



AGE 14

The Branch Years



H  **ME**
22.6

AGE 14

A Snapshot of Life

All teenagers develop differently, but some characteristics are the same. Below are some developmental changes that may be present during these years as your child grows physically, emotionally, and spiritually during the age of 14 to 15 years. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give you some insight into what to expect.

Physical Development

At 14, teens have a heightened sensitivity to appearance and its social value. Girls have fully developed into their adult bodies. Boys and girls have leveled out in height, but boys likely have a growth spurt to continue.

Emotional Development

Teens desire to control more aspects of their lives. They obtain a strong sense of accomplishment from being involved in various activities, and they perceive acceptance from others as paramount.

Relational Development

At this stage, teens may spend less time with family and more time with peers. They also have a strong desire for conformity with peers.

Spiritual Development

Teens' abilities to fully process abstract thoughts allow them to engage God personally. Rather than simply being told what to believe, teens need spiritual leaders who will share personal opinions, but let the teens develop beliefs for themselves. Teens' interest in and commitment to faith swing back and forth, signaling an internal struggle of whether or not to accept Jesus and the Christian faith. They also desire to find their own place in the church.

Parent Dedication

What is Parent Dedication?

Parent dedication is giving a strong spiritual legacy to your children. The Legacy Principle, the Likelihood Principle, and the Lenses Principle are crucial to your child's spiritual growth. In the parent dedication section you'll find tools to help you grow as a parent. **The Legacy Principle** states that the scriptures tell us that what we do today directly influences the multi-generational cycle of family traits, beliefs and actions – for good or bad (Exodus 20:5-6, Psalm 78:5-8). So passing a strong faith to our children begins by having a strong faith ourselves, modeling the gospel in our marriages and in how we relate to those closest to us. Some of us need to break negative cycles that may have started with our own upbringing in order to launch a new and improved legacy for the next generation. **The Likelihood Principle** states that the good news is this: in the context of healthy relationships, children tend to embrace the values of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that when children learn right from wrong at home under the nurturing, loving training of parents, they tend to adopt mom and dad's beliefs. While there are no guarantees because every child has a free will, kids are far more likely to embrace their parent's faith if they enjoy their parent's company! That's a big part of the reason parents are warned not to "provoke your children to wrath" but rather "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Bottom line – a strong relationship with mom and dad is key to a strong Christian faith. **The Lenses Principle** says Jesus taught that our enemy's primary weapon is deception – getting us to believe and live according to lies rather than truth (John 8:44). And when someone is deceived, he or she does not know it! Our children are growing up in a culture that bombards them with lies. An hour or two per week at church is no match for the hundreds of hours spent with media, school, and friends. Nor can it compete with a child's fallen nature that often wants to rebel against what is good, true and beautiful. It is the job of parents to equip children with the corrective "lenses" of truth so they can better navigate the deceptive roads of life.

Parenting Tool: *Balance*

Chaos. Pandemonium. Insanity. Holy Mess. Do any of these phrases describe your life with a teenager? What other descriptors come to mind?

If your life with a teenager is not busy by now, get ready because it will be. For most of you, this frantic pace of life has been going on for years. You pick up one child from point A only to drop him off at point B. After leaving B, you travel to point C to pick up your other child to take her to point D. Then it's off to get dinner for child one while you wait on child two to finish, and that's just Monday. This is replicated throughout the week.

Balance is of utmost importance during these years. In fact, if you have younger children in addition to a young teen, it is wise to start dedicating yourself to maintaining balance in parenting as soon as possible. It is impossible to expect your child to have a balanced schedule if you yourself do not have one.

The demands of things such as sports, friendships, and schoolwork will continue to increase with little regard for Christ, the church, or your child's spiritual development. The collateral damage of unbalanced schedules will likely cause ripples for generations to come. Below are some thoughts to consider that can help bring balance to your home.

Considerations for Bringing Balance to the Home

- Know and help cultivate your child's specific gifts and talents.

Involvement in sports and extra-curricular activities is not bad in and of itself. God gifts us in a variety of ways. It is likely that your child has some very unique abilities or characteristics. Maybe your son loves music, or your daughter has a propensity for excelling in math or an uncanny height that is needed for the school volleyball team. God desires for your child to use all of these gifts and abilities in glorifying Him. Colossians 3:17 tells us, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

- Remember the main reason your child is involved in certain activities.

As mentioned previously, involvement in sports or extra-curricular activities is not bad in and of itself. What is not healthy, however, is allowing involvement in activities that are not intentional or are not focused on the main thing. Remember that God has gifted your child with certain abilities,

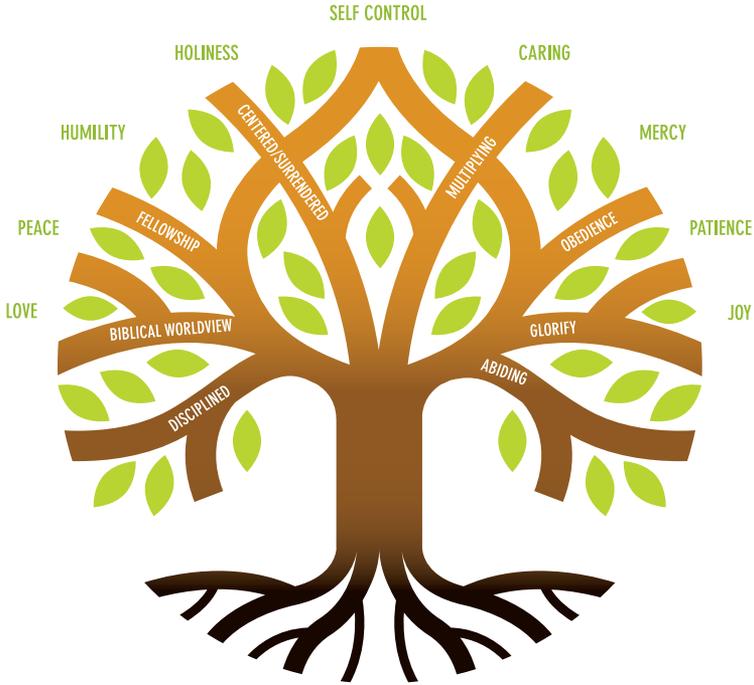
not to simply to allow him or her to earn a college scholarship or win a state championship. God has gifted your child in such a way as to reflect His glory on the athletic field or in the classroom. If the main thing is something temporal (such as a college scholarship), be careful because it becomes very easy to lose sight of the main reason the Lord created us.

- Evaluate your schedule to help keep the main thing the main thing. Matthew 6:33 reminds us, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Your children likely do not have the discernment or courage to admit when things get out of balance. They are often looking to you to help them know when something is too much. If your children’s involvements begin to stunt their spiritual growth or connectedness to the body of Christ, you may want to consider saying no to certain things. Look at your child’s schedule. If you notice it is filled with activities that excessively showcase your child instead of showcase Christ or strengthen your child’s faith, something needs to change.

Do you need some help determining what activities keep the “main thing the main thing”? Reflect on Philippians 4:8, which instructs, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

- Remind your kids that father (and mother) knows best. Remember that you are the parent. You are the ultimate authority in your child’s life—this responsibility does not belong to your child’s coach, teacher, or boss. God has given you children to protect and “train up in the way they should go” (Proverbs 22:6).

Do not be afraid to say no to things. In fact, be prepared to say no to things. Satan is a master of deception. He often leads us to think that the busier we are the more effective we are. Not so! Often times, busyness distracts us from the best that God has for us. On the surface, your child may cry and plead to be involved in every sport or activity imaginable because her friends are involved or because he loves it. But you, as the parent need to balance what is good with what is best. Be prepared and bold in making that decision. Remember, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).



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Blessing Your Children

How do I bless my children?

There is power in a blessing. The Hebrew word for blessing is used over 640 times in the Old Testament alone. Do you know the very first thing God did after creating us? In Genesis 1:27–28 we read, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them...” We were made for blessing! Based on examples in the Bible, there are five basic elements that make up a biblical blessing:

1. Meaningful Touch Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation—even physical health! For anyone who wishes to see the blessing grow and develop in a child, touch is an integral part of the blessing. As Mark 10:13–16 says, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.”

2. A Spoken Message Words have an incredible power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. This is particularly true when those words are coming from our parents. Therefore, the blessing hinges on a spoken message. Your child desperately needs to hear a spoken blessing from you. As parents, we must be keenly aware of the power of the spoken word and also be aware of how powerful the absence of spoken words can be. Both people and relationships suffer in the absence of words of blessing, or those spoken words of love, encouragement, and support. Proverbs 16:24 reminds us, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones...”

3. Expression of High Value To “value” something means to attach great importance to it. This is at the very heart of the concept of blessing. Anytime we bless someone, we are attaching high value to him or her. Our children need to hear that they are someone who has great worth apart from his or her performance. As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

4. Picture of a Special Future Communicating a special future to a child is another important part of giving the blessing. Children are filled with the potential to be all God intends them to be. Picturing a special future for your children can help bring out the best in their lives. It gives them a positive direction to strive toward and surrounds them with hope. When a child feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude toward life. We can see this very thing in our relationship with the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

5. An Active Commitment The first four elements listed above are the building blocks of the blessing, but the mortar that holds them together is an active commitment—the fifth element. This element of the blessing describes the responsibility that goes with the blessing. Parents need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children’s blessing. You have God’s Word through the Scriptures as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a commitment to do everything possible to help the one blessed to be successful. Isaiah 40:31 encourages us, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

For more information on the biblical blessing, see *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent, PhD.

Bless Your Child's Dedication to the Counsel of the Word of God

*"Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper." —Psalm 1:1–3*

1. In what ways is my child already dedicating him/herself to the counsel of the Word of God?

Tell your child...

(Child's Name), you diligently dedicate yourself to the counsel of the Word of God when you...

2. In what ways do I hope my child will further receive the counsel of the Word of God?

Tell your child...

(Child's Name), I hope that in the future you will continue to dedicate your life to the counsel of the Word of God even when things like _____ cause you to question it.

3. What challenge will my child likely face this year regarding dedicating him/herself to the counsel of the Word of God?

4. How will I commit to helping my child face this challenge?

5. When will be the best time to give my child this blessing?

6. Is there a "meaningful marker" that I can give my child to make this blessing memorable?



Family Time

What is Family Time?

The idea of family worship is both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will equip you to lead your family in worship.

What does the Bible say about growing together in Christ as a family?

The importance of the family in discipleship is prominent throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). Husbands are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of their children (Ephesians 6:1-3). These are huge responsibilities, but God has promised to provide everything we need to lead our families well, according to His design. As leaders in our home, the critical thing to remember is that God's Word must be written upon our hearts. Our faith in Christ and reliance on His Word should be authentic, tangible, and transparent.

What are the benefits of family worship?

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. Jesus will bring joy to families who worship and grow together. The love of Christ will be more evident in a family where worship is central.
- Family worship effects change in the world. As families read, pray, study, sing, and grow together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations, while influencing each other's lives for generations to come.

What should we do during family worship?

Keep it simple. Consider the following elements as you worship together:

READ—Read a portion of the Bible together. Don't worry if you've already read it in your time alone with God. Reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!).

DISCUSS—After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read, much like you do in your own time alone with God. Give everyone a chance to discuss the passage and consider how it applies to everyday life. Ideally, you will lead by example and share with your family what you learned in your time alone with God and the difference it has made.

PRAY—Consider praying through the key points of the Bible passage that you have just read and discussed. Ask God to change your hearts, minds, lives, and family accordingly. This specific prayer can lead to a more general time of prayer that uses the letters P-R-A-Y as a guide:

Praise—Worship God for who He is.

Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.

Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever He leads you.

Try to include everyone as you pray, even if this is on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to keep a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God's answers to those requests.

SING—Sing or listen to music together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, that person may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, you can sing along with music from a CD or DVD and discuss what the songs mean.

MEMORIZE—Choose key verses or passages to memorize. You may want to work on a verse or passage for a week or a month. Either way, be sure to work together, taking time to understand what you are memorizing. Periodically, set aside time to review verses over the course of the year.

Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

1. What if a father or mother is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume believing parents. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a follower of Christ, the mother will need to take the initiative for leading family worship in a non-offensive and non-threatening way. In the case of a mother not being a follower of Christ, the father should lead with compassion and sensitivity.

2. What about a single parent family?

In this case, the responsibility falls to the single parent. This, along with the many other duties that single parents have, may present a significant challenge. However, God will supply great grace and everything we need to raise and strengthen our children in the faith.

3. What about children?

The dynamic of family worship will vary considerably depending upon the ages of the children involved. The goal for every child in the family is not the same. With young children, focus on the importance of knowing God, respecting the Bible, and worshiping as a family. With older children, dig into Scripture more, ask good questions, and discuss how the Bible relates to life and how a relationship with Christ changes us every day.

4. How do I keep things interesting if the ages of my children vary widely?

Regardless of age, include children in planning, reading, singing, teaching, and praying as much as possible and as much as maturity will allow. Make sure to keep things simple, and don't be afraid to keep it short; listen well, and be aware of what is happening in each child's heart and life.

5. What time of day is best for family worship?

Timing is far less important than consistency. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since everyone may be present at that time.



Deuteronomy 6:7 says,
"You shall teach [God's words] diligently
to your children, and shall talk of them
when you sit in your house, and when you
walk by the way, and when you lie down,
and when you rise up."

Concentrated time in family worship
can serve as a catalyst and support for
"as you go, as you sit, as you walk"
conversations and applications of God's
Word within our families. Encouraging
and challenging our spouses and children
in Christian faith happens best in the
context of real, everyday life. Family
worship builds consistency into our family
routines and opens up many opportunities
and possibilities within our family
relationships.



A Family Time from 1 Samuel 16 & 17

READ

o 1 Samuel 26

o This is not the first time we have seen Saul pursuing David, and it is also not the first time David has passed on the opportunity to eliminate his pursuer. David's men desired to strike down Saul once and for all. However, David would not go against the Lord, saying, "Who can put out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be held guiltless?"

o Psalm 27

o This prayer of David allows us to hear David's heart during times of great crisis. He was fearless when armies came against him because he was confident in the Lord. The "one thing" he asked of the Lord was to "dwell in the house of the Lord." David steadfastly maintained this attitude as he waited upon the Lord.

The Bottom Line: David's actions demonstrate the focus of his heart. Above all, David desired the glory of God. This provided David incredible peace and absolute confidence in the plans of the Lord.

Questions:

- Why did David respect the life of Saul?
- How did David resist the influence of those who wished he would kill Saul?
- How do we resist the influence of others around us?
- How does King David's heart seen in Ps. 27 reflect the heart of King Jesus, David's greater Son?

PRAY

o When we pray a prayer of thanksgiving, we are expressing our gratitude to God. Prayers of thanksgiving can be lifted up in response to who God is, what He has done for us through Christ and for the blessings He continually bestows upon us.

Biblical Basis for Thanksgiving:

Psalm 69:30, Psalm 100:4, Philippians 4:6, Revelation 7:12

Take some time for each of those gathered with you to express their thanks to the Lord.

o Pray for the nation of Cote d'Ivoire

- Cote d'Ivoire is one of the 20 poorest countries in the world.
- Pray for God to provide in a mighty way for the people of Cote d'Ivoire.
- Pray that the Gospel is heard and seen by the more than 218 thousand Lobis.
- Pray for the translation of the whole Bible into a language that the Lobis can read and understand.
- Ask God to build His church among the Lobi in Cote d'Ivoire to be a beacon of the gospel for His name.

Source: Operation World by Johnstone and Mandryk

MEMORIZE

o Psalm 27:4 "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple."

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions to help their children discover the truths of God's Word and worship Him together.

Preschool (Birth-Kindergarten)

o Before you begin: gather some plates, cups, a special snack and drinks for you and your children.

o Tell your preschooler you are going to serve a special drink and snack, but they will need to follow your instructions to help set the table. Have them help you set the table with plates, napkins, cups, etc. Once the table is set, tell them you are going to serve them their snack, but they may not eat until everyone is served and the blessing has been spoken. Tell them that this is the rule for serving snacks today.

o Once all is done and the snacks have been enjoyed, explain to your child

how great it was that they followed your instructions. Say, "I was really proud of the way you followed my directions and waited on everyone else to be served before you enjoyed your snacks. Just like Mommy and Daddy wanted you to follow our directions for snack time today, God wants us to follow His directions and plans, too!"

o Just like David, who followed God's directions, we should wait and follow God's directions. Did everything work out right for us today when we followed directions and got to eat our yummy snacks together? Yes, it did. God's plan is always best and He is in control!

Children (Grades 1-5)

o Before starting, grab a map, a recipe or cookbook, and a Bible.

o Ask your children: If you are going to drive to a new place what should you have? A map. Show them the map and tell how you would plan a trip with the map. If you are making a new food, what should you have? A recipe. Show them the recipe and talk about the steps it tells you to take. What would happen if you did not have these things? You would not do them correctly and you would most likely mess up. Do we need a guide in our lives? Yes, we need the Bible to guide us to follow God's plan for our lives.

o We look at David's decision to spare Saul's life and see clearly that he was following God's desires and not his own (1 Samuel 26:8-11). He had a chance to kill Saul easily and yet he did not. This shows the focus of David's heart. Did he want his way or God's way? He chose God's way over his own. This is something we have to do on a daily basis. In order to make the right decisions, we must have a plan before we are in a position to make a choice. David made a decision to follow and obey God. This allowed him to make the right choice when faced with this difficult decision. Likewise, we must seek to follow His plans.

o Have your children think of things that happen in their life where they have to make right or wrong choices and discuss the possible results of those choices. Examples: schoolwork (cheating, not doing best), friends (gossip), parents (lying), television shows, music, and video games (bad language and images).

Students (Grades 6-12)

o Take another look at 1 Samuel 26:8-11 and Psalms 27:14. What do these

two Scriptures have in common? David realized that waiting and trusting in the Lord demonstrated the Lord's strength more than taking things into his own hands, thus, magnifying his own power.

o Read the following verses in 1 Samuel 26 and list the four reasons David did not kill Saul (vs. 9, 10, 23, and 24). Discuss as a family and then review these conclusions:

- Saul was the Lord's anointed (vs. 9). To do him harm would have brought about guilt, even if he were a bad king.
- David acknowledged that it would not be him, but God, who would bring about Saul's death (vs. 10)
- David trusted the Lord to repay both righteous deeds as well as evil deeds (vs. 23)
- David knew the Lord was the true deliverer, not himself. (vs. 24)

o Identify some areas in your lives where you have trouble waiting/trusting on the Lord. How about when others have wronged us, or when we're unsure of a decision. Believing the plans of the Lord are trustworthy is easy to say, but difficult to practice. Discuss some ways you as a family can demonstrate trust like we see in the life of David.

Church Community

What is Church Community?

With so many young people leaving the church after they are under the leadership of their parents, it is important that we teach the necessity of the church. Scripture says that the church is the Bride of Christ and He has given the church these four responsibilities: worship God, connect with others, grow in God's Word, and go tell the world about Christ. It is important that our children understand the heart behind what the church is meant to be and that our children allow Christ to transform their hearts to serve Him through His church.

We go to church to worship our God who has saved each of us and given us a personal relationship with Him. We go to church to come together to celebrate our Heavenly Father by giving Him our worship. Our children should see families living their lives side-by-side, sharing experiences, caring for each other, being open with one another, and praying together. Our children should know that the church is a place where they can grow in their faith and gain the knowledge that will help them grow closer to the Lord and live a more abundant life. In other words, our children should know the church is a place where we can be transformed. Finally, the church leads us to the point where we must open our eyes and our hearts to step out and follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit to reach the world around us.



How Do I Help My Child Value the Church?

The American church has experienced one of the most dramatic roller coaster rides in recent church history. Over the past 40 years, the church has experienced both astronomical growth (in 1970s–1980s) and monumental decline (in 2000s–2010s) all during a time of expansive population growth on American soil. Churches are dying at a faster rate than they are being planted. Recent research of this generation of teenagers and young adults continues to echo a relatively new phenomenon: “People love God, but hate the church.”

Think back to some of the conversations you have had with your children. More likely than not, your children, and maybe even you, view church as an interruption to the life that they want to live. Perhaps your children have expressed they would rather be on the field, in the bed, or at the lake instead of at church. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon that many families view the church as a private contractor whom they have hired for childcare or faith development of their children rather than as a place to gather for worship, community, and Kingdom assignments. One of the problems that feed this misguided view of church is that the church as a whole has come to be known more for what it does not believe rather than for what it does believe. The church is perceived to practice judgment first and love second. No wonder this generation struggles to find value in the church. But we can still right the ship! Consider the following strategies for helping your child value the church.

Develop and model a healthy understanding of the church

The church did not come into existence until the New Testament when the Holy Spirit descended on those gathered during Pentecost. The word is translated from the original Greek word *ekklesia*, which is defined as a public assembly or gathering of people. Paul refers to the church as the body of Christ (Romans 12:5). Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18). The purpose of the church is to glorify God and tell the world about Jesus. In other words, the church is an assembly of believers gathered together for the purpose of worship and growing in Christ with the goal of making Him known to the world. The church is not a structure, a daycare, or an elitist group. The church is a gathering God’s people—young and old, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile—who worship Him with abandon,

who devote themselves to the Word, who pray together, who are equipped to do ministry, and who are engaged in making disciples of the nations. How are you as a parent modeling this to your child?

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” —Acts 2:42

Make being a part of the church a priority

It has been proven over and over again that the things that are most important to us are the things we invest the most time, effort, and resources into.

There are three primary institutions that God created: (1) mankind, (2) the family, and (3) the church. Man’s relationship with the Creator supersedes man’s relationship with his family, which supersedes his relationship with the church. In other words, God is most concerned with an individual’s relationship with Jesus, then with his or her relationship with the family, and then his or her relationship with the church.

We often claim to live out these priorities in this order, but in reality the church and God get the leftovers. We position our family times, and even church commitments, around work schedules, sports tournaments and practices, dance recitals, and exam schedules. Let’s be honest, if God was truly the priority, then our families would not be consistently missing family meal times or struggling to schedule in church attendance.

Teach and model to your family that church is not an interruption, but it is a core value in your family. Make it a priority to attend and engage the church. When your children ask you why church has to be a priority, do not hesitate to tell them why. Steer clear of the simple answers like “just because” or “it has to be.” Your child is old enough to know why. Talk about the importance of being plugged into the body of Christ. Make church a part of your regular conversations with your child.

Help your child find a place in the church as early as possible

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” —1 Corinthians 12:4–6

“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” —Ephesians 4:12

“For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” — 1 Corinthians 12:14–27

One of the most important ways to help your children value the church is to help them find their place in the church. The Scripture repeatedly teaches the importance of its members. The task set before the church is not to be performed by the few, but by the masses. Your child, regardless of age, has been specially gifted to fulfill a specific role within the church. Encourage your children to find their places in the church as early as possible. Lead your family through a personality and spiritual gifts assessments like those offered by PLACE Ministries. Probably one of the most foundational ways to do this is for you to know and fulfill your place in the church. Yes, our place in the church may change as more gifts are developed and realized, but the sooner we get started, the sooner we value the church.

Below are two common excuses about church that you may have heard from your child. Reflect on the responses to these excuses so that you can help others come to see the value of the church.

1. Church is boring

This excuse is common for today’s teenage and young adult culture. The music is not loud enough. The preacher uses too many big words. The prayers last too long. If preferences are not met, then boredom easily

becomes a reason for not engaging or valuing the church. Essentially, preferences can take precedence over what God desires. Yes, the church should strive for relevance but not at the cost of truth or authentic worship. The deeper question attached to this excuse is what are your children bringing with them to church? In other words, is there baggage or distractions that they have yet to leave at the feet of Christ? Boredom most often kicks in when one's heart and mind are somewhere else. What is occupying your child's heart and mind? What relationship, struggle, or even unconfessed sin might your child be dealing with that is distracting him or her from worshipping the risen Savior?

2. Church is full of a bunch of hypocrites

This excuse may be one of the most commonly used among the younger generations. R.C. Sproul writes, "The charge that the church is full of hypocrites is manifestly false. Though no Christian achieves the full measure of sanctification in this life, the fact that we all struggle with ongoing sin does not justly yield the verdict of hypocrisy. A hypocrite is someone who does things he claims he does not do. Outside observers of the Christian church see people who profess to be Christians and observe that they sin. Since they see sin in the lives of Christians, they rush to the judgment that therefore these people are hypocrites. If a person claims to be without sin and then demonstrates sin, surely that person is a hypocrite. But for a Christian simply to demonstrate that he is a sinner does not convict him of hypocrisy."

Help your child realize that though Christians have a higher calling—we are to live above reproach—the temptation to sin still exists. "Those who use the excuse that all Christians are hypocrites as a reason not to become Christians are equally (if not more) judgmental as those so-called hypocrites because the definition of a Christian is someone who has admitted and confessed his or her sins to Jesus."

If your child uses some of these excuses, then it is very likely that your child's attitude toward church is directly affecting whether or not he or she values the church. Help correct this negative attitude as soon as possible, not in a judgmental way but in a proactive way. Remember, if your attitude toward the church is not very positive, then it is likely influencing your child's attitude toward the church.



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Discipling As You Go

What is Discipling As You Go?

Deuteronomy 6 is clear in its instructions to parents: constantly, as you live your life, be an example and train your children to follow the Lord. As parents, it is important for us to live a consistent life of faith in front of our children. As things happen in life, we should use those events to train our children, not only in right and wrong, but also in how to make decisions to live the abundant life that Christ has for us. We should model and explain how God's truth should be the standard of how we live our lives. In other words, even from the beginning, we should teach wisdom rather than the facts of "do's and don'ts." Faith is much easier caught than taught. Parents should always help their children see life's decisions through the lenses of our faith.



Parenting Tools:

Raising your son to be a godly man in an ungodly world

Can you see the extraordinary power of a relationship? It can transform a man's life. That's why Jesus, after spending a night in prayer, chose twelve men to be "with Him" (Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:12-13). He knew that His greatest impact would come from living side by side with handpicked men day after day. There is no substitute for knowing and being known by another human being - especially Dad. There is no other way to experience what deep down we really want as people – to be heard, to be understood, to be affirmed and to be valued.

Stephen Clark, in his book, *Man & Woman in Christ*, describes the normal Jewish family pattern in the days of Jesus: "In Jewish society...the mother had primary charge of all the children from birth until 5-7 years of age. At that time care of the boys would pass from the mother to father. He would work along with his father, helping him and thereby gradually learning his father's trade. During that time the father would form his son as a man. He would raise his son in his own presence and teach him all that he knew. His father was expected to equip him to function as an adult male. That's how it was done for thousands of years. They knew whom they were and what they were supposed to do because they had seen a model. But, when factories became the source of income, men had to leave home, thus diminishing their ability to influence their sons."

LESS TIME = LESS INFLUENCE

Men stopped raising their boys because they weren't present to lead their boys. When our boys have a clear role model, they intuitively know how to function when they assume the responsibility of marriage and parenting. It is the God appointed task of fathers, to equip their sons to that end. They must know whom they are and what they are to do. They must see their role model in action. How do you raise a Godly man? Be a Godly man! Model that for your sons. You must be seeking the Lord with your whole heart before instructing your sons in God's ways. Although we never live out our roles as fathers perfectly, our genuine desire and efforts to continually love, obey and grow in our knowledge of God can be felt. Take a heart exam! As your heart goes, so goes your family. If your heart isn't right, no child-raising scheme will work.

Author Tedd Tripp says, "Parenting is concerned with shepherding the heart. You must learn to work back from the behavior you see to the heart, learning to engage; not just reprove. The fundamental task of parenting is shepherding the hearts of our children."

WAYS TO INFLUENCE YOUR SONS

Start by loving your Wife – God designed parents to be partners. Show a Godly love for your wife.

1. Start by taking your family to church.
2. Start by growing spiritually. A man after God's own heart is a man who constantly deserves to grow spiritually.
3. Start by spending time with your son.
 - Be a mentor to your son.
"He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm." Proverbs 13:20
 - Be an encourager.
"And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my beloved Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" Mark 1:11
 - Be a confronter.
"Better is open rebuke than hidden love." Proverbs 27:5-6
 - Be an intercessor. Acts 20:18-38
 - Be a partner. A partner helps lift the load.
4. Start by modeling Christ-like behavior. As you begin maturing in your walk with Christ, you will assume more of a leadership role in your family.

TO BRING UP A SON

1. Make home the brightest and most attractive place on earth.
2. Make him responsible for a number of daily duties.
3. Never punish in anger.
4. Do not ridicule his vanity, but rather talk frankly on matters in which he is interested.
5. Let him feel free to invite his friends to your home and table.
6. Be careful to impress upon his mind that making character is more important than making money.
7. Live Christ before him all the time, and then you will be able to talk Christ to him with power.
8. Be much in prayer for his salvation and spiritual growth.

Parenting Tools:

Raising your daughter to be a godly woman in an ungodly world

Let her see Christ in you

“In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.” —Titus 2:7

You’ve heard this phrase before: kids are like sponges. They soak up everything around them. Your daughter, whether she’s a toddler or a teenager, notices everything you say and do. Even when you think she’s not paying any attention, she’s already noted your behavior and filed it away for future reference. Your children not only share your physical attributes, but they are a product of your beliefs, words, and actions. Therefore, it’s important for you to do two things:

Emphasize that her value is based on her status as a child of God

If you are constantly dieting and commenting on how your clothes fit or how you can lose a few pounds, then your daughter is probably mimicking your judgments in her bedroom mirror—whether she’s 5 or 15. Instead, emphasize that her value does not lie in how much she weighs, how many boys like her, or how high her grades are. Emphasize that her value lies solely in her status as a child of God and the fact that the Father created her for a unique purpose. Remind her of Psalm 139:14, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.”

Model with integrity

Another way to let your daughter see Christ in you is to model with integrity. Live out what you say each and every day. Be a model by which your daughter can learn just by seeing the essence of a godly life lived out. Acknowledge times when your faith has been inconsistent, ask your daughter’s forgiveness for not modeling with the integrity you want her to see, and ask God to help you do better.

“Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren.” —Deuteronomy 4:9

Live like Jesus every day

Yes, sometimes you'll fail and make mistakes, but don't try to hide or avoid your daughter. Be honest and real with her; she often understands far more than you give her credit for.

Teach, don't just preach

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," says Proverbs 22:6. The phrase "Because I told you so" is used to explain house rules and expectations for children all the time. Don't miss out on the opportunity to teach your daughter why you have a certain rule or expectation. Take time to explain why she can't stay out past 10 p.m., why she shouldn't date certain boys, or why you'd rather her not be on social media just yet. Show your daughters relevant Bible passages, pray with them, and speak to them like equals.

You might have a conversation like this...

This is what the Bible says, and this is what I'd like you to do. I understand that you disagree with point X, but I ask that in respect and obedience to me as your father, you don't do this. But, in the end, you are old and intelligent enough to make a decision for yourself, so may God bless you in making the right one.

A conversation like this allows your daughter to know why you've made a decision the way you have and allows her to make a choice based on God's Word and your teaching. Reflect on Ephesians 6:4, which encourages us, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Structure and discipline are absolutely necessary in parenting, but treating your child like an adult and teaching her how to make right and wrong decisions with you is infinitely more educational than simply forbidding your daughter to do X with no explanation.

Raise your child on your knees

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."—1 John 5:14–15

Prayer is stronger than any act of disobedience, sickness, addiction, or undue influence.

A parent's prayer can free children from the bonds of sin and protect children from the world. But, it doesn't take one prayer, or two—it takes a lifetime of daily conversations with the Lord.

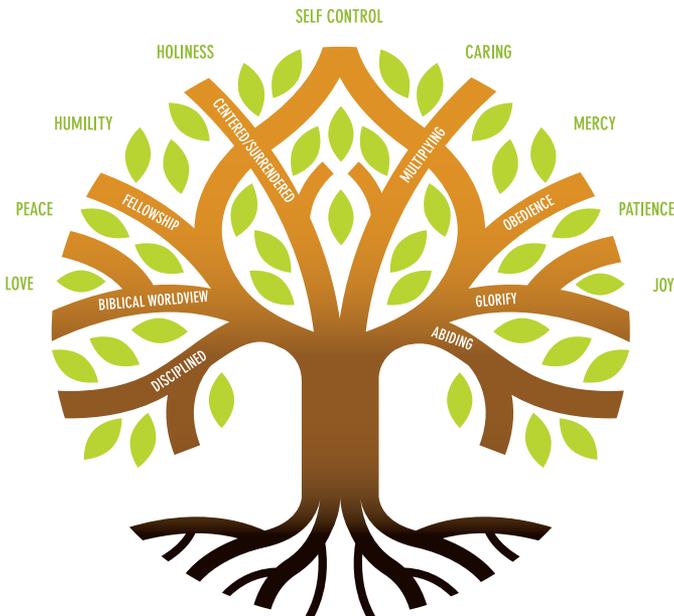
Take time to pray for your daughter daily. Pray for her current, specific needs, for forgiveness and guidance, for her future spouse, and things that she may encounter in life. Don't just pray a hurried prayer, but pray words full of love, with the intimate knowledge of your daughter's temperament and personal struggles. As you raise your daughter in humbled submission and prayer, you can expect blessing that comes from the joy of the Lord: "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is a man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate" (Psalm 127:3–5).

Ten ideas for raising a godly daughter

1. Help her choose courage over conformity. Teach your daughter how to be in the world without being of the world. Demonstrate in your own life how to consistently follow God's Word (Romans 12:2).
2. Worship and study God's Word together at church and at home.
3. Point her thoughts toward others. Encourage her to put the needs of others ahead of her own (Philippians 2:3–4).
4. Teach her to be patient and to trust in God's timing (Psalm 37:7).
5. Help her discover and develop her gifts. Encourage her to use her gifts for God's glory (1 Peter 4:10).
6. Monitor her outside influences. Know who your daughter's friends are and what values they embrace. Help her eliminate negative influences and build a peer group of strong, godly friends (1 Corinthians 15:33).
7. Teach her how to define her true self-worth. Explain to your daughter that the world's formulas for defining self-worth don't add up! Let her know that her worth doesn't come from what she looks like, what she does, or what other people think of her, but rather from the facts that God is more concerned with her inner heart than her outward appearance, He cares more about who she is than her accomplishments, and that it is God's opinion of her alone that matters. Tell your daughter that God's formula is the only one that works: her worth equals who she is in Jesus Christ.
8. Encourage her to dress modestly. Explain to your daughter why dressing modestly is an important way to honor God with the body He has given her. Help her understand that immodest clothes send wrong messages to guys and stimulate them to think lustfully toward her. Let her know

why choosing to be modest is a vital part of respecting her dignity as a person. Ask God to give her the confidence she needs to refrain from seeking attention in the wrong way (1 Timothy 2:9–10).

9. Help her discern the difference between facts and fairy tales. Help prevent your daughter from falling into the cultural lie that finding her Prince Charming will equal a life that's happily ever after. Teach her that if she expects a guy to complete her, she's setting herself up for disappointment and heartache. Tell her that only Christ's love can completely fill her heart. Encourage her to pursue her ultimate needs through a relationship with Christ rather than trying to meet her needs through a romantic relationship.
10. Help her get to know and trust the Bible. Explain to your daughter why the Bible isn't just another book filled with nice stories and principles. Show her how it is God's inspired, living Word. Help her understand that the Bible is God's revelation of Himself to people, which unveils His eternal plan for all humankind. Let her know about Scripture's consistency over the years and fulfilled prophecy. Show her how the Bible is relevant to her life.



Parenting is concerned with shepherding the heart.