they're simply being self-centered, as teens tend to be. Your getting upset or expressing shock or horror will only make matters worse. Learn to roll with the punches. If your teens know you will try to understand and sympathize when they vent themselves, they will feel safe around you.

4 Respect your teen. Respect is a sign of faith. When teens are having a hard time having faith in themselves, a little respect can boost their confidence, spur them on, and help them succeed. Conversely, if they think you *don't* have faith in them, they'll be much more likely to give up before reaching their potential.

5 Don't tease or belittle. When your teen is feeling vulnerable—which is most of the time—he or she is likely to take things said in jest personally and consider it ridicule rather than innocent fun.

6 Be positive and supportive. Most teens feel inferior in some way or another, and their negative view of themselves often spills over into their actions. Try to remain consistently positive and supportive in your reactions. You can't gloss over serious problems or wrongdoing, of course, but you can put a positive spin on almost any situation by talking mostly in terms of solutions and lessons behind

Inside, teens are desperate for direction, encouragement, love, support, understanding, and guidance.

them, rather than expressing anger or disappointment. Dwelling on the positive is a sign of unconditional love, which counteracts low self-esteem. Praise your teen every chance you get.

7 Avoid unnecessary rules. Too many rules and restrictions can cause almost any teen to rebel. At the same time, some rules are needed because it's unwise to give your teen complete free rein. When you feel a new rule is necessary, try to discuss and decide together, rather than dictate. Explain your reasoning, hear your teen out, and get his or her agreement on the terms and consequences for breaking the rule, as much as possible.

8 Give your teen responsibility. Teens need guidelines, but they also want to be independent and feel trusted. Trust your teen with adult responsibilities, and he or she will try harder to act like an adult. A wise person once said, "Treat people as though they were what they ought to be, and you help them become what they are capable of being." Your teens will make mistakes, as everyone does, but when they see that doesn't diminish your love and faith in them, they will keep trying and eventually succeed.

9 Earn their confidence by being confidential. Teenagers are sensitive about the things they are going through. No one likes to be the subject of gossip or careless

conversation—especially teens. When teens confide in you, they like to know that what they say will be kept as confidential as possible. It may seem like a small matter to you, but it may be a very big matter to them. Betray their confidence, and it will probably be a long time before they confide in you again.

10 Pray. Whenever you aren't sure what to say or how to react when your teen is having a problem, pray. Send up a silent prayer for wisdom, asking the Lord to give you His understanding and solutions.



11 Spend time together. Many parents spend a lot less time with their teens than they did when their children were younger. That seems natural since teens need less supervision than children and teens want to assert their independence, but it's often a mistake. Teens need lots of support, guidance, and fresh challenges. They need someone to coach, mentor, and teach them, and no one is in a better position to meet that need

than their parents. No other investment will form stronger bonds between parent and teen or pay higher dividends.

12 Admit your own shortcomings. Teens hate double standards. It takes humility to admit your shortcomings and to apologize when you've made a mistake or you've hurt your teens, but being honest about your own faults and failures will help your teens be honest and open with you about theirs. It will help you and them put their problems in perspective.

13 Have a sense of humor. There's a time to be serious and focus on long-term goals, but there's also a time to lighten up. Teens admire adults who know how to have fun and enjoy life. Just make sure your humor is in good taste and not at someone

else's expense, because teens emulate adults whom they admire.

14 Express your love. Teens may not like to be kissed and cuddled the way they did when they were younger, but we never outgrow our need to feel loved. Try not to let a day go by without you putting your love for your teen into words and backing up those words with actions.

15 Listen. Every teen needs a confidant—a true friend they know they can trust with their innermost secrets. Teens have so many things going on inside that it can be quite confusing, yet often they're afraid to talk about it for fear of being misunderstood, ridiculed, or considered naive. Take time to hear them out. They need to feel that someone understands (but avoid “when I was your age” responses, which most teens hate to hear). A common mistake parents make is not listening long enough and therefore jumping to the wrong conclusions. Rather than “showing them the light,” gently guide them to come to the right conclusions themselves as they articulate how they feel.

16 Befriend your teen's friends. Show a sincere interest in your teen's friends. Look for the best in them, and they will probably consider you the coolest parent they know. Then don't be surprised if your house becomes the main hangout for your teen and his or her circle of friends. The noise level and food bill may go up, but the trade-off in knowing where they are and what they're doing will be worth it.

17 Forgive and forget. Face it—your teens will make mistakes for which they will need to ask and receive forgiveness. Like the rest of us, teens often feel they can't confess their mistakes or wrongdoing because they will forever be labeled by their mistakes. They need to be

convinced of your love and readiness to forgive and forget and start anew.

18 Have conviction. If you're not careful, parental pride, emotional attachments, and the instinctive desire to protect your child can cause you to give in, go easy, pull back, or run to the rescue at the wrong time. You may even feel their anger, frustration, and rebellion as your own. That's when it's important to remember that your teen is learning to exercise good judgment, and that whether or not they act like it, they will take their cues from you. If you don't have the conviction to do what is right, despite some unpleasant consequences, chances are they won't either. Sometimes “tough love” is the best love. Teens are very idealistic and will respect you more if you stand up for your convictions, even when it's hard on them or they don't agree, than if you're too lenient.

19 Be genuine. Teenagers can smell a fake a mile away! Even if you're sincerely trying to relate to them, if you're trying too hard and laying it on too thick, they won't take you seriously. The secret is to be natural. Teens don't want to be patronized or cajoled, but they do want friends—people they know they can count on and feel comfortable with. If you accept them the way they are, they will feel comfortable around you and accept you the way you are.

20 Be willing to change. You may need to work on changing a few habits or the way you react to things. Why not let this be the motivation you need to get out of the rut you've been in, or to make changes in areas you've known for a while that you need to? It's often easier to change for someone else's sake than solely our own. What better reason could you have to strive to be a better person in every way? Seize it!



21 Point them to Jesus. The teen years are turbulent times. It's like being lost at sea in a small boat during a storm. Be a lighthouse, pointing your teens to the safe harbor—Jesus. No matter how much you love your teens, Jesus alone can answer their deepest questions and meet the deepest needs of their spirit. You're not their Savior; Jesus is. You can't be with them every second or rescue them from everything, but you can point them to the One who can. ♦

PARENTING *From the heart*

Things Are Not Forever, Children Are

BY RUTH CORTEJOS

We parents want our children to be liked and get along well with other children. I certainly did when my first child, Danae, was beginning to play with other kids. I tried to teach her how to interact lovingly, and she

did well in most aspects—making friends, not fighting, being considerate and helpful, and even letting me play with the other children. Teaching her to share her toys was the biggest challenge.

To give her more opportunities to learn this,

we started inviting other children her age over to play. That small step was the key to helping Danae discover that it's fun to share with others—a lesson I needed to brush up on myself, as it turned out.

One evening Danae had invited a friend, Natalie, to play with her. Natalie was one of her more frequent playmates, and their favorite thing to play with was the brightly illustrated deck of cards from a children's card game called Go Fish. Although the girls were too young to follow all the rules and play the game as intended, they liked looking at the pictures and finding the ones that matched.

That evening, after Natalie left, Danae came to me and said, "Mommy, I'd like to give these to

Natalie. They're her favorites." She held up three or four cards from the Go Fish game.

I tried to explain that I didn't want her to give them away because then our set wouldn't be complete, but Danae persisted. "But I really *want* her to have them!"

Again I tried to explain. "Danae, these cards belong to our Go Fish game. If you give them to Natalie, we won't have them anymore and the set will be missing pieces."

"That's okay, Mommy, because I have the other cards."

I thought perhaps she didn't understand that when she gave something away, it was gone for good, so I tried again to dissuade her. "If you give those to Natalie, you can't go and ask for them back tomorrow. Once you give them to her, they'll be hers."

A look of concern came over Danae's face. For a moment I was happy that she seemed to understand. Then she smiled and said, "Well, that's okay, I want her to have them anyway."

What could I say to that? I sat quietly for a moment and prayed. Then it came to me: I had been trying for so long to teach her to share, and now that she had learned that important lesson, I was trying to stop her. What was I doing? I was just about to make a very stupid mistake! What did it matter that our Go Fish game would be incomplete? It could be replaced, if need be. What mattered was that my daughter was learning the joy of giving, that she was thinking about others instead of herself, that she was



Danae (left) and friend, Natalie

My daughter taught me a lesson that day, and it's one that I still get tested on.

trying to make her friend happy. Isn't that what life is all about?

My daughter taught me a lesson that day, and it's one that I still get tested on. I now have three children, and fairly often one of them will come to me with a toy or stuffed animal in their hands and say they want to give it to one of their friends. My first

thought is often how I can talk them out of it, but when I stop to think about it, I always come to the same realization: Things are not forever, but children are. The values I instill in my children today will be part of who they are tomorrow. ◇

RUTH CORTEJOS IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN THAILAND.

A Parent's Prayer

Oh, heavenly Father, make me a better parent. Teach me to understand my children, to listen patiently to what they have to say, and to answer all their questions kindly. Keep me from interrupting them or contradicting them. Make me as courteous to them as I would have them be to me. Forbid that I should ever laugh at their mistakes, or resort to shame or ridicule when they displease me. May I never punish them for my own selfish satisfaction or to show my power.

Let me not tempt my child to lie or steal. And guide me hour by hour that I may demonstrate by all I say and do that honesty produces happiness.

Reduce, I pray, the meanness in me. And when I am out of sorts, help me, O Lord, to hold my tongue.

May I ever be mindful that my children are children and I should not expect of them the judgment of adults.

Let me not rob them of the opportunity to wait on themselves and to make decisions.

Bless me with the bigness to grant them all their reasonable requests, and the courage to deny them privileges I know will do them harm.

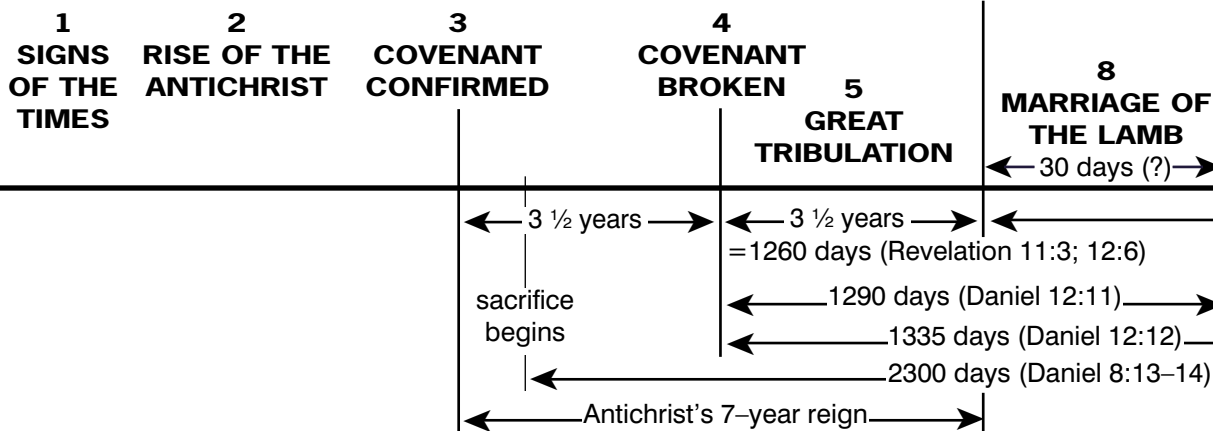
Make me fair and just and kind. And fit me, O Lord, to be loved and respected and imitated by my children. Amen.

—ABIGAIL VAN BUREN (1918–), "DEAR ABBY"

Endtime Timeline

ENDTIME INSIGHTS

BY JOSEPH CANDEL



1. SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Happenings that Jesus said would signal His return and the end of the world as we know it are taking place today (Matthew chapter 24).

2. RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST

A Devil-possessed man known as the Antichrist conspires to lead an anti-God world government (Daniel 8:23–25; 11:21,24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4).

3. CONFIRMING OF THE COVENANT

The Antichrist is welcomed as a savior when he initiates a seven-year agreement, or covenant, that temporarily brings a measure of peace and security to the world (Daniel 9:27a). This signals the start of the last seven years of man’s rule on earth.

4. BREAKING OF THE COVENANT

Halfway through his seven-year

reign, the Antichrist breaks the covenant (Daniel 9:27b), abolishes all religious worship (Revelation 13:7–8), and declares himself God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

5. GREAT TRIBULATION

The final three and a half years of his reign is the time of greatest trouble the world has ever experienced (Matthew 24:21). The Antichrist government demands that the entire world worship the Antichrist and his “image”—which could be a computerized robot—and persecutes those who refuse (Revelation 13:11–15). A mandatory economic system is put in place, by which everyone is compelled to receive the “mark of the Beast” (Revelation 13:16–18). Meanwhile, God lets loose pestilences and plagues on the Antichrist and his followers (Revelation chapter 8; 9:1–11; 11:3–6), and God’s two special Endtime prophets lead the believers in performing miracles and defying

6. NUCLEAR WAR(?)

7. RAPTURE

8. MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

the Antichrist, even as martyrs (Revelation 11:3,5–6; 12:11).

6. NUCLEAR WAR

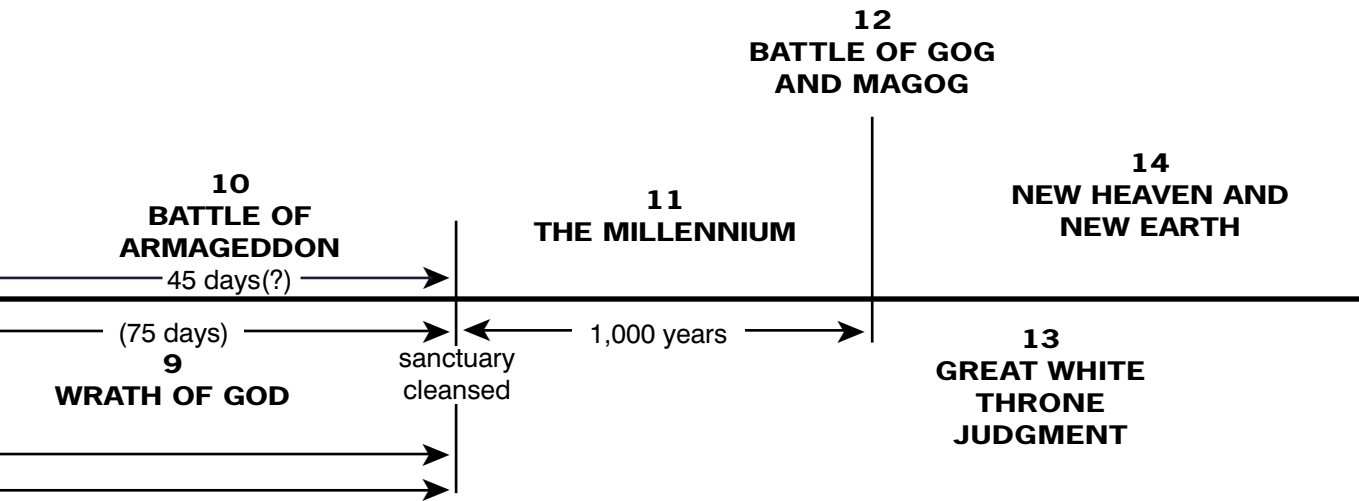
At some point, possibly toward the end of the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist and 10 “kings” who have joined forces with him will destroy “Babylon, the great whore” in a final judgment (Revelation 17:12–13,16–17; 18:2,7–8).

7. THE RAPTURE

At the end of the final three and a half years, Jesus returns to rescue His children out of this world and they receive new immortal bodies (Matthew 24:29–31; Revelation 1:7).

8. MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

In Heaven, Jesus unites with those He rescued in the Rapture, and at the Judgment Seat of Christ rewards His faithful children with eternal “crowns of life” (Revelation 19:7–9; 2:10).



9. WRATH OF GOD

The horrific plagues of the great “wrath of God” are poured upon the Antichrist and his forces (Revelation 11:18; 14:9–10; 16:1–11).

10. THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

On a plain in northern Israel, the Antichrist musters his armies for his greatest campaign against the nations that still oppose him, but Jesus and His heavenly army, including the resurrected believers from throughout the ages, return to earth to utterly destroy the Antichrist and his forces (Revelation 16:12–16; 19:11–21).

11. THE MILLENNIUM

The earth is restored (Isaiah 11:6–9; 14:7; 65:25; Hosea 2: 18), and Jesus and His saints set up the kingdom of Heaven on earth, where they rule for 1,000 years (Daniel 2:44; 7:18, 22,27; Revelation 5:10).

During this time the Devil, who plagued humankind throughout history and possessed the Antichrist, is bound and cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1–3), while those who survive the cataclysms surrounding Armageddon live on in a simpler but righteous world ruled by love (Isaiah 2:4; Revelation 2: 26; 20:4–6).

12. THE BATTLE OF GOG AND MAGOG

At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released from the bottomless pit for a “little season” and recruits followers who form an open rebellion against Jesus and His government—a rebellion that is obliterated in the Battle of Gog and Magog. The entire surface of the earth is re-created, and the Devil, along with death and Hell, is cast into “the lake of fire” (Revelation 6:14; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:7–10; 21:1).

13. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

The unsaved of all ages are resurrected, stand in judgment before God’s throne, are rewarded or punished according to their works, and assigned to their places in the hereafter (Revelation 20:11–13; 2 Peter 3: 9; 1 Timothy 2:4;).

14. THE HEAVENLY CITY AND THE NEW EARTH

God’s great heavenly city descends to the re-created earth, and God and Jesus dwell in the city with the saved (Revelation chapters 21–22).

For more detailed explanations of soon coming Endtime events, order [The Future Foretold from the Activated desk nearest you](#) (addresses on page 2), or visit the [Activated Web site: www.activated.org](#).

Q: Things have changed so much since I was growing up that I don't even know where to start in relating to and helping my teenage daughter. How can I bridge the generation gap?



A: The world *has* changed a lot in the last generation. On the surface, the generation gap appears to be widening, but appearances can be deceiving. Inter-generational differences are manifested differently from generation to generation, but the core issue remains the same: teenagers' God-given need to find their place in life.

To better relate to your daughter, try to remember how you felt at her age. If you were a typical teen, you felt awkward and unattractive in your constantly changing body. Every pimple or bad hair day was a life-altering crisis. You worried about how you fit in with your friends. You compared yourself negatively with others in your class who were more beautiful, smarter, more popular, or seemingly more self-confident. You faced bigger decisions than you had ever faced before, and knew that even bigger decisions loomed ahead:

To better relate to your daughter, try to remember how you felt at her age.

How far would you go in school? What would you do when you grew up? Who would you marry? How could *anyone* ever want to marry you?

You probably didn't understand what was happening at the time, and your daughter probably doesn't understand it now, but it's the process of discovering yourself and establishing your own identity.

At this stage in their lives, teens look to their peers and parents for clues. They constantly compare themselves with their peers to determine where they fit in, and they scrutinize their parents' attitudes, lifestyle, and values to determine whether they want to be like their parents when they become adults.

The teen years are when most children become at least a little rebellious. After all, how can they establish their own identities without cutting loose from their parents? Many parents make a difficult

Many parents make a difficult situation harder by overreacting to their teens' rebelliousness, which nearly always leads to greater rebellion and a deeper rift between the generations.

situation harder by overreacting to their teens' rebelliousness, which nearly always leads to greater rebellion and a deeper rift between the generations.

The wise parent will accept that a certain amount of rebelliousness is natural, and will understand that many of the outward changes they don't like in their teen—the outlandish clothes or hairstyle, the dreadful music, etc.—are all part of the separation process.

The wise parent also understands that experimentation is a necessary part of growing up, and that not every experiment is going to be a success. On his way to inventing the light bulb, Thomas Edison tried hundreds of combinations of materials that *didn't* work before he struck on one that *did*. Like Edison, most teens will recognize what isn't working and move on to something else. Allow your teen latitude to experiment, within bounds. "Nothing harmful to yourself or others, and nothing illegal" makes a good starting point.

Closely related to experimentation is the issue of self-control. Many teens lack self-control, mainly because they don't see any reason for it. They like to have fun, they enjoy their greater independence, and they're learning by trial and error. It's often not until they experience the consequences of poor decisions that they learn self-control—but wasn't it that way for you?

While teens want to be their own person, they're generally insecure in that new role. It's a bit like standing at the top of a high diving board for the first time: They're about to take the plunge into adulthood and wonder if they'll survive the impact.

Nothing counters that insecurity like unconditional love. Teens often act like they don't want or need their parents' love and support, and they can some-

times be downright ornery and unlovable to underscore the point. But more often than not, whether the teens realize it or not, what they're really doing is *testing* their parents' love. They seek affirmations of their parents' love, because love is an indication of value, and teens need to feel they have value. Parents who demonstrate unswerving love for their teens through thick and thin give their teens the validation they so desperately want and need.

It takes great love, patience, and self-control on the part of the parents to loosen their grip and let their teens go through the growing up process. It also takes faith—faith in their teens; faith that the values they tried to instill in their children when they were younger will now guide them to make the right choices; and faith in God, who created the process. This last point is where parents who believe in the power of prayer and have a personal connection with God through Jesus are at a great advantage; they know where to turn when they and their teens need help.

Another thing that works to believing parents' advantage is the fact that more people accept Jesus during their teen years than at any other time. Teens, in general, are seekers—pilgrims in search of truth and the meaning of life. If you or someone else can lead your daughter to Jesus—"the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)—He can put things in perspective for her like no one else. He can give her unconditional love and acceptance. He can give her peace in her heart. He can give her answers as she learns to take her problems to Him in prayer.

And once you and your daughter share a strong, living faith, you'll have more in common than ever before. Jesus is the ultimate bridge for the generation gap! ◇

PRIME TIME—FAMILY TIME!



BY SARA KELLEY

One of the most important things we can spend on children is time. It seems we parents often need to be reminded of that important principle. When our days are busy and our children are in school throughout the day, the short amount of time families have together in the evening and on holidays and weekends should be cherished and guarded as special “family time.” That’s our chance to show our children just how important and special they are to us.

How we spend our time together and how much time we spend together should be important to parents and children alike. However, it’s really up to us parents to make this time both fun and worthwhile for the kids. One thing that shows kids that they’re special to their parents is when the parents make sure those times together are not interrupted.

In many homes, the first time of the day the whole family gets together is at dinnertime. Dinner conversation is good, but it’s not enough. Some parents with strong bonds with their children have found that the best way

to ensure they stay close is by setting aside one hour after dinner as official family time and making sure it’s *quality* time. During this hour, the parents agree to not disturb one another with any other business. That way, the children know they can count on having their parents’ full attention.

Whether it’s an hour or more, it’s up to each of us parents to make a conscious effort to put aside our work and other concerns and give our children our 100 percent. It may be inconvenient or seem a sacrifice, but if we will be consistent and put the necessary effort into it, it will make a noticeable, positive difference in their lives and our kids will love us for it!

To make family time all it can be, get involved with your children. Don’t just do the same thing separately in the same room—like watching TV—but get on their level and talk with them, make conversation, find out what they’re thinking. Step out of your adult world into their world. Have fun. Relax. Learn to really enjoy your children.

If you have both younger and older

Family time will make a noticeable, positive difference in our kids lives and they will love us for it!

children, you will probably want to do different activities with each age group. Perhaps one evening Mom can play with or read to the younger children, while Dad does a special art or carpentry project with the older ones, or helps them with their homework. Then the next night the parents can switch roles. Or if you're a single parent, you may need to spend time with the younger ones first and the older ones after the younger ones are in bed. The point is to spend some quality time with each one.

If one of your children has a special aptitude or talent, such as typing, art, or playing a musical instrument, family time can be a great opportunity to help develop this talent and provide parental support at the same time. (Be sure your other children don't feel slighted.)

The main key to success is to have ideas planned out and organized in advance. You don't need lots of special skills or fancy equipment to keep your kids happy and challenged at family time. Just as your children are very special to you, *you* are very special to them. Spending time with you is what will mean the most and have the greatest lasting effect. Give it your best shot, and you and your children can all look forward to family time as a chance to do your favorite things with your favorite people! ◇



Honesty pays

One father confessed that he hadn't realized how dishonest he'd been with his son until he learned a hard lesson. His son received a very low grade in English. In spite of scoldings and extra study, it seemed the boy simply could not bring up his grade. One day he said to his father, "I guess when you went to school you got all A's in English."

"What makes you say that?" the father asked.

"Well, if you didn't do well," said the son, "you wouldn't scold me the way you do."

The way he had corrected his son was a misrepresentation of the truth. "No, the fact is that I had a really hard time with English," the father replied. "Especially spelling."

From that moment on the boy did better, freed from the impression that he was inferior and a failure. Seeing that his dad had the same problems, but succeeded, gave him hope.

—ANONYMOUS

Maturity

Maturation is an on-going process.

Philippians 3:12–13

2 Peter 1:5–10

Our speech and actions reveal the level of our maturity.

Proverbs 9:6

Proverbs 15:2

Proverbs 29:11

Ecclesiastes 10:12–13

James 3:2

We become mature when we learn to take responsibility for ourselves and others.

Lamentations 3:27

Romans 14:12

Galatians 6:2

Philippians 2:12

Steppingstones to maturity:

Proverbs 20:11

Proverbs 23:24–25

1 Corinthians 13:11

Ephesians 4:14

Titus 2:4b,6

2 Timothy 2:22

1 John 2:13b–14

Spiritual maturity depends on our connection with the Lord and His Word.

Psalm 16:8

Daniel 11:32b

Matthew 13:3–8,18–23

John 15:4–5

1 Timothy 4:15–16

2 Timothy 3:15–17



Parenting through prayer

It's not easy raising children in today's world. Many of the godly values that you want to encourage in your children are constantly being attacked by others who are going the opposite direction. You worry that even your best efforts will fail and that your children will turn their backs on the values you hold dear. I know you're tempted sometimes to give up, but don't. Your concern and care are not in vain. There's only so much that you can do, even though you try your best. But I'm capable of doing much more than you ever could, and I am here to help. I also understand your children even better than you do, and I know how to best handle their problems. I want to work with you to shape your children into the godly people you and I both want them to become.

Commit your children to Me in prayer. Through prayer you can be the better parent you want to be. Through prayer you can help protect your children from harm and unwholesome influences. Through prayer you can find My solutions to their problems. Through your prayers I can do what you can't do.

Set aside time each day to pray for your children. Each time you're faced with a troublesome issue, ask Me for the answer. Start today to be a better parent through prayer. Changes that you haven't thought possible will come to pass through the power of prayer.

