



# PARTNERS

*with p u r p o s e*  
*p a r e n t i n g t e e n s*



# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## A FIRM FOUNDATION

Three things will determine what your teen eventually becomes. The quality of your parenting, the choices of your teen and, most critically, the sovereign work of God in their life. This course explores how we can partner together with our teen and the Lord toward a God-glorifying outcome.

### I. YOUR TEENAGER IS A GIFT FROM THE LORD

*Psalm 127:3* – Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

Our starting point for parenting through the teen years must be this – this teen is a gift from the Lord. Let our overwhelming sentiment as we approach this subject be gratitude that God would bless us with this child and love and affection for this precious gift – even in the midst of the inevitable difficulties of the teen-aged years.

### II. YOUR TEENAGER IS A STEWARDSHIP FROM THE LORD

*Ephesians 6:4* – Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

BEN PATTERSON - “A steward is someone entrusted with another’s wealth or property and charged with the responsibility of managing it in the owner’s best interest.”

### III. RAISING A TEENAGER REQUIRES MUCH GRACE AND PATIENCE

*Hebrews 6:12* – So that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

#### A. Parenting is Hard Work

We have to fight the expectation that raising a teenager is going to be easy. Successful parenting is not for lovers of ease. Correspondingly, we have to fight the cultural lie that it is impossible, that teens will rebel and that nothing can be done about it.

#### B. Parenting is a Process

And because it is a process, patience is necessary.

#### C. Parenting is Beyond our Ability

1. The importance of knowing your inadequacy
2. The importance of knowing God's all sufficiency

BOB KAUFMAN uses the phrase “parenting with God in the picture”. There are things we can and must do and things only God can do. Be faithful to use means but never mistake the importance of your contribution with the importance of God's. Never lose sight of God in the process.

# A FIRM FOUNDATION

*Psalm 127:1-2* – Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

*2 Corinthians 12:9-10* – But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

*PAUL TRIPP (Age of Opportunity, 99)* – "It is important for us to look at our task as parents from the vantage point of the awesome power of God – the power by which he created the world, holds the universe together, raised Christ from the dead, and defeated sin. Our God is a God of glorious power far beyond what our minds can conceive. We cannot look at our parental responsibilities only from the perspective of our own weariness and weakness. We must remember that we are the children of the Almighty. He *is* Power! He *is* Strength."

### 3. The importance of prayer

Prayer highlights our insufficiency and God's all sufficiency.



CHARLES BRIDGES (The Christian Ministry, 178) - It is faith that enlivens our work with perpetual cheerfulness. It commits every part of it to God, in the hope, that even mistakes shall be overruled for his glory; and thus relieves us from an oppressive anxiety, often attendant upon a deep sense of our responsibility. The shortest way to peace will be found in casting ourselves upon God for daily pardon of deficiencies and supplies of grace, without looking too eagerly for present fruit."

#### IV. YOUR TEEN WANTS AND NEEDS YOUR INVOLVEMENT

STEVE WRIGHT (A Parent Privilege, 16) – "If you are a parent, then you too have shared some of the same thoughts of inadequacy, feeling both underequipped and overwhelmed...As our children grow, we continue to doubt ourselves, our skills, and our ability to impact their lives. Amid all the cultural influences, peer influences, and media influences, often our influences seem to erode as we feel like we take a place in line behind dozens of others who influence our children. In these years, many parents believe that kids listen to their friends, celebrities, trendsetters, schoolteachers, leaders at church, and just about anyone else more than they listen to mom and dad...While you may feel inadequate and may think that our kids stopped listening years ago, you may be surprised by the facts. The latest research and time-tested biblical precepts emphasize exactly the opposite. Your children listen to you. They both want and need you involved in their lives. You have an apparent privilege, the most exciting of your life, right in front of you – to be a touch of grace on your children's souls."

- An extensive study of 272,400 teenagers conducted by *USA Today Weekend Magazine* found that 70 percent of teens identified their parents as the most important influence in their lives.
- An MTV and Associated Press study asked “So you’re between the ages of 13 and 24. What makes you happy?” Spending time with family was the top answer to that open ended question. Parents are seen as having an overwhelmingly positive influence in the lives of most young people.

## V. ITS NEVER TOO LATE.

No matter where you find yourself as we go through this course...

1. Start it up
2. Step it up
3. Keep it up

# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLAN

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

### I. GOD'S PURPOSE (6:2-3)

#### A. Your Teen's Welfare

From generation to generation ("you and your son and your son's son) the blessings of the covenant ("days may be long...go well...multiply greatly") would come to those who obeyed these commands. For us this means the blessings of the gospel – salvation, justification, reconciliation, adoption, the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, and eternal life. We need to communicate to our teens that God's plan for them is far better than any plan they might devise for themselves.

But, do we have an ironclad promise that our children will be saved? No, but we have every reason to hope because of our covenantal relationship with God. Although God would have every right to not choose our children and our children must choose Him (*John 1:12-13*), I believe we have every reason for hope and faith that our children will indeed be saved

*Deuteronomy 30:19* – I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life (*in the NT, life = the gospel*), that you and your offspring may live.

*Isaiah 65:23* – They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them.

*Proverbs 22:6* – Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

## GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLAN

### B. Your Teen's Mission

Our parenting is part of God's overarching plan to form a people for His glory.

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT (NIBC, 8) – “Deuteronomy is a book for a people on the move, literally at first, spiritually and morally thereafter. It presents therefore, a God of sovereign worldwide purpose and a people with a sharp spiritual mandate and moral agenda. Deuteronomy bends every rhetorical, literary, emotional, and moral skill to the task of equipping and motivating God's people to live for the purposes of God in each generation.”

What is the focus of your parenting? Is it simply to keep teens in line, or to grow up to be nice Christian people, or are you presenting a higher, more glorious reason for living? Do your teens see your directions to them as only one more rule or duty or do they see (because you see) a larger purpose in your parenting?

The quickest way to miserable or mediocre kids is to set the bar too low for them.

## II. GOD'S PLAN (6:1, 4-9)

Teach and model the character and commands of God at home.

### A. Teach (v 1, 4-5)

Teach God's character (v 4-5) and commands (v 1) – the foundational truth and foundational duty of Israel.

#### 1. Character (v 4-5)

J.A. THOMPSON (Deuteronomy, 122) – "Israel's obedience was not to spring from a barren legalism based on necessity and duty. It was to arise from a relationship based on love. It was love toward God and the remembrance of all His past mercies that moved men to obedience.

Love for God is the only consistently effective motivation for the Christian life. Teaching God's wonderful character inspires our teens to love Him, which is the primary command out of which all true and lasting obedience springs. If you simply impose requirements, you are not giving your children what they need to fulfill those requirements. We too often start with rules and regulations and expect that our kids (especially unsaved ones) are somehow going to have the desire and ability to obey them. It simply won't work. Your teen must be motivated to holiness and mission by their love for God and not simply rules and regulations.

Our love for Him is inspired by His character and deeds – especially the gospel.

JOHN STOTT – “The cross is a blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough for its sparks to fall on us.”

TEDD TRIPP (Dazzle Your Teen, JBC, Summer 2005, p. 9) – “Part of our calling every day is to hold out for our teens the delights that they were made for – the delights of knowing God. As we see teens try to fill their appetites, we need to help them understand the greatest delight...Teenagers need to hear this message all the time: We have a glorious God. Life is found in knowing Him. Life is not found in the abundance of possessions, satisfying your appetites, having a string of successes, or all those other things. The greatest joys you can possibly experience as a human being are those joys found in the presence of God.”

## 2. Commands (v1)

Obedience is not only right and due but is the key to a blessed life and fruitful mission.

*Ephesians 4:17-24* – Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

## B. Model (v 6)

There is a prerequisite here. It ("these words") must first be "on your heart". Our love for God, our obedience to God and our mission for God can't just be external (i.e. facts we teach) but must be internal (i.e. affections we possess).

TEDD TRIPP (Dazzle Your Teens, JBC, Summer 2005, 11) – "If we are going to hold this vision out for our teens, then we have to be dazzled by God ourselves. You can't give away what you don't have. We have to be people who continually keep God before us. We must interpret our lives through the lens of the glory and wonder of who He is. We need to be people who are dazzled ourselves so that our hearts overflow with the wonder of the glory of God."

## C. At Home (v 7-9)

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN - "It is well that we remember that the fathers were principally responsible for the giving of this religious instruction. Sometimes it seems as though Christian people have lost something of this ideal, and especially Christian fathers. There is a great tendency to trust the religious teaching of our children to others, such as preachers, Sunday-school teachers, and those who specialize in that work in one form or another. For the work of all these, we cannot be too thankful; but we ought to remember that the first responsibility for the diligent teaching of the children belongs to those to whom they are entrusted as the most sacred and blessed gift of God. The teaching of the things of God by fathers and mothers has a value and a virtue which can be supplied by none other."

# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## THE SINS OF THE PARENTS

As parents we are called upon to constantly judge/evaluate our teen's progress and to bring correction and encouragement that keeps them moving in the right direction. Jesus addresses one of the dangers of this judge role – to have our judgment colored by our own sins.

*Matthew 7:3-5* – Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

PAUL TRIPP (Age of Opportunity, 18) – “It is my experience that when parents begin to recognize, own, confess, and turn from their own wrong heart attitudes and the wrong actions that flow from them, the result is a marked difference in their relationship to their teen and in the way they view the struggles of the teen years. When we look with concerned eyes toward the teen years, we need to look not only at our children, but also at ourselves. Parents who are humbly willing to change, position themselves to be God's instruments of change.”



PAUL TRIPP (Age of Opportunity, 29) – “It is a waste of time for us as parents to think about strategies for parenting our teens without first examining ourselves...I am deeply persuaded that our idols have caused us to see opportunity as trial and caused us to strike back at our teenagers with bitter words of judgment, accusation, and condemnation, behaving toward them with intolerance and anger. While God is calling us to love, accept, forgive, and serve, we are barely able to be nice.”

# THE SINS OF THE PARENTS

Our own sin is our greatest problem as parents. Effective parenting begins with us identifying and correcting the sins that keep us from effectiveness. Teens don't create our sins, they reveal the sins that were already there.

## Some Common Sins of Parents

J.C. RYLE (Holiness) – “We need not be afraid to look at sin, and study its nature, origin, power, extent and vileness, if we only look at the same time at the almighty medicine provided for us in the salvation that is in Jesus Christ...Awful and tremendous as the right view of sin undoubtedly is, no one need faint and despair if he will take a right view of Jesus Christ at the same time.”

In looking at these issues never forget that God is greater than our sin and greater than our teen's sin. He has provided both forgiveness and power through the gospel. You can change and be an instrument in the redeemer's hands to help your child to change.

BOB KAUFMAN – “My failures as a parent don't ultimately determine my child's eternal destiny, but they do affect it.”

## 1. Selfishness

*Mark 10:45* – For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Biblical leadership, which parenting is, is selfless leadership. It is servant leadership. It is leadership that is exercised for the ultimate good of the other. Leadership that requires us to lay down our life for another's good.

## 2. Laziness

Parenting, both positive instruction and discipline, is hard work. There are no shortcuts or 10 easy steps. But we often don't want to put in the hard work. "The rest of my life is busy." "I need my rest." "I have an agenda/desires that I don't want messed up." One of our greatest hindrances to effective parenting is that we want it to be easy and when we don't find it easy we are tempted to quit, complain, shift blame to our teens, lash out in anger, or find shortcuts.

## 3. Fear of Man

We don't want our teen's disapproval so we compromise our convictions to keep peace. Parenting requires courage. Courage to correct, to say no, to ask hard questions, to insist on obedience, to discipline, etc. Courage to do the right thing when it isn't popular or easy or when the consequences may be painful.

It also requires wisdom. Wisdom to know when to take a stand and when to back off. Wisdom to know how to be your teen's friend without compromising your authority.

#### 4. Pride

Our pride can manifest itself in a variety of ways in parenting. For example...

**Wanting to be recognized and appreciated as a good parent by others** - Our children can embarrass us. This tempts us to either hide our struggles or to make decisions that we think other parents will approve of, not decisions that may be right for your teen in their particular situation.

**Wanting to be respected and appreciated by your children** - “After all I’ve done for you.” “I deserve better than this.”

**Unwillingness to admit wrong in your actions or wisdom** - Be willing to ask forgiveness or at times reconsider decisions you have made.

**Self pity** - “Why me!!!” “I don’t deserve this!!!” “Why do I have to go through this??” “After all I have done for them!!!”

#### 5. Self Righteousness

Self righteousness is when we somehow come to believe that our accomplishments were due to our own merits or abilities and not totally dependent on the merits and enabling grace of Christ. Not understanding that your teen is a sinner who needs daily grace just like you and making the goal of your parenting to point them toward that grace.

## 6. Anger

*James 4:1-3* – What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Our anger is not caused by our teen's behavior, no matter how inappropriate it may be. Our anger is always caused by craving something, even good things like respect and obedience, that we don't get. And, our anger never improves the situation. It only makes it worse.

*James 1:19-20* – Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

## 7. Uncharitable Judgment

We can so easily attribute heart motivation to our teen's actions without exploring their true motives. This must be tempered by wise judgment – a holy suspicion of our children's motives or ability for self-deception. We don't help our teens by being uncritical, only by being graciously critical.

## 8. Impatience

Patience leaves room for God to work. Impatience strives and pressures apart from God's work. Our patience with others starts with our understanding of God's patience with us.

Patience must be accompanied by faith that your children can change. Your child, whether believer or unbeliever, is never beyond the reach of God's grace. Be aware of His grace. Be aware of where He has already been at work in your teen. Be patient because of His grace.

## 9. Unforgiveness and Bitterness

When a sin or shortcoming has been long-term we can be tempted to stop forgiving and to grow increasingly bitter and resentful toward our teen which then makes their sin seem to us even more egregious and unforgivable.

## 10. Fear and Unbelief

We fear what will become of our child if we don't do everything right. We lack trust in God for our teen's ultimate welfare. This kind of fear will either paralyze us or tempt us to be overly controlling.

PAUL TRIPP (Age of Opportunity) – "If you respond out of anxiety, irritation or fear, you will try to control your child all the more. Instead of seeing this as a time of preparation, you will take on a survival mentality...If instead you move toward your teenager with a confident faith in the Redeemer, whose word is true and whose sovereign presence empowers your weak and feeble parental efforts, God will use you to communicate understanding, grace, hope and life."

# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## THE EVIL DESIRES OF YOUTH

*2 Timothy 2:22 (NIV)* – So flee the evil desires of youth.

Like us, our teens are sinners. As parents, we must be aware of their unique “evil desires” so that we might more effectively understand, sympathize, and help our teens to flee them.

### I. A TRANSITIONAL TIME

Your teen is moving from childhood to adulthood. Many important things take place during this transition. Your teen’s horizons will expand as will the number and variety of people they are exposed to. Their existing worldview will be challenged. Your teen must increasingly come to own their faith and values. They must develop their own convictions. They must learn to stand on their own. And their relationship with you will change from one of absolute authority to one of friend and valued counselor.

This transition can be hard on us as parents. We can be ruled by fear of the choices they will make. We can feel personally affronted and rejected by some of their thinking and decisions. We must weigh the cost/benefits of letting our teens make their own decisions and make their own mistakes. We can unwisely increase our use of authority at the very time when we are to be more and more releasing to our teens.

PAUL TRIPP (JBC, summer 2005, 13) – “The final years of a child’s life at home are a time of unprecedented opportunity. As a child’s world unfolds before him and he experiences greater freedom, his heart is revealed. This means parents have to take every opportunity to be part of the final stage of preparation. Being involved with our teenagers at a deep level is a critical goal for these years. Unfortunately, Western culture has a cynical view of the teen years. People tend to see teenagers as a collection of raging, rebel hormones encased in skin. Of course, you can’t talk to a hormone. But this approach is a subtle denial of God and the gospel. This approach says that God didn’t make teenagers. It says that the gospel doesn’t work for this particular group of people. That is devastatingly bad theology.”

# THE EVIL DESIRES OF YOUTH

## II. UNIQUE TEMPTATIONS

PAUL TRIPP (Age of Opportunity, 15) – “There are lusts that uniquely plague young people, temptations that are particularly powerful. These must be faced. Scripture enjoins us to be strategic, to ask the question, ‘What are the evil desires that grip a person during this phase of life?’.”

### A. The Desire for Independence

Rushing to adult privilege without adult responsibility or wisdom. Without recognizing the wisdom of covering, submission, authority, counsel, etc.

1. Pride – thinking more highly of themselves (their opinions and abilities) than is warranted and, correspondingly more lowly of you as parents.

2. Rebellion and Disobedience – an increasing unwillingness to follow your leadership and submit to your authority.
3. Withdrawal – not eager for wisdom and counsel, increasingly unwilling to talk with you, finding ways to spend less and less time with the family.
4. Dishonesty – temptation to lie or hide truth to maintain their path of independence.
5. Impatience – lack of a long-term perspective.
6. Ingratitude – lack of appreciation for what you have provided and do provide both materially and spiritually.
7. Anger – when their way is thwarted.
8. Argumentativeness – goes hand in hand with pride and desire to break away.
9. Unteachableness – an unwillingness to receive your wisdom and benefit from your experience.
10. Selfishness – not looking to serve others but to assert their perceived rights.
11. Self sufficiency – I want to do it my way and I don't need your help.



PAUL TRIPP – “This is an age when children push at the boundaries, when temptation abounds, and when peer relationships do not always encourage right behavior...there are desires that make the teenager susceptible to the temptation to rebel: the desire to be an individual and think for oneself, the desire for freedom, the desire to try new things, the desire to test the boundaries, the desire for control, the desire to make one’s own decisions, the desire to be different, the desire to fit in, and the desire to be accepted. These, with a host of other desires, all fueled by the autonomy and self-centeredness of the sin nature, can surely lead the teenager astray.”

#### B. The Desire for Experiences

Wanting to taste what the world has to offer both relationally and materially without the discernment or discipline to say no or to be moderate in saying yes.

1. Irresponsibility – the priority of fun over everything else.
2. Sexual immorality/temptation.
3. Worldliness – more excited about exploring the world than living for God.
4. Materialism – being overly impressed by and wanting stuff.
5. Short sightedness – not considering the future cost of their present actions.

6. Impetuosity – a living in the moment mentality.

7. Intemperance – lacking moderation.

9. Drinking and drugs.

J.C. RYLE – “Youth is the time when our passions are the strongest, - and just like unruly children, cry most loudly for indulgence. Youth is the time when we have generally most health and strength: death seems far away, and to enjoy ourselves in this life seems everything. Youth is a time when most people have few earthly cares or anxieties to take up their attention. And all these things help make (youth) think of nothing so much as pleasure.”

### C. The Desire to Fit In

Wanting to be accepted by their peers without the strength to not compromise biblical values.

1. Fear of man – what do people think of me?

2. Become stumbling blocks to one another

3. Tendency to become defensive about their friends – an “us against them” mentality.

4. Gossip and Slander – a readiness to talk about others to elevate themselves in their own or other’s eyes.

5. Ridicule/Mocking – without the discernment to know who and when.

# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

*1 Corinthians 15:3-4* – For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

FRANCIS FOULKES (Ephesians, 166) – “Parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than anything besides, more for this than for their health, their intellectual vigor and brilliance, their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great misfortunes.”

J. C. RYLE – “Precious no doubt are these little ones in your eyes; but if you love them, think often of their souls. No interest should weigh with you so much as their eternal interests. No part of them should be so dear to you as that part which will never die. The world, with all its glory, shall pass away; the hills shall melt; the heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll and the sun shall cease to shine; but the spirit which dwells in those little creatures, whom you love so well, shall outlive them all. And whether in happiness or misery (to speak as a man) will depend on you. This is the thought that should be uppermost in your mind, in all you do for your children. In every step you take about them, in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement, that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, “How will this affect their souls?”

## I. EVANGELIZING YOUR TEEN

*John 20:31* – ...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

### A. What You Can't Do

*John 6:44* – No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

You **can't** save them. Only God can save your child. You are only a means of grace in the process. You can't pressure your teen into being saved. You can pressure them into praying a prayer but not into being saved. This is freeing. And it is humbling. It casts our dependence right where it should be—on God.

DAVID WELLS (God the Evangelist) - "The message proclaimed has the power to do its work not because of the evangelist's personality or skills of persuasion (which is often what we look to) but because of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to turn rebellious sinners into obedient followers of Christ."

J.I. PACKER (Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, 29) - "It is not right when we regard ourselves as responsible for securing converts, and look to our own enterprise and techniques to accomplish what only God can accomplish...Regarded as a human enterprise evangelism is a hopeless task."

### B. What You Can Do

Witness to your teen the same way you would witness to anyone else.

# THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

## 1. Faithfully Preach the Gospel

There is a specific content, a specific message, the gospel, through which one must be saved – even teens!!!

*Romans 1:16* – For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

*1 Corinthians 1:18* – For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The simple gospel:

**You are a sinner who needs a Savior** – use your teens' sins, struggles, questions, etc., to help them understand this simple truth. Don't be condemning or frustrated but see these things as an opportunity to help your teen see their greatest need.

**Jesus is the only Savior** – his substitutionary death and resurrection are your teens only hope for salvation. Help them to see the gospel not as another set of rules to be obeyed but as a gift from God that brings forgiveness, power, hope and joy.

**Trust and turn** – the gospel does involve a choice that you must make clear; trust in Jesus alone to save and turn from your sins to follow him.

## 2. Faithfully Model

Set an example for your children of gospel living.

### 3. Faithfully Pray

*Romans 10:1* – Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

## II. HELPING YOUR TEEN BE ASSURED

*1 John 5:13* – I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

R.C. SPROUL (Doubt and Assurance, 50) - "The question, 'Am I saved?' is one of the most important I can ever ask myself. I need to know the answer; I must know the answer. This is not a trifle...Though we are loathe to think much about it or contemplate it deeply, we know, if only intuitively, that the worst catastrophe that could ever befall us is to be visited by God's final punitive wrath."

*Matthew 7:21-23* – "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

*2 Corinthians 13:5-6* – Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.

## A. How Can We Know?

KARL GRAUSTEIN (Growing Up Christian, 33) – “The most significant danger church kids face is false assurance of salvation – assuming that we are saved even when we are not. We grow up in a Christian culture with Christians all around us – family, church, and friends. Because we do things Christians do and we are surrounded by Christians, we tend to assume we are Christians too. But just as standing in a wheat field doesn’t make someone wheat, being raised in a Christian environment doesn’t make someone a Christian.”

We must ask ourselves – “Has my teen been genuinely saved, or, are they simply a product of a Christian upbringing?”

The scriptures are clear that if your teen is genuinely saved the effect will be apparent in their life. You can’t have the Holy Spirit come to indwell and remain the same. Their behavior (what they say and do) and values (what they care most deeply about) start to change.

WARNING: The changes should be more than subtle. Parents are often too willing to settle for subtle changes and flimsy evidence because we want to be assured of our teen’s salvation.

KARL GRAUSTEIN (Growing Up Christian, 36) – “An unregenerated heart will be apparent in our patterns of ungodly thoughts, words, and actions...regenerated hearts will demonstrate a pattern of God-honoring thoughts, words, and actions.”



## Testing the Fruit of Salvation

1. Do They Love God?
2. Do They Care About God's Word?
3. Has Their Relationship With Sin Changed?
4. Has Their Relationship With The World Changed?
5. Do They Love God's People?

## B. What If I Am Unsure?

1. What is the difference between a weak, immature believer and an unbeliever?

Conviction and progress. Every one of us struggles with sin. No one is as passionate about God as they could be. These things always must be judged on a scale not on a yes/no basis.

2. What if I think my teen is saved but lacks assurance?

In this case help them to actually look away from fruit and look to the gospel itself and the promises of the gospel for their assurance while at the same time encouraging them for the fruit you see.

*Romans 10:13* – For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

3. What if my child goes completely astray?

See Abraham Piper's paper – "12 Ways To Love Your Wayward Child"

*Proverbs 22:6* – Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

CHARLES BRIDGES (Proverbs) – "A man will be as the son is trained. The child may depart when he is young, but when he is old, in after years, smothered convictions will bring back the power of early impressions...Cultivate then, the exercise of parental faith; trusting, not to what we see, but to what God has engaged. Expect the fulfillment of the parental promise, as confidently as any other free promise of the gospel."

# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS

PAUL TRIPP (JBC, Summer 2005, 19) – “Cultivating a heart for God in teenagers is the hardest work a human being could ever do. We must realize that there is no hope apart from Christ. If I could turn the human heart by the force of my voice, the strength of my personality, the logic of my argument, or the wisdom of my parenting strategies, then Jesus would never have needed to come. As a parent, I’ve hit something that I can’t do by myself. It makes me angry. It frustrates me. It discourages me. I want an ‘instant fix’. Just give me the three steps to producing godliness in kids. But the Bible doesn’t do that. It doesn’t give us a system of redemption; it gives us a Redeemer.”

PAUL TRIPP (Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands, 124) – “What is God’s goal for your parenting? It goes way beyond clean rooms, good manners, proper dress, the right college, a good career, and marrying well. In all these things God calls parents to work toward something deeper and more lasting. Paul captures it in Ephesians 6 when he calls parents to bring their children up in the “training and instruction of the Lord.” This radically changes the parental agenda. Gone is the horizontal focus. The call is to be part of God’s work of heart transformation – to help the child change from a self-absorbed sinner to one who loves God above all else. Paul’s model of parenting is distinctly redemptive, but when parents forget that moments of difficulty are moments of redemption, they stand in the way of what the Lord is doing.”

It is our privilege to come along side our teen-aged children and help them in the process of change. But the question is - How do I help them to change? To get from here to there? From immature to mature?

## I. REVIEWING THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

### A. Our Words and Deeds are Rooted in our Hearts

Biblically the heart includes: the Mind – thoughts, plans, judgments, discernment; the Will – choices and actions; the Affections – longings, desire, revulsion, imagination, feelings; and; the Conscience – sense of right and wrong which approves or condemns your mind, will and affections

*Matthew 12:33-35* – "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit...The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.

*Matthew 13:23* – As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

*Matthew 15:19* – For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

*James 1:13-14* – Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

# INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMERS HANDS

## B. We Are Responsible to Put Off Evil and Put On Good

*Ephesians. 4:22-24* – ...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

*Colossians. 3:5* – Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry...*Colossians. 3:12* – Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience

This putting off and putting on involves not just outward behavior but the heart. In fact trying to deal only with outward behavior or circumstance and not the heart will prove fruitless in helping a person to change. Therefore one must discover and change the motivations of the heart - what we expect, demand, crave and believe.

PAUL TRIPP (Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, 67) – "Sin is much more than doing the wrong thing. It begins with loving, worshiping, and serving the wrong things."

## C. Lasting Change Is Only Possible Through the Lord

While we are responsible for putting off and putting on, we can only do this through the power of God. He provides this power in three primary ways, ways that even our unsaved teens can benefit from through God's common grace.

### 1. Scripture

*2 Timothy 3:14-17* – But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

### 2. The Holy Spirit

*Philippians 2:12-13* – Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

### 3. Others

*Hebrews 10:24* – And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

## II. BEING AN INSTRUMENT OF CHANGE

*Ephesians 6:4* – Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

## A. We Can Be Instruments of Change Through Our Instruction

A. SKEVINGTON WOOD (Expositors, 82) – What Paul is referring to here is training in righteousness, 'instruction' is correction by word of mouth. Remonstrations and reproof are implied, but also advice and encouragement.

### 1. The Actions

Teens aren't just facing sins and temptations but also fears, doubts and questions. They are trying to figure out the world and how they fit into all that is changing and going on around them. Being an instrument of change doesn't simply mean being on a sin hunt but being an ally to their soul in all the challenges and changes of growing up.

- a. Explore – ask questions that help draw out your teens' hearts so that you might better understand them and help them to better understand themselves.

*Proverbs 20:5* – The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

TEDD TRIPP (Instructing A Child's Heart) - "The finest art of communication is not learning how to express your thoughts. It is learning how to draw out the thoughts of another. Your objective in communication must be to understand your child, not simply to have your child understand you. Many parents never learn these skills. They never discover how to help their children articulate their thoughts and feelings."

- b. Enter In – try to enter into their world and understand the challenges, struggles, etc. that they are experiencing so that you might better communicate sympathy and unity with them.
- c. Prescribe – since scripture is our hope for change, find the scriptural truths and principles that come to bear on your teens' situation and instruct them on how to apply the scripture in their life. This also involves imparting faith for the power to change and the assurance of forgiveness when they have sinned.
- d. Assist – stay with them to encourage, pray and provide accountability. Be particularly intentional in pointing out evidences of grace and encouraging your teens.

*1 Thessalonians 5:14* – And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

## 2. The Attitude

*Galatians 6:1-2* – Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Always approach this process of change as a fellow sinner and struggler.



### 3. The Purpose

Our purpose in correction is three-fold – to help them mature into the image of Christ; to save them from harm because sin is always harmful to the individual involved; and, to maintain order in your home because sin not only effects the individual but those to whom they regularly relate.

#### B. We Can Be Instruments of Change Through Our Discipline

Discipline – to train and control by inflicting punishment for the purpose of perfecting moral character. There are times, because we are by nature fools and sinners, when instruction is not enough, when further reinforcement is necessary.

### III. ENLISTING OTHERS IN THE BATTLE

*Proverbs 18:1* – Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.

Raising teens is hard enough without trying to go it alone. Get others involved in helping your teen (friends, care group, pastors, older couples, etc.).

BOB KAUFMAN – “Observations are gifts to seek, not penalties to be avoided.”

# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## EXPECTATIONS AND EXASPERATIONS

### I. EXPECTATIONS

We have to have appropriate boundaries in place to ensure order in our homes and to protect our teens. Not boundaries that are excessive or are intended to micro-manage our teens lives but reasonable boundaries, reasonable expectations for their lives.

#### A. For a Relationship with God

This would include the spiritual disciplines, family devotions and Sunday morning and care group attendance and participation.

#### B. For Response to Sin and Correction

There should be a willingness to talk about spiritual things, openness about temptations and struggles and a willingness to hear, carefully consider and respond to your correction. The goal would certainly be to move them to the place where they desired and sought correction which is a sure sign of growing maturity.

#### C. For Relationship with the Family

There should certainly be an obedience and respect toward parents and a care and consideration for siblings. These should be done with a measure of cooperation and cheerfulness.

#### D. For Relationship with Friends

J. C. RYLE (Thoughts for Young Men, 59) - "Good friends are among our greatest blessings, - they may keep us back from much evil, quicken us in our course, speak a word in season, draw us upward and draw us on. But a bad friend is a positive misfortune, a weight continually dragging us down, and chaining us to earth. Keep company with an irreligious man, and it is more than probable you will in the end become like him. That is the general consequence of all such friendships. The good go down to the bad and the bad do not come up to the good."

*Proverbs 13:20* – Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

#### E. For Relationship with the World

Dealing with movies, music, TV, video games, FaceBook, etc., may be the trickiest area of all for setting reasonable expectations for our teens. We want to not only help set boundaries but teach our teens to discern boundaries for themselves.

*James 4:4* – You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

*1 John 2:15* – Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

## EXPECTATIONS AND EXASPERATIONS

**Some Evaluation Questions:**

1. Is this activity clearly forbidden?
2. Is this activity of doubtful wisdom?
3. What does my teens attraction to this activity reveal about the state of their heart?
4. Does this activity attract and excite my teen more than pursuing God?
5. What effect does this activity have on their love for/friendship with God?
6. How does this activity affect my teen's attitude toward sin?
7. Can they participate in this activity with a clear conscience?
8. Is this activity taking too much time in thought and practice?
9. Does this activity refresh and revitalize my teen to serve God?

**II. EXASPERATIONS**

*Ephesians 6:4* – Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger (NIV – exasperate; NEB – goad to resentment), but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

*Colossians 3:21* – Fathers, do not provoke (NASB – exasperate; NIV – embitter) your children, lest they become discouraged (NASB – loose heart).

A. SKEVINGTON WOOD – “Above all else, he warns fathers against goading their children into a state of perpetual resentment...Fathers must not make unreasonable demands. Otherwise children, being overcorrected, may lose heart.”

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. (Successful Christian Parenting, 131)

– “The children’s duty in the home is to obey. The flip side is the parent’s duty: to teach them that obedience in an environment of godly nurturing, without exasperating them in the process. It’s a tall order. This doesn’t come naturally for parents, any more than obedience comes naturally to kids.”

## A. Things to Do

### 1. Love

*1 Corinthians 13:4-8* – Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Love both expressed and demonstrated is crucial to the parent/teen relationship. Don’t neglect both verbal and physical demonstrations of affection with your teen.

J. C. RYLE (The Duties of Parents, 4) – “Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys, - these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily, - these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart...Nothing will compensate for the absence of this tenderness and love...Just so, you must set before your children their duty, - command, threaten, punish, reason, - but if affection be wanting in your treatment, your labor will be all in vain.”

## 2. Compassion

*Hebrews 5:2* – He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

Compassion is a sympathetic consciousness of others distress together with a desire to alleviate it. Our teens live in the same fallen world with the same sin nature as we have. The more we are aware of our own need for grace, the easier it will be to be aware of the same need in them and to extend the grace and understanding that we ourselves need.

## 3. Gentleness

*1 Thessalonians 2:7* – But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children

Gentleness means to be kind or amiable, free from harshness, sternness or violence, mild, docile, soft or moderate.

#### 4. Patience

*2 Timothy 4:2* – ...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Patience means to manifesting forbearance (to hold oneself back from, to control oneself when provoked) under provocation or strain.

#### 5. Encouragement and Praise

*1 Thessalonians 2:11-12* – For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

*Hebrews 10:24* – And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works....

To encourage means to give courage or confidence; to raise the hopes of; to help on by sympathetic advice and interest, to strengthen. Growing up can be hard and our teens need us beside them cheering them on and pointing them to the grace of God and the gospel to give them hope.

#### 6. Time and Talk

*Psalms 39:4* – "O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!

There is simply no substitute for time spent with our teens. Time spent talking and listening, hanging out, building memories, serving together, etc. Build a relationship in which all our instruction and discipline can flourish.

PATRICK MORLEY (The Man in the Mirror) – "If we end up with regrets over the time we didn't spend with our children, it's a pain that never goes away."

## B. Things to Avoid

### 1. Overindulgence

Our teens need and actually desire boundaries. Weak, inconsistent enforcement of standards will eventually frustrate and anger your teen.

### 2. Favoritism

Teens have excellent radar for "fairness" and favoritism.

### 3. Unrealistic Expectations

We must beware of setting standards so high our children can never live up to them. This can often be accompanied by parents being harsh, impatient and critical thereby communicating to our children that nothing they do is ever good enough.



#### 4. Constant Criticism

Do your teens feel you are constantly disappointed, discouraged and frustrated with them? Are they more aware of where you think they fall short than where they are succeeding? Do they feel like you talk to them or lecture them?

#### 5. Hypocrisy

To demand of our children what we ourselves are not modeling will surely exasperate them. So will our failure to live with them as a fellow sinner who confesses sin and asks forgiveness when needed.

#### 6. Lack of Relationship

The old saying “rules without relationship equals rebellion” is true. If you are more general and judge than loving parent and friend to your teen they will become exasperated.

WILLIAM HENDRICKSEN (Colossians, 172) – “Fathers should create an atmosphere which will make obedience an easy and natural matter, namely, the atmosphere of love and confidence...When fathers are unjust or overly severe, a spirit of sullen resignation is created in the hearts of their offspring...A good father spends time with his children, teaches, entertains, and encourages them, and by his example as well as outright verbal instruction, points them to Christ.

# PARTNERS WITH PURPOSE

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## NAVIGATING RELATING

*1 Corinthians 7:32 and 35* – I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord...I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

In my experience, the number one distraction from pursuing a course of growing maturity in the teen years is the pressures related to and desires for relationship with the opposite sex.

### I. WHY IS THIS THE CASE?

*Proverbs 1:1-4* – The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—

In Chapter 7, Solomon addresses the fascination young people have with the opposite sex and the dangers that can adhere to that fascination. Though speaking here specifically about the adulteress, which certainly doesn't describe our teens, there are principles here which illuminate our teens' struggles with temptation in this area. Specifically they are...

A. **Dumb about it** (v 7) – “the simple”, “lacking sense” (one who is naïve, inexperienced, lacks discernment). Our teens tend to not recognize the power of sexual attraction and the need to carefully guard their (and others) hearts in this area.

- B. **Drawn to it** (v 8) – “near”, “taking the road” – Our teens are drawn to the opposite sex.
- C. **Deceived and Deceptive about it** (v 9) – “twilight”, “the time of night” – We have already said that there is a certain naiveté in teens about the power of sexual temptation. But there is also a certain craftiness. Teens are often willing to pursue the opposite sex in secret and without proper parental counsel or accountability. Unbiblical relating always involves lying and deception.
- D. **Detained in it** (v 22-23) – “caught fast”, “into a snare”. Once a teen begins to go down this path it can be difficult for them to pull up and reverse the momentum. The danger of relating with the opposite sex isn’t purely sexual intimacy but emotional and soulish intimacy.
- E. **Damaged by it** (v 26-27) “for many a victim she has laid low”. There are certainly potential physical consequences, pregnancy, STDs, etc., but also the emotional pain of breaking off a relationship where emotional intimacy was developed.

## NAVIGATING RELATING

### II. A DIFFERENT WAY

Proverbs 7 doesn’t simply paint this sobering picture of the dangers of sexual temptation, it gives us hope for helping our teens escape these dangers. That hope is, not surprisingly, your loving involvement with your teens in this area of their lives.

*Proverbs 7:1-5* – My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call insight your intimate friend, to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words.

*Proverbs 7:24-25* – And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths,

#### A. Maintain a Positive Commitment to the Lord

The weaker a teen's positive commitment to the Lord and a vision for life in Him, the harder it will be to avoid the temptations that compete with that commitment.

PAUL TRIPP (A Quest for More, 99) – "You will never win the battle with yourself simply by saying no to yourself. That battle only begins to be won when you say yes to the call of your King, the Lord Jesus Christ."

JOSH HARRIS (I Kissed Dating Goodbye) - "Over the past four years, I've come to understand that God's lordship doesn't merely tinker with my approach to romance - it completely transforms it. God not only wants me to act differently, He wants me to think differently - to view love, purity, and singleness from His perspective, to have a new lifestyle and attitude."

#### B. Make a Commitment to Serve and Protect Others

*Hebrews 10:24* – And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works....

## 1. Ways teens sin against each other.

a. Immodesty

b. Flirtation

Maintain a standard of warm, friendly and distant.

c. Touching

d. Seduction

*1 Thessalonians 4:3-7* – For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

## 2. Ways teens can serve each other.

a. Don't do the above.

b. Genuinely love one another

*1 Corinthians 13:5* (NIV) – Love...is not self seeking...always protects....

1 Timothy. 5:1-2 – Treat...younger women like sisters, in all purity.

C.J. MAHANEY – “How far should I go? As far as you would want someone else to go with your future husband or wife.”

c. Guard their hearts.

### C. Make a Commitment to Purposeful Dating at the Proper Time

JOSHUA HARRIS (I Kissed Dating Goodbye) - “I’ve come to realize that I have no business asking for a girl’s heart and affections if I’m not ready to back up my request with a lifelong commitment. Until I can do that, I’d only be using that woman to meet my short term needs, not seeking to bless her for the long term...Instead, by avoiding romance before God tells me I’m ready for it, I can better serve girls as a friend, and I can remain free to keep my focus on the Lord.”

The Bible doesn’t give us hard and fast rules for how to navigate a dating relationship when the proper time comes (or even when the proper time is). Parents ultimately have to make the decision and have to be convinced from scripture in regards to how they will proceed and do so in a mutually respectful, grace-filled partnership with their young adult children.

Doing so will reap a four-fold benefit that you can help your teen to own...

1. It will make it special to give themselves to only one person and only in marriage.

2. It will enhance their ability to build healthy relationships.
3. It will spare them any emotional and spiritual wounds from giving themselves to someone and then ending that relationship.
4. It will keep them on track in devoting themselves to the things that are most important at this season of life so that they can be prepared for marriage and a family.