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Resources for Raising Teens

Tags: communication high school HSLDA parenting preparation purpose rebellion teens

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! We pray the Lord's blessings on your family as we head into 2010. Fresh beginnings always offer new inspiration and motivation. We hope you are in that frame of mind.

If we asked you to evaluate your relationship with your homeschooled teen, would you smile or frown? Regardless of your reaction to that question, the majority of parents are very interested in improving their relationships with their teens. Homeschool parents in particular know that the close encounters homeschooling provides on a daily basis can either be a source of encouragement or cause for prayers of supplication. If you would like to take some time at the beginning of this year to equip yourselves as parents to better train and interact with your teen, we'd like to offer some suggestions for parenting resources.

Please know that we do not intend to be a substitute for your individual pastor's oversight or instruction. The titles mentioned below are merely recommendations--your pastor will undoubtedly be able to suggest additional good selections.

Parenting with a Purpose

No matter your current interaction with your teens, parents can always grow in parenting skills. Understanding the changes in your teens' physical, mental, and emotional areas will enable you to direct, train, and equip them for life. When both parents are on board and there is unity of spirit regarding training and disciplining issues, your teen will be less desirous of trying to divide and conquer your authority. If this is not the case, pray for harmony and peace in the home and a coming together of the minds. Homeschooling can place strains on a marriage. Michael Farris and Reed Elam in their book, A Sacred Foundation, give helpful insights on alleviating these strains.

Additional helpful parenting resources listed on our website include:

- Farris, Michael. The Home Schooling Father: How You Can Play a Decisive Role in Your Child's Success
- MacArthur, John. What the Bible Says About Parenting
- Priolo, Lou. Teach them Diligently: How to Use the Scriptures in Child Training
- Tripp, Paul David. Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens with Study Guide
- Tripp, Paul David. Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Changing Helping People in Need of Changing
- Tripp, Ted. Shepherding a Child's Heart (for younger children but still applicable to teens)

Communication is Key

Have you realized that conflict will be inevitable? Conflict is usually seen as negative, but when it is worked out in a biblical way, it leads to change and growth. Don't ever lose hope or give up on your teens. Tell them time and time again that you love them, you are for them, and that with the Lord's help you desire to raise them to the glory of God.

Communication by its very definition is a two-way process. If your teen refuses to communicate despite your many repeated attempts, please don't despair! The Lord can open doors that you cannot. Cry out to the Lord for His help in this area and trust

in the comfort of Psalm 40:1: ".I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry." Continue to earnestly seek an interactive relationship with your teen and leave the results in the Lord's hands. If you are brokenhearted, the Lord is near to you. If your teen is running in the opposite direction from you and the Lord, the Lord is a great pursuer and the Hound of Heaven (according to C.S. Lewis)!

Some suggested resources for building relationships with teens:

- Mahaney, Carolyn. "Building a Strong Mother-Daughter Friendship"
- Mahaney, Carolyn and Nicole Mahaney Whitacre. Girl Talk: Mother-daughter Conversations On Biblical Womanhood
- Priolo, Lou. The Heart of Anger
- Sande, Ken. Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home
- Tripp, Paul David. War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles

Questions are good!

The teen years are exciting times as your child matures and grows. You'll be amazed at the questions that will come up in the midst of teaching academics that provide a platform for helping your teen sort out his or her values. You may have already encountered some of these questions: How do I know that God really exists when plenty of people don't believe that He does? What's embryonic cell research and is it a good idea? What's the theme of The Scarlet Letter and what personal relevance does it have?

It is of the utmost importance that your teens understand that your home provides a safe place to wrestle with and sort out their questions--especially those of a spiritual dimension. Many times parents are thrown off guard when teens struggle with certain aspects of the faith; and some parents may respond with anger, fear, or remorse. Be encouraged that your calm and reasoned responses to your teens' questions will have the most likely chance of being received with respect. Don't panic when questions come up--but seek the Lord's wisdom and pray for your teens to be open to the Holy Spirit's involvement as they think about their personal convictions.

Resources for your teen to read that will encourage his personal faith include:

- Brooks, Ron & Norman Geisler. When Skeptics Ask--A Handbook of Christian Evidence
- Karl, Graustein and Mark Jacobsen. Growing Up Christian: Have You Taken Ownership of Your Relationship With God?
- Keller, Timothy. The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism
- Lewis, C. S. Mere Christianity
- Little, Paul. Know What You Believe and Know Why You Believe
- Mahaney, CJ. The Cross-Centered Life
- Stott, John. Basic Christianity
- Stott, John. You Can Trust the Bible
- Whitney, Donald. Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life

Preparation for Life

As homeschooling parents, you have a tremendous opportunity to use your homeschooling days to prepare your teen for his future endeavors. As part of that preparation, think about incorporating a worldview or apologetics course into his high school plan. These courses and resources give your teen opportunities for practical application of the truths that you are teaching. Being prepared is half the battle when your teen encounters those in the workplace or college that adhere to different values.

Worldview and apologetics resources:

- Noebel, David. Understanding the Times
- Noebel, David & Chuck Edwards. Thinking Like a Christian: Worldviews in Focus Series
- Sire, James. Universe Next Door
- Wile, Jay. Reasonable Faith: the Scientific Case for Christianity

Good reading for teens heading off to college:

- Budziszewski, J. How to Stay Christian in College (An Interactive Guide to Keeping the Faith)

- McFarland, Alex. Stand Strong in College

Relationships with the Opposite Sex

One of the aspects of training that you probably encountered even before your children reached the teen years was the topic of how to relate to the opposite sex. Although there are different thoughts on what is or is not appropriate in terms of relationships during the teen years, it is beneficial as parents to stay directly involved in the friendships that your teens are forming. The majority of the resources listed below focus on a courtship style of relating to the opposite sex. Other resources may be found, however, that provide alternative or additional ways to view teen relationships. Ask the Lord for His insight and leadership as you tackle this area. The Word of God is a great place to begin to develop your family's parameters regarding relationships.

- Elliot, Elisabeth. Passion and Purity: Learning to Bring Your Love Life Under Christ's Control
- Farris, Michael. What A Daughter Needs From Her Dad: How a Man Prepares His Daughter for Life
- Harris, Joshua. I Kissed Dating Goodbye, A New Attitude Towards Romance and Relationships
- Harris, Joshua. Boy Meets Girl
- Jones, Debby and Jackie Kendall. Lady in Waiting: Becoming God's Best While Waiting for Mr. Right, Expanded Edition
- Paulsen, Heather. Emotional Purity: An Affair of the Heart
- Rainey, Dennis. Interviewing Your Daughter's Date
- Generation of Virtue (resources for teaching purity)

A Final Word

During the teen years, you may find that the old adage, "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink," takes on a new perspective. Parents can train, discipline, encourage, and reason with teens, but each individual teen will make choices that reflect his or her heart attitude. For those of you with spiritually mature teens who are eager to continue growing, parenting may be a sweet endeavor. But for those of you with children who you lead to water and yet they refuse to drink, please take heart. Pray with a heart that believes in a God who is able to change hearts. If you need encouragement in this area, see "Homeschooling to Prevent Rebellion" by Barbara Frank. Don't be fooled by the title. The article acknowledges that homeschooling is not a foolproof way to prevent teen rebellion, but it can be used by the Lord as a means of grace to steer your teen in the right direction while leaving the results to Him.

If your teen is currently not interested or is hostile to following the Lord, another resource to encourage you is Carol Barnier's recent HSLDA webinar, "A Prodigal Speaks." Carol is currently a homeschool mom and speaker; but she, too, was a prodigal who lived as an atheist for a number of years. She shares helpful insights that include loving and interacting with a prodigal child of her own. Carol discusses the false myths of parenting including: perfect parenting produces perfect children, children raised in a church will never depart, your child is deliberately trying to hurt you, and if you make parenting mistakes your child is doomed. You'll find hope and help--not condemnation--from the wisdom that she shares.

From our personal experience, parenting teens was both a joy and a trial that kept us on our knees! Each day is a new opportunity for you to trust in the Lord's help as you grow in your parenting skills. God promises that "when you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on Him, He will lift you up and give you honor." James 4:10 (NLT)

Join us next month as we discuss how to create your teen's high school transcript.

Until then, we pray that during the month of January your strength is renewed and your joy is full,

Becky Cooke and Diane Kummer
HSLDA High School Coordinators

This resource is an article from the *Homeschooling Thru Highschool* newsletter (1/7/2010), and is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association as a service to the homeschooling community.

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Author: Becky Cooke
Diane Kummer

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