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## **The Drama of Parenting— Parenting 701**

### **Ephesians 6:1-4**

**PowerPoint Presentation: None**

**Keywords: Parenting, Children, Family, Gender Roles, Teens, Teenager**

**SermonAudio blurb: none**

#### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Transitions are hard for many people. We tend to like stability rather than change.
  - 1. There is the comfort of knowing what to do and how to do it.
  - 2. There is the confidence that something “works” and so you don’t want to tweak it.
  - 3. But change and development is inevitable. The result of this inevitability is various reactions.
    - a. Ignore it until it can’t be ignored.
    - b. React to it when it comes.
    - c. Plan for it and seek to guide those transitions as best you can.
- B. For parents, the presence of teenagers is a time of great transition and it is a time where many parents can stumble.
  - 1. We can continue to try to treat them as children. You will hear this all the time. He is just a kid (referring to a 14 year old).
  - 2. We can cut them loose completely and hope for the best. This is the parenting model of “just hope that they don’t do something stupid and pray a lot.”
  - 3. Or we can anticipate this time and both consider it and approach it through a biblical paradigm/model. This is what I am going to give today.
- C. Basic points to keep in mind:
  - 1. The idea of a teenager is a modern construct.
    - a. Better to think of them as young adults with the emphasis upon “adult.”

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- b. There is no biblical category of “teen” nor in most cultures is there this category. The bible speaks of three groups, children, adults and the elderly.
  - c. The goal is to get out of childhood and youthfulness for that is where folly and sin abound and move into adulthood and maturity where wisdom is found (assuming you do it well).
2. The teen is not your enemy and you are not to be in “survival mode.”
- a. The potential for life-changing actions grows with each year your child lives. The damage a 3 year old can do is usually a lot less than a 17 year old. This can result in paralyzing fear.
  - b. Also as the child grows into adulthood they will begin to naturally push against boundaries and question things. This can result in a defensive posturing by the parents rather than a thoughtful engagement.
  - c. You should begin preparing for this time when your children are very young. Decisions on how you raise your little ones should always include the thought of how that will prepare them for young adulthood.
3. In our culture it can be an awkward time of the “inbetween” and the better this is grasped the easier it will be.
- a. They are not children, they are now in puberty and this is huge to understand and respect. This sexual awareness is not your enemy, it is part of God’s divine purpose and how you react and act about this reality will go a long ways in how you help your teen.
  - b. There are many changes that they are experiencing and for them it is all new so having a wise and faithful parent present is incredibly helpful.
  - c. You are moving away from telling them what to do and helping them figure out what they should do themselves. You are moving from order giving to counselor.
- D. For a parent with teens what you really have are young adults. In many ways what you are doing is shepherding/pastoring them. If you approach parenting your teen in this manner it makes things a lot easier.

## **II. Teens.**

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- A. First, if they have been raised in a Christian household by now there should be a decision for Jesus Christ or clearly a movement toward that decision.
  - 1. I will get into this in more detail on my upcoming sermon on evangelizing your children. But if you are faithful as a Christian parent then they should be coming to certain conclusions related to Jesus Christ.
  - 2. This is no difference than meeting with a person who doesn't know Jesus for the purpose of bring them the gospel. At some point you need to ask them what they believe and why.
  - 3. You have been pointing them to Jesus, having them read the bible, teaching them of God, bringing them to church, memorizing Scripture for 12-14 years. What do they make of all of that?
  - 4. **Everything** else I will teach is presupposing that you have been raising your child as a Christian and not a pagan.
- B. Be on guard for your teen's soul.
  - 1. Acts 20:28-31.
    - a. The command is to keep watch and it is primarily used in Scripture to keep watch out for false doctrine.
      - (1) Beloved, the battle for your son and daughter is at the heart level. What they believe and love. This means you must exercise great diligence on the various ways your teen is growing in their acquisition of knowledge and convictions.
      - (2) This means that there is no excuse for not knowing. You are to make the hearts of your children the basis of your intense study for the fulness of their life with you.
      - (3) This involves then their personal relationships, their books and shows that they enjoy, their curriculum, their browsing on internet and anything else that affects them.
    - b. Note also that it is for all the flock, in your case this means all your children. The easy ones and the hard ones. Too often it is in the teen years that the focus is purely on the one creating trouble and you let slide the "good" one. A faithful parent is one who casts his and her eyes over the whole of the family.
    - c. Note that just as it is the Holy Spirit who made these men elders so too you are appointed to be the parents of these young people. Embrace this as part of your calling and take it seriously.

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- d. As I have already stated, you should be raising Christians and assuming this is what you are doing as well then you should see these as people who are more than merely your children. They belong to the Church of God and are brothers and sisters in the Lord.
- e. Notice in what you are shepherding your teens (29).
  - (1) People from outside the faith.
    - (a) Beloved, if you don't teach your children early on to discern truth and those who speak it then you set them up as they get older to receive the lies of those who hate Christ.
    - (b) These are not "just friends;" rather they seek to destroy the faith of those in the Church.
  - (2) People from inside the faith.
    - (a) Then there will be relationships that show up within the Church that need to be monitored and discussed.
    - (b) There is a ton of bad teaching and doctrine and living from within the Church. There are those who come into the church to prowl on those within it. A wise parent seeks to shepherd their young adults through these waters.
  - (3) If I were to summarize these two points it would simply be that your job as a parent of teens is to help them discern and confront or avoid those influences which promote bad doctrine and sin.
    - (a) If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness (1 Timothy 6:3)
    - (b) No Christian parent should allow the idea that false teaching somehow will not impact their son or daughter.
    - (c) Life betrays doctrine and doctrine produces fruit. As your son or daughter grows and begins to make

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friends on their own this is where your care as a parent/shepherd comes into play.

(d) For your teen to have sin issues abound or control them means that there are serious doctrinal issues at the core of it.

(4) Early in their life the expectation of obeying God was to obey parents. But as they age you must help them make the transition to simply obeying God. From dependence upon you to independence from you, but never from God.

C. Four things needed to parent a teen well (2 Timothy 3:10 - 4:10)

1. Be a godly example in all things.

- a. Paul had absolute confidence that his life was observed in all of its strengths and weaknesses before Timothy.
- b. Note the vastness of Paul's terms in vss 10-12.
- c. Note the faithfulness of Paul both in the good and pleasant and the difficult and painful. He painted a living picture of dependence upon Jesus Christ.
- d. This is what is needed by your teens as they move into adulthood and independence.
- e. They don't need an airbrushed image nor do they need to witness hypocrisy in action.
- f. They need a mother and father committed to the historic doctrines of the Christian faith who live out their day to day lives in an awareness of the abiding presence of their Lord.
- g. In my premarital counseling I reference an image from Doug Wilson's book, *Reforming Marriage*. In it he asks what is the spiritual aroma of your household. Is it like that of freshly baked bread or like something that crawled under your refrigerator and died? Your teenager knows the answer to this question.
- h. Beloved, there is great value in others speaking into the life of your son or daughter. But that will never come remotely close to the power of godly living by you before the face of your teen.

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- i. As you live out your faith and you suffer for it never forget that your son and daughter watches how that faith intersects with life. Especially life that involves suffering.
  - j. Hebrews 13:7, “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”
    - (1) Parents live a life worth remembering by those you lead.
    - (2) Give them a vast library of actions, habits and attitudes to consider as they look at your life as it winds down.
    - (3) And note finally that in the writer’s mind your faith is not private or personal. It is something that is observable and also one that your child can imitate.
2. Teach the bible and sound doctrine (13 - 4:2).
- a. Note how Paul piles up the importance of Timothy remembering what was taught to him in this section.
  - b. If you do not instruct from the bible as your little ones as they grow then you should not be shocked to find that there is little interest as they enter adulthood.
  - c. Note how Paul speaks of the bible’s relevance for you and your family from birth through to adulthood (14-15). Your household should model a generational commitment to the Word of God. Which means that if you are the first generation then you are the one who starts this race.
  - d. Vs 16 shows how the bible must affect how your home functions as a Christian home.
    - (1) There is no higher authority in your home than the Word.
    - (2) There is no true that is contrary to the Word.
    - (3) The bible is what motivates you as to how you live in this age.
    - (4) As your children move toward those teen years you need to bring them to the Word for the basis for your thoughts and positions. They desperately need to see that you and your spouse are under the authority of God’s Word.

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- e. When your son or daughter decides to stiffen their neck you don't change tactics. 4:2, whether it is during the good or the bad times, you bring the Word of God to bear upon the situation.
3. Confront sin (3:16; 4:2).
    - a. This is where it becomes no fun but this is where you truly own the calling to be a parent.
    - b. Note that you will never do this well when you fail or are lazy with the first two points.
    - c. Sin is the key point of confrontation, rebuke and correction. Not preferences but that which falls into sin.
    - d. Paul reminds us that this must be done with great patience because there can be hard seasons of correction that may go well into their lives as adults.
    - e. You will find that your young adults will want to know why you think something is wrong and this is why you bring them to the Word of God. And it is why you must know the Bible yourself.
    - f. This means you must be brave in these times. You cannot shirk this responsibility. It is very hard to watch parents who are afraid of what might happen if they confront sin in their teen's life. That is a person who somehow lost God's calling for them.
  4. Test their faith (4:3-10).
    - a. As your sons and daughters grow into adulthood they will begin to show you more clearly what they love and where their heart is at.
    - b. Watch the messages and messengers that they gather around them. What is the message of the music and the videos that are flowing through their ear buds.
    - c. Refuse to be that person who tickles the ears of the teen. Rather, when you see serious issues in their life you must bring that lovingly and seriously to their attention and to expect them to make a decision.
    - d. Do not be so convinced of your child's faith that you are not testing their profession of faith. This is a hard balance to walk but you must walk it.
- D. Help your teen leave well.

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1. To do this requires you to plan for this moment in advance. I have watched too many parents grieve the passing of the various stages childhood and a dread of the children leaving the home.
  - a. This is not proper.
  - b. It is good to create good memories of these stages but never to have the child stay in those stages.
2. This means you are planning to instruct them on how to arrange their lives in all of the key parts of life before they leave.
  - a. Faith.
  - b. Finances.
  - c. Relationships.
  - d. Work/vocation.
  - e. Education.
  - f. Society.
3. Train them to be prepared to marry when they leave home regardless of if they do.
4. Between the ages of 12 and 18 you are to increasingly help teach them to make their own decisions.
  - a. At first you can and should intervene when a foolish decision is rendered.
  - b. As they approach 18 though you have to let them fail and also bear the fulness of the consequences of that bad decision. Warn them and then stand back.
5. Get your sons out into the world on their own as soon as you can. Do not make it easy for them to vaguely float through life on your dime. This is contrary to their divine calling to be men who protect and provide.
6. Tie faithfulness to their duties/chores/employment to food and comfort.
  - a. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-11)



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- b. This can start early on. Your 8 year old doesn't want to do his chores? Then dinner is something he sits and watches the rest of the family enjoy.
- c. A teen who is able to annoy and irritate the family members is a teen who has too much time on their hand, fix that immediately.

### **III. Conclusion.**

#### **A. Tidbits.**

- 1. Read carefully *Age of Opportunity* when your child is entering the teen years.
- 2. Don't get into debates over words with your teen.
- 3. Their choice of friends can be very bad and it is not your responsibility to accept those friends. Reject those which are pointing your teens to evil.
- 4. Whatever sexual temptation you think they are under it is likely far more and the presence of sexually explicit material is likely far more prevalent than you think.
- 5. Consequences are your friend so do not be quick to remove them from your teen. Repentance is not the same as enduring consequences. But consequences are a great way to help reveal repentance.
- 6. Help them see things with a long view. Yes, lazy school work seems to be a good idea when you want to hang with friends but the long term costs are serious. Even more so with a lazy spirit or a lying tongue.
- 7. Everything ultimately is a revelation of their heart so train yourself to take note of what is being revealed even if you don't speak to them on it every time.

#### **B. Being a parent is a gift from God and that includes being a parent of a teen.**

- 1. See them as that gift.
- 2. See your calling to point them to a life under the gaze of their God and the goodness that comes with that life.
- 3. Make the gospel the foundation for all you do and be a man or woman of God.

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## ***Community Group Questions***

1. How were you taught to view teens and the teen years and how did this sermon perhaps challenge or support that view?
2. Why do you think the teen years are seen as being so hard for the parent? What wrong thinking might be present in this?
3. Why is modeling your faith so critical in parenting and how can the CG help encourage you in this task?