

THE COUNSELOR

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PARENTING TEENS PART 1

Issues & Challenges



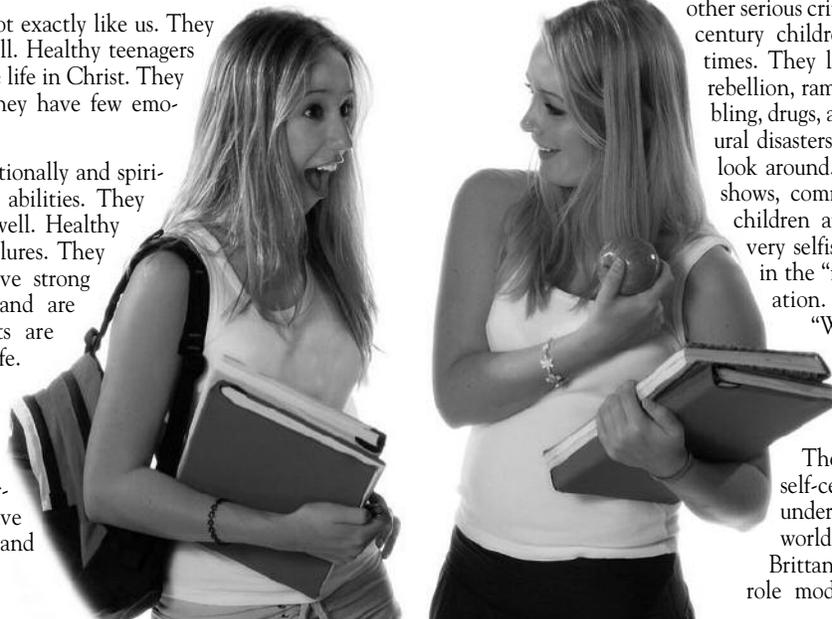
Some folks cringe when they hear the word “teenager.” Others have fond memories of their own teen years and welcome the challenge of raising their own adolescents. Most parents agree that the teen years are difficult, frustrating, and challenging. Some parents will readily admit that their children’s teen years were painful, disastrous, and full of tension and family conflict. Nevertheless, we survive parenting our teens through those turbulent years. Some of us come out better than others, but we all make it. Parents, you don’t have to feel powerless and hopeless in raising your teenagers today or dread those years ahead when your children reach adolescence. God is good. He will give you the wisdom, tools, support, endurance, and power to raise healthy children from birth through young adulthood. You will make it with Him! This newsletter and the next one will help you understand and parent your teens today. We are called to be Godly parents. It is a tremendous privilege and responsibility to parent children. We are the stewards of the next generation or possibly the last generation before Christ returns! I am convinced we are living in the end times. The world is more depraved than ever, and the events described in Revelation are unfolding. We need to understand our teenagers and equip them so they can thrive spiritually, morally, emotionally, and psychologically in a decadent society. We need to be proactive! Children and adolescents need courageous, Godly parents who are not afraid to rise up against the wave of evil and deception in our world today.

Healthy Teens

Your primary goal is to raise healthy children and teenagers who thrive and grow into loveable, capable, effective, Godly adults. What does a healthy teen look like?

They are not perfect and they are not exactly like us. They are different but well adjusted overall. Healthy teenagers are equipped to deal with and handle life in Christ. They respond positively to challenges. They have few emotional difficulties.

Healthy teenagers are balanced emotionally and spiritually. They are confident in their abilities. They handle crises, tragedies, and stress well. Healthy teens rebound from setbacks and failures. They have relatively few fears. They have strong positive relationships with peers, and are socially adept. Healthy adolescents are motivated to achieve in school and life. They have good problem solving skills. They are independent and responsible for the most part. They resist negative influences from their peers. Healthy teens are loving, caring, and affectionate. They also have great relationships with their parents and siblings.



The Times and Challenges

We live in troubled times. September 11th, 2001 changed us forever. We have seen more violence than ever over the last decade. Wars, terrorism, school shootings, kidnappings, sexual abuse/murder, and other serious crimes occur more frequently. Our 21st century children and teenagers live in perilous times. They live in a world full of wars, chaos, rebellion, rampant sex, pornography, gangs, gambling, drugs, alcohol, corporate scandals, and natural disasters. We live in a Godless society. Just look around. The billboards, movies, television shows, commercials, and news tell it all. Our children and teenagers are growing up in a very selfish and permissive world. They live in the “me” and “give it to me now” generation. Commercials like Burger King’s “When you do it your way, it tastes good,” Nike’s “Just Do It!” and Sprite’s “Obey your thirst.” reflect the times. They basically say, don’t be denied, do your own thing.

They reflect and promote our society’s self-centered attitude. Our teenagers are under attack and pressure to conform to a world that is wasting away. They have Brittany Spears, Puff Daddy, and M&M as role models. The nuclear family is under



attack. The divorce rate is 50% now. Blended families will eventually outnumber traditional families. Gay activists press for recognition and legalization of same sex marriages. Teenagers are encouraged to express themselves sexually with whoever makes them feel good, opposite or same sex relationships. You and your teens face serious challenges today. The greater the challenges, the greater the need to be proactive and respond positively and aggressively. Don't despair, nothing is impossible with God! You can rise to the occasion with Christ.

Issues and Causes

We live in a fallen world that is falling deeper. Prayer was taken out of the school and the Ten Commandments are being removed from public places. Our world is moving further away from God each day. These issues affect your children and teenagers. Their culture pressures them to be self-absorbed, self-oriented, and conform to it's beliefs. The strongest teenagers could find themselves compromising their values and beliefs. This happens with adults! There's tremendous stress and pressure on families today. Busy schedules push families beyond their limits. High conflict families are prevalent today. This usually includes pre and post divorce families as well as blended and single parent families. It includes families with serious marriage problems, personality clashes, boundary issues, acting out children and teens, poor conflict-resolution and communication skills, anger problems, substance abuse, financial troubles, resentments, and disconnection from God. Father absence, uninvolved fathers, and conflicted father-child relationships create significant problems for teenagers. Fathers can bless or curse their children with their relationships. Father-starved children and adolescents become stunted emotionally and have trouble making life transitions. Father hunger, father wounds and the wounded father within, cause a lot of problems for children and teenagers. They have an affective craving for their father to hold them, affirm them and spend time with them (father hunger). The father wound created by father/child problems gets passed onto the child. The child carries his father's wound (wounded father within). Unresolved individual and relational problems can contribute to significant conflict in families and teenagers. Hurts, wounds, and unfinished business can be passed from one generation to the next. A major source of pain in these families results from unforgiveness. Teenagers also feel less connected when they experience rules without relationship. Harsh discipline without warmth and love can cause serious problems in adolescents. Lack of vision and focus also generates problems. Parenting without clear direction and sense of purpose confuses and angers teenagers. Angry, unhappy, rebellious/disobedient, confused, conflicted, broken, emotionally blocked teenagers and adults can develop from the issues and problems described above. They will be a generation of teens/young adults without a sense of

focus and vision. Remember, there's hope. This can be prevented. All of this can be healed, reversed, and restored with God and your involvement.

Understanding Teens

The key issues in adolescence are: transition from childhood to adulthood; individuation (separation from parents); emotional and behavioral independence/autonomy; personal identity ("Who am I?" "What am I doing here." and "What am I going to be?"); and sexuality. Children progress through adolescence. This is a process. Adolescence can be divided into three periods (early-ages 12-14, middle-ages 15 and 16, and late-ages 17-19). Each stage has it's own challenges. Children progress physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. They become bigger, and stronger. Their thinking moves from concrete to more abstract. They fluctuate emotionally. Spiritually, teenagers go from basic understanding to higher levels of knowing and believing. They question God as they grow in their relationship with Him. Teenagers can be difficult. They may not talk much, appear distant, push you away, have an "attitude," and be hard to reach, but they need you. Teenagers need specific things from you. They need to be validated, accepted and made to feel worth while by you. They need to be connected to you and especially to their peers. Teens need to be loved, nurtured, and encouraged no matter what. They need to separate more from you so they can develop on their own. They need to have more freedom, to gradually branch out, and to be trusted more. They need for you to have faith in them. Transitions and milestones come. These include puberty, interest in the opposite sex, driver's license, jobs, graduations, and eventually leaving home. The goal of parenting is to help your children move through adolescence, encouraging and supporting more independence and self-functioning. This is a challenge for all parents.

It brings sadness and joy to see your child become his own person and move on. Parents feel the loss, and emptiness (empty nest). The goal from the day they are born was to raise them to leave some day. It's sad but joyful. Many parents make the mistake of viewing their teenagers as "little adults." They expect them to act like adults in their maturing bodies. Teenagers are in transition, just like adults, but more so. View them as "big kids" growing up. This view will eliminate a lot of anger, pressure, frustration and confusion.

Relationships The Bedrock of Healthy Parenting

Your relationship with your children is critical in raising them. You cannot be a highly effective parent and raise healthy, Godly children without good, strong, loving, Godly relationships with them. The parent-child relationship is extremely important, unique, and powerful in shaping a child (Also See S. Rossi Newsletters: Volumes 1, No. 4, 3, No. 2, 5, No. 3, and 7, No. 1). Your interactions, words, and time with your children determine the quality of your relationship with them. Great parent-child relationships produce great kids. The father-child relationship seriously impacts his children's lives. This relationship affects his children's values, beliefs, self-concept, motivation, academic and vocational success, sexuality, adult relationships, their future parenting and personal effectiveness in the world. Father absence, disengagement, weak, poor, conflicted, or no father-child relationship,

damages children. Children need their father's physical touch, emotional involvement, and interaction. They need his affection. Father hunger develops without it. Father-starved children are usually stunted emotionally and have trouble making life transitions. The father's warm, loving, caring, closeness builds self-confidence in his children. His children feel worthy and important. Boys develop a healthy male identity and real masculinity. Strong father-son relationships prepare boys to become excellent, lov-



ing husbands and fathers. Girls with healthy father-daughter relationships look for the same qualities in their future husbands. Healthy father-daughter relationships help girls appreciate their femininity and relate to men appropriately. Strong, Godly father-child relationships promote spiritual growth, empower, and equip their teenagers to face life's adversities courageously. Mother-child relationships are important too. These relationships provide the fundamental nurturance and security every child needs early in life. Grow strong relationships with your teenagers. Remain involved in all types of activities with them, give them your time. Don't just set limits. Share your joys, feelings, frustrations, and excitement. Admit your mistakes. Develop loving, supportive relationships. Help your teens look within themselves as you share your feelings with them. Connect with them. Believe in your teenagers. Resolve any tension in your relationship. Heal any brokenness. Assess relationship problems, needs, and commit to change. You will not labor in vain. God will bless your work in this area.

F.Y.I.

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SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

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10/30 - Parenting Teens - Part II
Second Baptist Church
Woodway (Room 3064)

11/13 - Sexual Addiction/False Intimacy - Pt. I
Second Baptist Church
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12/11 - Sexual Addiction/False Intimacy - Pt. II
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