

25 DAYS

of Quickie Parenting Tips

Let's face it. Connecting with our teens and tweens can feel really complicated and difficult. We are busy and often overwhelmed. Each of these ideas takes less than 15 minutes a day amongst the craziness to make a connection.

TEXT THE LOVE: This week send your child a text everyday of a truth about the way that Christ sees them. Follow it with a Bible Verse that backs it up. If you can, download the "You Version" of the Bible to your phone. This "app" allows you the ability to look up a verse and text it directly to someone. (We recommend using the New Living Translation for easy understanding.) If your phone does not offer this capability, then look up the verse together over dinner. Some ideas to get you started:

- *You belong to Christ. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)*
- *God chose you to be His. (Ephesians 1:3-8)*
- *With Christ he takes away fear. (2 Timothy 1:7)*
- *Christ has plans for you that are bigger than you can think! (Jeremiah 29:11)*
- *God sings about you! (Zephaniah 3:17)*
- *God loves you more than you can even dream! (Ephesians 3:18-20)*

DINNER OF LOVE: Make a favorite dish of everyone in the house for dinner. (Even if it is a strange mix of foods!) Make sure to make your favorite as well! When you sit down for dinner point out who you made each dish for. Use this as a chance to talk about how you did this because your family belongs to you and you love them. Over dinner, ask your children ways that Christ shows their love to them, in bigger ways. Do they see it?

THE FACE-TO-FACE CHALLENGE: Take Five Minutes with your child. Sit across from them and ask them to look you in the eye. Then for five minutes tell them all the ways they were made wonderful. When you are done, tell them that the reason they are this way is because God made them this way. Talk to them about how God their Father loves them, more than you could possibly love them. Ask them what they think about this.

15 MINUTES OF "UNPLUGGED" TIME: Pick two nights this week where both you and your children "unplug." No technology for anyone. (Computers, phones, TV, games.) For this time you are totally focused on getting to know your child, and finding out about who they are and what they enjoy. This will help you to get to know your child and start to hear their struggles. For those parents who grapple with Father's not being in the home, this can be a time to start talking about how this effects them.

PIZZA AND A ? NIGHT: Sometimes we just need some good old fashioned family time. This week have a night when everyone is home, get a pizza and just hang out. You can watch a movie together. Play a board game. Just spend the night enjoying each other.

“WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE”: Take out a couple of baby pictures or pictures of your child when they were very young. By the time our youth enter the teen years they think they have forgotten what it means to be “little.” They are so focused on “being grown.” Spend 5- 10 minutes looking at the pictures with your child and telling them your favorite things about them when they were that age. Talk about memories that were your favorite from when they were young ages.

PROVERBS CHALLENGE: Leave a Bible and a journal on the coffee table. Each day read one Proverb and then rewrite it in your own words. Challenge your child to do the same, in the same journal, then they can see what you are writing and you can see them. You are encouraging the both of you to get into the Bible on the same day!

LUNCH BOX LOVE NOTES: Three days this week write your child a small note that encourages them in a way to live for Jesus while at school. Tuck the note into a notebook or lunch. Make it a place where they can find it (but not be embarrassed).

15 MIN DESSERT TIME: Make a 15 minute “date” with your child this week. Set aside 15 minutes just to sit and talk with the over their favorite dessert.

TOGETHER CHORES: What is a chore around the house that your child might not “know how” to do well? What could you do together that you could show them “how” and “why” you do something? How do you balance a checkbook? Why do you pick certain items up at the grocery store but skip others? How do you iron clothes well?

THE “I LOVE YOU” CHALLENGE: At least five times this week stop, look your child in the eye and tell them that you love them. Then tell them something you love about them, that is NOT a physical attribute. For example: “I love the way that you really are a loyal friend. That is something that is important.

DO WHAT THEY LIKE: Make a 15 minute “date” with your child this week. Set aside 15 minutes just to do something with your child they like to do.

FRIDAY FAST FOOD: Take your child (or children) out with the idea of finding out how they are doing. Let them pick their favorite place. Avoid asking “yes” or “no” questions. Instead ask questions that get them talking. Instead of, “How’s your friend?” ask “Tell me one thing that made you happy this week.”

FUN AND FAVORITE: This week, do something with your child that is a favorite activity. If not make them their favorite meal. Use this time to talk about all of your child’s “favorites.” When is the last time you told each other your favorite song, food, movie, etc.

FIVE MORNING MINUTES: Sometimes it is hard to sit and “talk” face to face. Using a notebook spend five minutes every morning writing a short note to your child about why you love them and what you are proud of them for. Put the notebook in their room or

backpack. Encourage your child that this notebook is a safe place to tell you their feelings as well. You can use it as a written dialogue to “talk” when it isn’t easy.

“I’M SORRY” NOTES: Sit down with your child and discuss the last time you had a disagreement that didn’t go well. Did you hurt each other in it? Take a few minutes to write each other a note explaining why you are sorry for the way you handled yourself. (Did you yell? Did they say mean words?) Then make sure to write a line of why you love your child.

I LOVE YOU STILL: Take two minutes today to tell, text or instant message one reason why you love your child. End it with, “I love you still, even when we disagree.” Sometimes when we don’t get along our children think that we don’t love them.

WHAT YOU SEE: Stand in front of a mirror with your child for 30 seconds. (Longer may make them uncomfortable.) Tell them all the wonderful things you see staring back at you.

WHAT YOU “CAN’T” SEE: Write a note to your child and hang it up in their room or on their mirror. In the note include all of the wonderful things you love about your child that maybe they “can’t” see for themselves. If you would rather find a picture of something beautiful or magnificent. (A rainbow, a mountain range, etc.) with the caption, “When I look at you I see God’s reflection.” He is the creator so he is reflected in everything.

MAGAZINE CRAWL: Get ahold of any popular magazine. (Preferably one with celebrities in it. It can be fashion, sports or health.) Look through the magazine together. On each page either in ads or articles, discuss how it nudges you to want to be “something” Some pictures “say” things just by showing us a skinny girl or a guy with a six pack of muscles. Count all of the ways just this one magazine is “talking” to you. Discuss ways you can learn to ignore the world in this way.

WHO DO YOU WISH?: In the car or before bed sit down and talk to your child about those people in the media you wish you looked like. Have a discussion on how God made you the way you are for a purpose.

THIS WAS ME: Show your child a picture of yourself when you were in High School. Talk about the styles then. How did your own friends affect what you wore or how you saw yourself? (Even if not at all)

STYLE WATCH: Sit down with your child and talk for 2 minutes about their own sense of style. Why do they wear what they wear? Why is it popular? Is there something they would like to wear but are afraid others won’t like it?

PICTURE PERFECT: Copy a recent picture of your child or send it to them in an email. On the back of the picture, or in the body of the email talk about all the qualities you see that are “Christ’s” reflection. How are they kind? Compassionate? A servant? When people see them, how do others see Jesus?

PERSONAL SERVICE: One of the best ways that we can show Christ to others is through serving them. Pick a neighbor or a friend and find a small way to “serve” them with your child. Could you bake them cookies? Could you both mow their lawn? It can be the offer to do anything small, that shows a gesture of Christ’s love.