

Christian Parents and Christian Kids – Family Series 2026

#2 – Discipline and Discipleship – Rom 6:1-14, Eph 4:14-15

Introduction - Surpassing the myth today that spanking young children equates to child abuse is the myth that teenagers must rebel against their parents. Our youth-worship culture only promotes the lie. The blight of the modern church is it's catering to the folly of youth rather than commanding and cultivating the respect of elders (Prov 1:8-9, Eph 6:1-3). What we want to do is think biblically about this time of life for our sons and daughters and seek how we might best shepherd them as parents. At 10, your boys and girls are all boys and girls and no men and women. At 20, your boys and girls will be all men and women and no boys and girls. And the transition will take place during the teen years. The metamorphosis is amazing and a privilege to watch. And you have been hand-picked by God to oversee, shepherd and guide the process – by grace through faith. “*Be anxious for nothing...*” (Phil 4:6-9).

No Exemption Card from Obedience (Rom 6:1-14) – Christian teenagers are not natural rebels; they are only learning about the fight as Christians, fast and furious, against the flesh. There is no genetic or psychological reason that justifies sin. Rom 6:1 assumes an overabundance of grace (and patience, forgiveness, and faith in a merciful, kind, and loving God) for such a question to be asked (Rom 5:20-21) and so to apply this teaching as parents (as we must) requires just such a home. Paul teaches here is that God's abundant grace is no excuse to go easy on sin. (vv1-2), for we have died and have been separated from that hold of sin and brought up into a new way of being human (vv3-4).

Identified and Grabbed by Our Baptism - Once a person is baptized, they are united together with Christ in His death and resurrection (v5), declaring their old man crucified (v6) and that their life is now found in Christ (v7). When they (just like us) are tempted to disobey Christ, Paul calls us to grab them and say, “*hey, you're baptized, you can't do that.*” We are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ (v11). And then we are to live like what has been declared (vv12-14). The difference for teenagers is not that they are the only ones who go through a crisis of faith (“am I really saved, and am I really going to live like it?”) The difference is that it is becoming a self-conscious crisis for the first time (or times) in their lives.

Loving Teenagers – Parents are grabbed by their baptisms as well. What is the second greatest commandment? And who is your neighbor? The answer is the teenager living in your home, who often appears to be less lovable than when he was a cute, little toddler. 1 Tim 5:8 teaches us that the commandments of God are even more important in the home. Loving them should be a response of our obedience to the Lord, and not how we are feeling toward them. And so, when it comes to our charge to discipline and disciple our children, it all must come from a heart of love.

Love, not Technique – Training your kids requires lots of practical techniques. But if you have all the techniques, if you have checked all the boxes, but have not love, you are nothing. Godly character formation and discipleship is simply – loving God and loving the thing you are doing currently in the presence of another person whom you also love.

Loving the Standard – This godly discipleship is not aiming to get your teenagers to conform to the standard; it is to get your teenager to love the standard. Of first importance is “do you love the standard” and is that obvious? Then, for the child, if they think you are simply trying to get them to conform to the standard, they will soon be counting the days until they can get out of this joint. “*If you cannot get them to love the standard, then lower the standard*” – Wilson. We are talking, of course, about house-rules and not God's commandments. You want them to grow up and into loving to hang with you, talk with you, open up to you, tell stories with you. In order to get there you may need to lower the standards which you will find is actually requiring you to raise your standards – “*if you want to be great in the kingdom of heaven, you have to become the servant of all – if you want to be respected in your home, you have to become the servant of all.*” This is all tied to loyalty and love. This is all tied to imitating God who commands us to love but showed us how first (1 John 4:19).

Training For Maturity - Deut 6:6-9 takes on new applications as these children spread their wings and begin to fly on their own:

Fear God (Prov 1:7) – They don't need flashy testimonies. They need faithful obedience – that will be flashy enough in today's culture. At the same time, do not trust their regeneration to a slender thread – “*she made a commitment when she was...*”, or “*he goes to church each week...*” Again, this is more caught than taught. Do you fear God?

New Forms of Discipline – At some point, spanking is out. But sin must still have consequences and you want to magnify those consequences for the sake of teaching. Do not subsidize sin, rebellion, or laziness, with free room and board (2 Thess 3:10). It may mean losing privileges (getting to go to, overnights, keys to car, tonight’s dinner, etc.), but these things should not be ‘grounding.’ You are not punishing; you are disciplining/training. The punishment was paid for by Christ and so your aim is repentance, confession, and forgiveness. You must discipline, but you may not take the transgression personally. Coach them through all steps of reconciliation and restitution; do so with them with a spirit of thankfulness (remember, it is always better that you found out). Thank God He brought it to your attention and will give you what you need to disciple them.

Think About What You Are Actually Teaching – If you have an obstinate teenager (hypothetical), your job is not to fix the teenager. Your task is to model for that teenager how to be a parent (and an adult), which they will be in just a few short years. If you are angry, offended, and short with them, you will not be teaching them how to not be obstinate (or the importance of doing whatever it is they need to do); you will be teaching them how to be exasperated with other people when they cross you repeatedly.

Avoid Evil Companions (Prov 1:10-14) – They need your help on how to choose good friends and avoid bad company. There is always something tempting about hanging out with those “on the fringe.” And this company includes actual friends but also the music, the entertainment, the movies and social media they hang out with. Your job will be to have lots of discussions about Phil 4:8-9 situations. Which also means....

Going Pert (Prov 27:17) – Learn to enjoy a good argument, showing respect to elders, learning to listen, when to be vigorous, etc. You want them thinking....

Forms of Courtesy – Why do manners matter? This is love in the trifles, and is a key to maturity. For the teen, it is a physical way to remember who they are. This covers learning not to talk too much, table manners, personal hygiene, how to participate in hospitality with you, how to use humor, and when to shut off the sarcasm.

Growing Up Christian (Eph 4:14-15) – We are all called to grow up from children unto maturity. Adulthood is when you become what you’ve been becoming. But we are all still becoming. *“Think of life as a great big school. The children are in grade school. The parents are in junior high, and the grandparents are high school seniors thinking longingly about graduating when they can go see Jesus. All of us are enrolled...”* – Wilson. And all of us are on the same trajectory toward the same end – to grow up in all things into Christ. What is getting in the way? Paul says, *“we should no longer be children.”* We all need to grow up and be growing up. Adolescence is a point along the way, a part of our sanctification. Maturity is the fruit of discipline and discipleship - and the fruit, in Christ, is the chief end of man: glorifying and enjoying God forever.