



**TEENAGERS**

# TEENAGERS

## *transitioning into adulthood*

The teenage years can be both gratifying and scary. It is gratifying to see your young child blossom into a young adult. He or she is growing and maturing into the unique person God made them to be. But of course there are also other voices attempting to pull your child away from God's best for their life. And that can be scary! We must remember the love that God has for our children, and we must also remember that he holds the whole world in his hands. His love is relentless—he never gives up in the pursuit of his children. The teenage years may prove to be a difficult time to keep focused on Christ, but there is a lot you can do to ensure they are navigated according to God's plan. Here's how:

### SET THE STAGE

Even though your child may act as though they don't need you, the sociologists and experts all agree: teens need their parents now more than ever! By this time in your child's life, you have built a solid foundation of faith, family traditions, and positive interactions. Your teen may begin to push back against some of these things, but others he or she will embrace as a natural part of who they are. It is important for your teen to begin to separate from you and discover new independence. Reassure your teen that you will be there to help navigate the challenges they face as they take ownership for their own choices and their own relationship with Jesus Christ.

### THE FOUNDATION IS RELATIONSHIP

Continue to create intentional one-on-one time with your child. This will help to connect you relationally, and it will keep the lines of communication open over the coming months and years. Remember to really listen to your child instead of always correcting and giving advice. Some parents plan monthly "date nights" with their child, letting the teen decide what to do. Others choose a hobby to share such as a sports team, a TV show or book, or an outdoor activity. *Invest your time and money in these shared activities*, and they will pay huge dividends in the teen years.

## FROM TEACHER TO COACH

The best analogy of your changing role as a parent during the teen years is that of a coach. This is because one of the main attributes of the teenage years is for you, the parent, to start giving your child more authority over his or her own life. Your teen should be allowed new freedoms and responsibilities that accompany young adulthood. This will foster a relationship of respect that will ease you both into the next phase of life. But don't confuse being a coach with being a "friend," "peer," or "buddy." Your teen still needs you to be the parent. However, this parental role will take on a new capacity than it had in previous seasons of your child's life. Your teen will continue to push your boundaries, and sometimes you will have to be tough. Use their mistakes as a time to draw them back to God and to remember His forgiveness (Eph. 4:31–32, 1 John 1:9, Acts 3:19).

## SUPPORT

You've heard it said, "It takes a village to raise a child." And it is true that teens need to be surrounded by those who will love and encourage them in their decisions and in their faith. But it also takes a village to support a parent! No one can do this alone. The teen years are challenging for parents as well as children. It is vital to find a community who will pray for you and your teen, encourage and support your family, and be available to share your successes and failures. As Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

## BLESSING

Teens often experience negative attention. Blessing is something they crave, but don't often receive. There are two primary ways to bless your teen. The first is through your words. Find ways to express your love and appreciation for your child. Tell them the positive things you see in their life, and be specific. Whether it's a small action on their part or a larger character trait that you admire, use your words to affirm your teen. Even if it feels awkward or embarrasses them, do it anyway. You can always write a note as well. The second way you can bless your teen is by modeling your faith. Allow them to see you praying, reading the Scriptures, serving, and being an active part of your church. They need to see that this FaithPath is the journey of a lifetime, not just something for young children. It is especially important for boys to see their dads, and girls to see their moms, live out their faith.

# INTENTIONAL FAITHPATH PLAN

## CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

*How will you be intentional this next year?*

- Pray daily for and with my child.
- Attend church regularly.
- Schedule and have regular family times.
- Create a habit of worship with my child, teaching them “why we do what we do”.
- Consistently spend time in God’s Word with my child.
- Help my child develop the habit of giving some of their money back to God.
- Schedule a time to serve the wider community together as a family.
- Talk with my child about the upcoming changes of puberty.
- Sign my child up for Confirmation.
- Coach my child to set healthy boundaries.
- Schedule a time to bless and give my child a vision for the future.
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The next step on the FaithPath is *Launch*, recommended at age seventeen. You will receive an email in the month of your child’s birthday, and the resource will be available for you with your child’s name on it at the Bringing Faith Home Center, right outside the Incarnation Bookstore.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *Feeding the Mouth that Bites You: A Complete Guide to Raising Adolescents and Launching them into the World*, by Ken Wilgus.
- *Spiritual Milestones* from [heritagebuilders.com](http://heritagebuilders.com).
- *Not Just Good, but Beautiful: The Complementary Relationship Between Man and Woman*, by N.T. Wright, et al. is a small book with many famous contributors about the meaning of masculinity and femininity. It answers many questions teens ask about gender and sexuality.

## INCARNATION’S CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

Bringing Faith Home: [incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home](http://incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home)

Children & Family Ministry: [incarnation.org/grow/children](http://incarnation.org/grow/children)