

Date: October 9, 2022
Series: *Building Up A Family*
Title: *Nurturing a Teen*
Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:7–12
Preacher: Kevin Freeman

Parents are called to train up their children to follow Christ. By extension, all believers should play some role in supporting young people in their faith. Paul writes to the Thessalonian church in parental terms to describe how he nurtured them. His words remind us all how we can best encourage teens to live lives worthy of God.



Introduction

NOW

9/18 Cold War analogy in Pastor Mark's sermon. Great illustration of spiritual warfare.

My mind went to this topic, nurturing teens. Does life ever feel like the escalation of cold war tensions in the home?

- Breakdown of normal diplomatic relations - what used to come naturally now requires so much effort!
- Don't feel like allies, and full-scale battle seems near
- Competing ideologies - sometimes the principle of a thing matters, and you feel the need to demonstrate that your philosophy matches reality
- The occasional crisis or détente that either escalates or deescalates tensions (Reagan and Gorbachev met in Reykjavik 36 years ago tomorrow)

THEN



Tensions between teens and parents are not new. Millennia-long situation. Should be heartening.

These tensions also find parallels. Coaches-athletes, teachers-students. Even Darth Vader struggled with Obi Wan. "Now I am the master."

ALWAYS

Another parallel is spiritual.

Cold War analogy

Teens and parents are at war, but they are fellow soldiers.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 2.

Acts 17 records gospel to Thessalonica

Part of Macedonian call

Could only stay a short time due to riots against them

Writes to them with parental concern and uses parenting analogies.

Consider this description in parental terms.

encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:7–12



1 Thessalonians 2:7–12 (NIV)

⁷ Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, ⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. ⁹ Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. ¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

What is life like for teens and parents today?

What is life like for young people and parents today?

Challenges teens face

Some risky behavior concerns of decades past are far less common now.

Teenage landscape has been transformed by technology.

Many teens now have access to information (true/untrue) about every topic.

Teens are rich targets for competing worldviews. War of the eyeballs.

Worldviews incompatible with Scripture are reinforced on TV, at school, and in peer groups.

Not completely new, but the flow is. What used to be a trickle is a tidal wave of ideas.

Add to it the irony of isolation in our ever-connected world.

Anxiety and depression are at all-time highs.

Society blew it with teens during the pandemic. Top-down policies (not individual parenting decisions)

Teens feel more isolated and out of control than ever before, which leads to anxiety and depression.

What do you admire about your parents?

- I admire that my parents fight so hard for the truth and aren't afraid of hard questions.
- I love your integrity and love in what you do every day! I love you! I hope you know you're the best parents ever!
- My dad always makes me laugh.
- What I like: they are hard
- I love that they're for me and so loving
- I admire how knowledgeable my parents are. They know so many things I don't that help me in every situation I could ever be in.
- I love that my parents want what's best for me.

What do you wish your parents understood about you?

- I wish my parents knew how much my friends matter to me.
- I wish my parents knew how to help me. They try, but it always seems like they hurt me instead of help me.
- I wish they understood I want a really short haircut.
- That I work better without direction and I have my own routine
- That I am OK with being alone sometimes
- I wish my parents understood [the things that matter] to me...and take the time to talk about them and maybe make more time for them

Challenges parents face

What is one thing you admire about your teen/preteen?

- Diligent with daily quiet time with the Lord.
- How my teen speaks truth winsomely and with courage
- His confidence
- Sharing his frustration
- He is very creative and not swayed by peer pressure!
- Always ready to help someone in need
- A loyal and compassionate friend

What is one thing you want your teen/preteen to understand about your role as a parent?

- Even if you make a mistake, we still love you.
- We don't have all the answers and make mistakes but we always seek the Lord and are motivated by love!
- My role is to love, nurture and guide him to help him become who God wants him to be.
- Authority
- I am their biggest fan!
- we're not "out to get you" - everything we do is with your best intentions in mind. out of love
- Trust our experience, we've lived a lot of life and seen and done a lot of things, many of which directly relate to what you are going through right now.

Parents often feel out of control, too, and are burdened with several responsibilities at all hours of the day.

9-5 work schedules often stretch all over the day. Disjointed and unable to take time to focus on family.

Don't know how to stem the flow of technology without becoming Amish.

Overwhelmed by the onslaught of competing ideologies facing our teens.

How can we parent for God's glory?

How can we parent for God's glory?

Our passage shares key actions that parents can take to nurture teens.

Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,

v 7 mother, v 11 father

1 Thessalonians 2:7



1 Thessalonians 2:7 (NIV)

⁷ Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,

How can we parent for God's glory?

Care

Care

Care: θάλπω (*thalpo*) - cherish, warm. Why? Love.

so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NIV)

1 Thessalonians 2:8



⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

v 9 toil, hardship, night & day - reminiscent of parenting

encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 (NIV)

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12



¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

How can we parent for God's glory?

Care
Encourage

Encourage

Encouraging: παρακαλέω (*parakaleo*) - urge, exhort.

Lit. "call to one's side", invite in

Para educators

Keep inviting to come along with you as you follow Christ

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV)

1 Corinthians 11:1



¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Move through daily tasks that reveal your character in stress, boredom, happiness, etc.

How can we parent for God's glory?

Care
Encourage
Comfort

Comfort

Comforting: παραμυθέομαι (*paramythoumenoi*)

Even if you can't pronounce it, you can do it!

"para" - still along with - important factor in nurturing: your presence! Incarnation

How can we parent for God's glory?

- Care
- Encourage
- Comfort
- Urge to live for God

Urge to live lives worthy of God

Urging...: μαρτύρομαι (*martyromai*) - urge, insist, implore

Incorporates witness/testimony (same root where martyr comes)

Live this way, do this. It works.

Foster training. Kids who have experienced trauma.

What normally takes 7 reminders takes about 70!

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

Our parental duties to care, encourage, comfort, and urge toward following Jesus never end!

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

- Recognize the goal

1.) Recognize the goal

Our goal is to help teens live lives worthy of God.

with all humility and gentleness,
with patience, bearing with one another in love,

Ephesians 4:1-2



Ephesians 4:1-2 (NIV)

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Literally “walk” worthy of God.

This goal will help you look past distractions.

Not every facial expression or eye roll needs to be addressed.

You aren't a punching bag, but neither are you the ultim

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

- Recognize the goal
- Remember your past

2.) Remember your past

Parents, remember your own teenage years and some of the turmoil you experienced.

Remember what you cared about and what confused you.

Teens, remember the investment your parents have made in your life so far.

The message in our passage is an appeal to spiritual teenagers to remember how the apostles cared for them.

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

- Recognize the goal
- Remember your past
- Remove distractions

3.) Remove distractions

The enemy seeks to divide you!

We live among more distractions than ever.

Beware of rectangles! Seek circles - eyes, time around the dinner table, marshmallows, baseballs, teacups, hugs

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

- Recognize the goal
- Remember your past
- Remove distractions
- Repair damage

4.) Repair damage

Past wounds can be healed!

Requirement is humility. Remember the goal: living for Christ, not satisfying past wrongs against you.

Parents should initiate in a damaged relationship. Don't worry about those offenses against you. In Christ, God has overlooked your offenses against Him, and those were worse! So initiate the restoration of the relationship by owning up to your own faults.

Teens, this will be hard for your parents. Take it easy on them. Even initiate yourself. "I know I haven't been perfect, but I would like us to have a better relationship."

Hit the reset button. Start over.

Not easy to do? Get some help. We'll talk about that shortly.

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

- Recognize the goal
- Remember your past
- Remove distractions
- Repair damage
- Reserve energy

5.) Reserve energy

Energy reserves get depleted. Your available time decreases

Easy to tell our kids to wait so that we can handle another responsibility.

Time and place for that.

Bring them into your task

or forego the task for time with your teen

Those without teens may even make time to volunteer with them

What more important responsibility do you have that supersedes your kids?

Tell me something more important than guiding the next generation to follow Christ faithfully?

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

- Recognize the goal
- Remember your past
- Remove distractions
- Repair damage
- Reserve energy
- Reach out for help

6.) Reach out for help

One of the great tragedies plaguing the Church today is the lack of depth among believers. Superficial relationships and tendencies toward isolation keep Christians from helping each other grow.

You can't go it alone.

Seek out wise Christians who have already parented teens. Get their input. Ask questions.

We hold parenting topics every Wednesday to discuss these issues.

Seek out even more help if you have hangups that you know are preventing the nurturing God has called you to do.

How can parents and teens enjoy a close relationship?

- Recognize the goal
- Remember your past
- Remove distractions
- Repair damage
- Reserve energy
- Reach out for help
- Remain on mission

7.) Remain on mission

The mission to train our teens to follow Christ is the same one we are on.

Show your kids how you, too, are growing spiritually, struggling, learning.

Conclusion



Jonathan McKee - well-known West Coast youth pastor, author, speaker:

“My parenting repertoire is filled with stories of feeling too busy > too overwhelmed burning the candle at both ends; you probably know the feeling. It’s these times I answer with the most logical response when a person doesn’t have any time. Like the time my son Alec asked me if I wanted to play video games with him. I can remember the moment like it was yesterday.

He was in his late teens, working almost every day after school and had an internship at church. It was an extremely busy time in his life. My schedule was very comparable. I worked full-time writing and speaking, was attending graduate school, volunteered at the church, was raising three kids - not a lot of free time.

Alec poked his head into my office one Friday and simply asked, “Dad, do you wanna play Xbox?”

I was finishing some last-minute prep for a parenting workshop I was teaching that weekend. The next morning I was going to leave the house at 3:30 a.m. on the first flight out. With time in airports, two planes, and a rental car I’d travel over ten hours across the country (the problem with living in California and frequently speaking on the East Coast) then teach a two-hour workshop Saturday night, preach the morning services at a church Sunday morning, then teach a parenting workshop that afternoon. I had about seven items to finish on my to-do list, and playing video games just didn’t seem wise, if even possible.

I can’t remember my exact words, but they were something like, “Sorry, Alec, but I’ve got to finish my workshop helping other moms and dads be good parents.”

Yes, the word irony comes to mind.

He wasn’t brokenhearted. He was actually very kind about it. I can still see the expression on his face. “That’s okay, Dad, I understand. I know you’ll do a good job.”

Fast-forward two days later when in the middle of my parenting workshop I gave the parents a “self-quiz” that helped them look introspectively at how well they knew their kids. As they sat in their seats, pens and pencils busily scratching out answers. I read through the questions myself while standing onstage waiting. As a joke I played the famous ‘70s folk song “Cat’s in the Cradle,” in which a dad expresses his parenting regrets. I jested that they shouldn’t feel guilty if they did poorly on the quiz.

That’s when it happened.

I began reading my own quiz questions and my eyes rested on question number 13: “When is the last time you played with your kid?”

The lyrics to “Cat’s in the Cradle” resounded in my ears: a kid asking his dad to throw a ball and the dad saying, “Not today.”

I started full-on weeping.

I turned my back to the audience in hopes they wouldn’t notice. I had forty-five seconds to pull it together. But first things first. I whipped my phone out of my pocket and texted my son:

ALEC, I’M A TURD! YOU ASKED ME TO PLAY XBOX WITH YOU AND I LET MY WORK INTERFERE. I’LL TOTALLY PLAY XBOX WITH YOU WHEN I GET HOME TOMORROW! YOU GOT TIME?

Not ten seconds later I got a text back: SURE. WE'LL BLOW AWAY ZOMBIES!

The next day I got up bright and early and flew home (another ten-hour journey with a layover), and when my son walked in the door I was sitting on the couch with the controller in my hand. "You ready to show me how to play this thing?"

And we played for almost two hours until he finally had to go to work.

Let me be very clear. Say yes to any opportunity to connect with your teenager."