

Top Twenty Teen Parenting Principles

1. Your home should be a place where the Bible is taught formally (family devotionals) and informally (by example and in discussions). Dads, you should take the lead in this.
2. Pray for your children. Pray regularly for them on your own and with your spouse. Pray for their walk with Christ, their future spouse, and their future children, especially. Also, pray for your fruitfulness in parenting and that they would have a heart for God.
3. You must first look at your own lives and hearts. Your parenting must be shaped by your walk with Christ and your knowledge of God. Parenting is not just about learning parenting techniques. It is first and foremost about who you are.
4. You retain responsibility to disciple your teens. What this looks like is that the older they become, the more you should move in the direction of being a coach. As a coach you remain intentional in guiding them toward Christ-like adulthood.
5. Acknowledge your youth are growing and changing. Give them more responsibility and room to make decisions and “test their wings”. Trust them as much as you can. Keep God’s chief end for your children your chief end in parenting—glorifying Him through disciplining them. This means your prayer and work is in the direction of adult children who run hard after God in faith. Nothing else is a large enough goal to be faithful to the scriptures.
6. See the teen years as an age of wonderful opportunity, not as a time to be dreaded. It is a wonderful opportunity because they so often “wear their hearts on their sleeve” and are working to find out what direction they are going in life. Use all of these opportunities to shepherd their hearts with God’s wisdom.
7. Teach them their need for the grace of Christ. Do not raise self-sufficient Pharisees. Be honest with them and willing to ask forgiveness. Protect them against exclusivism (“It is us against everyone else”) and judgmentalism (“It’s us over everyone else”).
8. Parent the child God gave you, not the one you dreamt of having or expected to have. Remember that they are to be fashioned into the image of Christ, not merely into your image.
9. Refuse to make your parenting benchmark either refusing wholesale how you were raised or buying into it completely. First and foremost think biblically about parenting, yet do it in the context of your own teen experience as you think about application.
10. Keep a strong unified marriage and approach to parenting.
11. Continually pursue relationship with your youth, even if they go through periods of not communicating as much as they did when younger.

12. Make sure that your house is open for them and their friends.
13. Acknowledge that they need others to influence their lives as well. Lead them in how to build friendships and find other mentors well.
14. Keep in touch with what they are doing and how things are going. Things can change quickly. Listen, don't always be in the "tell" mode. Also, take care not to jump to conclusions before you know the facts.
15. Love them and respect them, but don't seek to be their buddy. Don't be afraid of their disapproval.
16. Choose your battles with your youth wisely. You should not, in fact, you need not, battle over everything. Pray and think carefully through whether or not their differences from you are moral issues, or if they are issues of personality and preference.
17. Keep the bar high for what you expect from them in character, study, and work.
18. Teach life skills (e.g. how to work, balance a check book, cook, etc.).
19. Serve together.
20. Don't go it alone. Be part of community and in dialogue with others who are teen parents. Don't be afraid of committed believers who take a slightly different approach. Learn from each other.