

Biblical Parenting – 16 Rebellious Teens contd.

(Eleven Tips for Parents of Rebellious Teens continued)

3) Open the door to real communication.

Seven principles for communicating with teens:

1. Don't give up on giving wise, gentle correction:

Prov 27:5. Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed.

Prov 28:23. He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue.

2. Pursue your teenager.

Daily express your love. Don't ask questions that can be answered with a yes or no. Ask questions that require description, explanation, and self-disclosure. (Paul Tripp, Age of Opportunity, 80)

3. Ask open-ended, heart questions that force the teen to evaluate his thoughts words, and actions, and respond to you.

Don't settle for grunts, groans, no eye contact, and silences.

4. Be patient in the face of provocation.

Teenagers will say wild things. They will give weak excuses and offer illogical arguments. They will make extreme statements. They will accuse you of not understanding. (Age of Opportunity, 138)

5. Welcome and respect differences of opinion.

... don't scold the teenager for his honesty

In adult relationships it is possible to disagree with each other and remain friends.

6. Don't try to address too many issues at one time.

7. Listen to understand, not merely to refute:

4) Don't ignore the rest of the children.

Three dangers in regard to the other children:

a. The danger of bad influence:

It is important to protect your other children from the sinful influences of your rebellious child.

b. The danger of neglect and double standards:

c. The danger of self-righteousness:

Sometimes kids who are "good" can be tempted to become self-righteous and look down upon their disobedient sibling.

5) Put the teen in decision-making roles at times when bad decisions won't be disastrous.

This shows respect, trains him to make decisions, and encourages him when the decisions go right.

6) Write out and review with the teen a list of expectations that you have for him.

Note: It might also be good to have the teen make a list of the expectations that he or she has of the parents.

A sampling of areas to discuss under parental expectations:

- church attendance
- respect toward other family members
- school performance
- contribution to family chores
- curfew
- entertainment standards
- internet and phone usage
- dress code
- relationships with the opposite sex
- etc.

7) Define and enforce consequences for both active and passive defiance.

Two reasons for consequences:

1. God's reputation

Gal 6:7. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

2. The ineffectiveness of words

Newheiser and Fitzpatrick:

Most parents with wayward adult kids have made many threats, but few have carried them out. They have backed away from ultimatums, allowing the pattern to continue ... (80)

Four categories of consequences:

1. Restrictions

Restrictions are best for acts of irresponsibility, such as bad grades or work left undone.

2. Labour

Extra chores can be an appropriate consequence for acts of disrespect

3. Financial Consequences

4. Restitution.

8) Remove or reduce bad influences.

Prov 13:20. He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

1 Cor 15:33. Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

How to address the issue of friends: Teenagers tend to be prickly and protective when it comes to discussions of their friends.

Tedd Tripp:

The most powerful way to keep your children from being attracted by the offers of camaraderie from the wicked is to make home an attractive place to be. (Shepherding a Child's Heart, 221)

9) Enforce the right treatment of other family members.

10) Do not allow substance abuse in the home.

11) Refuse to finance the rebellious child's lifestyle.

Note: Under South African law, parents are responsible to provide for their child's basic needs until the age of 18.

You aren't required to maintain his lifestyle, however.

Drastic Consequences: When should a rebellious child be put out of the home?

It is possible that in spite of all the parents' positive efforts, the child's attitudes and behaviour will continue to get worse. What do the parents do then?

Two steps:

1. Bring the child to the church leaders for admonition.

As in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 where parents of a rebellious adult child brought him before the city elders.

2. Put the child out of the home.

When do parents take this extreme measure?

Newheiser and Fitzpatrick: When your teen ...

1. ... consistently and over a long season, has refused to follow your rules about household responsibilities, schoolwork, entertainment, activities, and choice of friends.

2. ... has frequent and ongoing disrespect for you and for other authority figures.

3. ... incessantly blames you and your authority for the problems in his life.

4. ... is involved in immorality, substance abuse, gang activity, or other illegal activities and staunchly refuses to stop.
5. ... has harmed or seriously threatened other members of the family.
6. ... has been involved for some time with the occult or with beliefs that glorify evil, darkness, or death. (When Good Kids Make Bad Choices, 194-195)

Note: If he is guilty of criminal behaviour, allow the police to do their job by turning him in (Rom 13:1-4).

Principle: Children who want to make adult decisions need to accept adult consequences.

The place of painful consequences in Christian practice:

As with Matthew 18 and as illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, painful consequences are one of God's key tools in breaking the hardened heart of a rebellious young adult.

The two goals of putting a child out of the home:

1. That the child would repent and return.
2. To protect the rest of the family.

Note: Putting a rebellious young adult out of the home does not necessarily require shunning. He or she can be invited to join family outings, come for meals, and so on.

Options:

- put him on the street with nothing (if the child is age 18 or above)
- drug rehabilitation facility
- halfway house
- live with relatives or another family
- place him in a special school designed to handle problem children

When the rebel wants to come home:

Be guardedly optimistic, but keep your eyes open for manipulation.

The child must sign an agreement to live by a list of reasonable house rules, agreeing to accept appropriate consequences if he doesn't.

This agreement, the rules, and the consequences of their being broken should be written out and signed by both the parents and the child.

Eight suggestions for motivating rebellious teens:

1) Parents should confess and ask forgiveness for their failures.

2) Listen until the teen believes you see the problem from his perspective.

3) Admit that you can't make the teen change.

4) Point out the cause-and-effect relationship between the teen's choices and the things he doesn't like in his relationships.

5) Point out that the teen's right choices make a big difference in his relationships.

6) Point out the teen's good choices in the past and their agreeable consequences.

7) Ask questions to discover the teen's wise wants.

8) Preach the gospel for heart change—the true solution to the teen's rebellion.