

Discipleship: The Heart of Parenting

“Prayer”

Parenting teens can begin a season in our lives that is unpredictable and challenging. Our children are now to the age that they have their own opinions and those opinions cover a wide range of things that may not necessarily align with ours. As parents we can often feel like we are without the necessary tools to lead them through these years because this is a road that we have not traveled before. We do not have experience to draw upon, and the situations we experience seem unique.

The bible does address this season of our lives. The bible needs to be our constant companion and source of wisdom in these, as in all of life's situations. There is an additional tool we have as believers to affect our children and their lives, opinions, and decisions. There is direction God has given us of how to act when we have no idea what to do, what to say, how to answer or respond. This direction ensures we are never powerless in the face of parenting challenges. This direction is to pray.

You may respond to that and think it is really little or no help at all. You pray now and it is often difficult to see the effect. Plus when you need to hear from God on a specific situation you often hear nothing but your own heart beating, as you go ahead and make a (seemingly) unpopular decision.

This morning let's see how God intends prayer to be a part of our parenting, and what we can expect from God when we pray for our children.... even in the intensity of the teenage years.

I. God's view of Prayer

A. Your prayer is powerful because of Christ

1. Access to our Creator is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf.
2. “The intercession of Christ is the perpetual guarantee that we do not speak to the thin air or to the ceiling when we pray through him. We have access to the father through him who is the true image of God.” ... “This means our prayer, through Jesus, enjoys the same acceptance as his prayers, because we are heirs with him.” Graeme Goldsworthy
3. Romans 8:34b *Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

B. Your prayer is powerfully effective

1. James 5:16-18 – *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*
2. We have access to the same God, who has the same power, and He hears the cry of his children.
3. Psalm 23:1 *“The Lord is my Shepherd...”* God is both infinite and personal, which means God is powerful beyond all understanding and also personally involved in our lives as our Shepherd.

C. Prayer is an expression of desperation and dependence upon God

1. “Prayer is not made so that God can find out what we need, because Jesus tells us, *“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him”* (Matt. 6:8). God wants us to pray because prayer expresses our trust in God and is a means whereby our trust in him can increase.” Wayne Grudem
2. 2 Corinthians 1:10,11 *He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 11 You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*
3. Prayer is what we need as parents to approach this duty of raising teenagers. We need to be crying out to God for help each and every day. Prayer brings God into our situation

II. Parenting by Prayer

- A. “We instinctively believe that if we have the right biblical principles and apply them consistently, our kids will turn out right. But that didn’t work for God in the Garden of Eden. Perfect environment. Perfect relationships. And still God’s two children went bad. Many parents, including myself, are initially confident we can change our child.... Without realizing it we become demanding. We are driven by the hope of real change, but the change occurs when we make the right moves. Until we become convinced we can’t change our child’s heart, we will not take prayer seriously.” Paul Miller, *A Praying Life*.
- B. Look to reality and faith
 1. God is a Father who wants us to come to him consistently in prayer with our needs. This would include coming to him consistently about our teenagers, since ‘needs’ can come up daily.

- a) Hebrews 4:14-16 - *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
- b) James 4:8 – *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*
- 2. God genuinely hears our prayers.
 - a) 1Peter 3:12 - *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.*
- 3. God uses trial to draw us closer to Him. Trial is normal, and trial with our teenagers is very common. We need to realize that God is at work in us as much as He is at work in them.
 - a) “You will know more of Jesus in one sanctified trial than in wading through a library of volumes or in listening to a lifetime of sermons.” Octavius Winslow

C. Watch for cynicism and doubt

- 1. “Cynicism and defeated weariness have this in common: They both question the active goodness of God on our behalf. Left unchallenged, their low –level doubt opens the door for bigger doubt. They’ve lost their child-like spirit and thus are unable to move toward their heavenly Father.” Paul Miller
- 2. Genesis 18:13,14 - *The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord?*
- 3. In coming to the Lord in prayer truly believe that there is nothing that is too difficult for God, even areas of needed change in the lives of our teenagers.

III. Our ‘Prayer Story’ opportunity

- A. When we patiently believe that God is at work in our lives and in the lives of our children that is often the point when we begin to consistently pray for them, and watch God ‘weave His story’.
- B. Let our faith be evident in our responses, and allow our hope to be centered upon Jesus, not upon their responses.
- C. We can talk with them, which we should, we can reason with them, which we should, however our talking to God about and for them should be our most consistent conversation. It is the Holy Spirit who is at work in their lives to bring and conform them to Christ.

1. “Nothing is so precious, so costly, so indestructible as the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul.” Octavius Winslow

D. Look with faith to see the active role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our teenagers.

IV. Application workshop

- A. Please write down on a 3x5 ‘Prayer Card’ for each child the following:
 1. What is one way you are grateful for them?
 2. What are the specific areas you want to ask God to change in them?
 3. What are some scriptures that you can pray that address these areas?
- B. Pray for them daily, and begin today.