

Get the Picture?

Karen Lange

Some of the biggest challenges parents face are during the teen years. Even if you have a good relationship with your teens, there are always issues to deal with. Teens wish to be more independent; parents must accept this as part of the process and provide Godly limits. It can be difficult to allow teens to make decisions, but making mistakes and learning from them comes with the territory. We want them to learn to discern, but we still need to be there for them. We must not smother and drive them away. It is a delicate balance to maintain. So how do we do this?

As parents, we need to step back and focus on what I call life's "Big Picture." It helps to keep in mind that the ups and downs are just a small part of this big picture. All circumstances and events are working together for our children's ultimate good; to bring about God's will for their lives. When we trust Him to direct the "Big Picture", He will preserve them and draw them to Himself. To help us stay focused, we need to keep several things in mind.

We must pray! Never underestimate God's ability to work in our children. It is never too late to pray for them. When we pray, we are seeking God's help and inviting His protection and support. Battling with prayer and scriptures will affect great things for our children. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16) We are more actively involved with our children's lives than we realize when we pray. Hebrews 4:16 advises us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This mercy and grace will see us through the challenges.

You may be facing stress because of disagreements about curfews, friends, or something much greater. Remember this: God promises to deliver our children. They may encounter rough spots along the way, but He promises to take care of them. One scripture I confess for my children is: "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom." (II Timothy 4:18) As I pray this for them, I trust that God will be faithful to work so they will fulfill His calling on their lives.

We must listen. It is tempting to talk too much, to scold, or be critical of their friends or actions. They need guidance, yes, but they need to talk as well. Verbalizing is one way to sort things out, gain insight and perspective. Taking time to listen shows your teens how important they are to you. Despite any differences you might have, it is one way to demonstrate your unconditional love. Woodrow Wilson said, "One cool judgement is worth a thousand hasty counsels. The thing to be supplied is light, not heat." God will supply this light when you trust Him and remain open to His leading. Talking and gaining their trust may take time and creativity if your relationship with your teen is rocky, but with God's help, it is not impossible. He will work great things not only in them, but also in you.

Physical touch is another key ingredient. Teens may be big kids, but they still need the affirmation and security that affection provides. This can be an awkward thing to do as they grow up, but it is worth the effort. A hand on the shoulder, a pat on the arm, a brief hug, all are ways to physically but not overwhelmingly convey love and support. Even as we grow older, the emotional power of physical touch is still important.

The teen and young adult years are only a short scene from the “Big Picture,” but they provide more opportunities to trust and listen closely to the Lord. For me, it has been a time where He has revealed His grace and faithfulness in new ways. Learn to rest in knowing that the “Big Picture” is divinely directed for good. It will be a blockbuster that will bring glory to the Lord.

Biographical Information

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