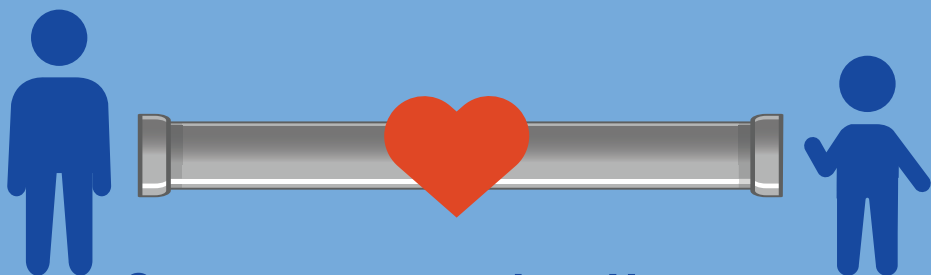


# PARENTING TEENS



Connecting the Hearts  
of Parents and Teens

RICHARD ROSS  
& DAVID BOOTH

# What Is Real Success?

Even atheists want their teenagers to grow up to be financially stable, part of happy families, and solid citizens. What do you want that is so different?

Does something in you shout, “Yes!” to the following goal for your teenagers?

“I would love to see my teenager, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, spend a lifetime embracing the full majesty of Christ, become more and more like Him, and join Him in making disciples among all people.”

To reach that goal, you must embrace several truths:

## 1. Affirm God's call on your own life.

God placed you here because He deeply desires to have a relationship with you. You are here to share ever-increasing love, closeness, and fellowship with God, even as your awe of His holiness also deepens.

Flowing out of that purpose, you are to join Him in bringing His Kingdom on earth. You are called and gifted to love all people, introduce them to God through Christ, and then disciple them.

This brings glory to the Son of God you love with all your heart.

## 2. Affirm God's call as a parent.

You and your spouse are called to lead your children to God through Christ and then disciple and lead them to join Him in bringing His kingdom on earth. Any other assignment you have on earth pales in comparison to that one.

You are the most important spiritual leader of your children. You have more spiritual influence in their lives than any minister or church leader. (You have to decide if that is good news or bad news).

## 3. Understand and put God's parenting essentials into practice.

Your own love relationship with God and your discipleship journey will provide a powerful example (positive or negative) of what it means to be a Christian man or woman.

If you are spiritually stagnant (or keep your spiritual life hidden), your teenager will likely walk away from the faith as a young adult.

The quality and strength of your heart connections (relationships) with your children will powerfully shape the spiritual life of your teenager.

If you are spiritually alive and transparent, and have strong heart connections, and you teach your teenager God's truth, then your teenager likely will spend a lifetime embracing the supreme majesty of Christ and living on mission with Him.

# What Is My Role?

Christian teenagers know and love Jesus. But the majority tend to know Him as a friend and not much more. Worst case, some teenagers may see Jesus as their little buddy in their shirt pocket. He always is there in case they need to pull Him out to “poof” some difficulty away.

Do you tend to believe Christ only exists to bless you and to give you the kind of life you want? Do you primarily expect from Him relief from suffering, quick solutions to your problems, and general satisfaction with life? For you and your children, who really is Jesus Christ today?

Colossians 1:18 reports that for God, the bottom line of every constellation He’s created—the stunning climax of every facet of salvation He offers—comes down to this: “... that in everything he [Christ] might have the supremacy” (NIV).

Most parents don’t want their children settling for less than the best. Leading your children to embrace the supremacy (ultimate power and authority) of Christ, positions them to live their lives for what ultimately matters most.

Your awaking to the supremacy of Jesus, your more deeply adoring Him on His throne, and your daily arising to join Him in His kingdom activity ... offers the brightest hope for your children moving in those same directions.

Do the following statements accurately reflect your own awakening to the supremacy of Christ the King?

## **I am moving away**

from focusing on myself rather than Christ.

from only believing facts about Christ.

from opening my Bible on Sundays only.

from choosing extra sleep over morning time before the Throne.

from compartmentalizing prayer as a morning ritual.

from using most of my prayer time making requests to benefit me and those close to me.

## **I am moving toward**

daily placing myself at the center of who Christ is and where He is headed.

knowing and enjoying Him for a lifetime and into eternity.

Christ revealing more of His Truth and His way through my daily time in Scripture.

increasingly longer and deeper times of intimacy with Jesus at the break of day.

abiding in Christ through running conversation with Him all day long.

using most of my prayer time praising majestic Christ in the power of the Spirit for the glory of His Father.

from automatically asking for instant relief from any life pain I am experiencing.

from rearing my children to be comfortable and “successful” in this world.

from tithes and offerings that require little change in my standard of living.

from believing I am superior to other individuals or groups of people.

from believing my faith and “the American dream” are tied together.

from loving only those who deserve it or might return the favor.

from wanting to be seen as cool rather than speaking of Christ.

from pursuing every opportunity to make myself more popular or more powerful.

from believing Jesus is preoccupied with my outer performance.

from seeking fulfillment in others.

from sin kept in secret.

asking Christ to grant me the privilege of sharing in His sufferings and to move in the midst of my pain to work out His kingdom purposes.

rearing my children to be in love with Christ and to join Him on His mission.

delighting in Jesus by giving so extravagantly that I must make lifestyle adjustments.

humility and showing honor and deference toward all people Christ has created.

downsizing and simplicity in order to free significant funds for kingdom activity, including funds for those in need.

loving those who are undeserving, treated unjustly, or having nothing to offer in return.

considering all things as loss for the sake of introducing others to Jesus, including my reputation.

taking assignments only from Christ, including those that have me serving in obscurity.

believing Jesus cares most about the condition of my heart, knowing that everything about me flows from it.

completeness in knowing and being known by Christ.

transparency with Christ in prayer and accountability with grace-filled believers.

from thinking life down here is  
the main thing.

considering this life a brief transition  
toward being in Christ's presence forever.

## What Does God Say About Parenting?

Pressing issues and stresses can cloud your ability to see parenting from God's broader perspective. Consider these words from Deuteronomy 6:4-7 (emphasis added):

Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. **Repeat them to your children.** Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (CSB).

This passage brings into sharper focus what God told Abraham, concerning the critical importance of intentional parenting in God's plan for the nations. Consider Genesis 18:18-19 (emphasis added):

Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him **so that he will command his children and his house after him** to keep the way of the LORD ... This is how the LORD will fulfill to Abraham what He promised him (CSB).

**The Generational Big Picture:** God's plan for parenting goes beyond an individual parent and teenager. He is orchestrating entire generations. Just as God desired for generations of Hebrews to bless the nations, God still desires that parents join Him in moving the Christian faith down through all the generations for His grand purposes.

**Parents Are Primary:** Parents have primary responsibility for the spiritual leadership of their children.

Parents cannot shirk their responsibility, leaving the eternal destiny of their children to others and depending on church professionals to take the lead role in discipling. (Many parents, however, do just that—their leadership ends in the church parking lot.) Church leaders do not have the depth of relationships nor the hours in the week to approach parents in potential life impact.

Parents who embrace the principles of Deuteronomy 6 are uniquely and powerfully positioned to:

- Provide a daily, tangible role model for how one's love and worship of God translates at home, and out in the real world.
- Bless children each morning and at bedtime, when their hearts often are most receptive to the things of the Lord.

- Sit down many times each week with warm meals, heart conversations, and worship experiences that magnify the King.

Adults who parent after the pattern of Scripture intentionally lead their children toward salvation and a personal and maturing relationship with Christ for a lifetime.

## What Difference Does Our Relationship Make?

Your call from God and unique position in your children’s lives give you, by far, the greatest influence with them. Your children will tend to delight in embracing your faith if they share heart connections with you. Why? Teenagers who are loved by their parents with the warm love of Christ (Ephesians 5:22–6:4) more easily embrace Christ Himself as His Spirit calls them into relationship.

Parents who keep heart connections warm and strong usually see visible evidence their faith and values are passing to their children. “And he will turn [connect] the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6, CSB) (brackets added).



A heart connection is the “pipeline” that connects the hearts of the parent and teenager. It is through that pipeline of warm relationships that spiritual impact flows from one generation to the next.



Too little quality time together or emotional injury can damage heart connections. If you and your teenager grow distant from each other, the pipeline is pulled loose. The probability is that you then will have little spiritual impact—even if you teach and live out biblical truth before the teenager.



If your teenager loses a heart connection with you, he or she often will try to fill the void by giving the pipeline to peers. Some of those peers, from weak homes, may fill the pipeline with faithlessness and confused values. But even then, Christ offers hope for healing and restored relationships.



Parents rebuild heart connections by forgiving teenagers for pain they have caused, by asking them for forgiveness as appropriate, by moving away from emotional outbursts toward teenagers, and by using words to bless, encourage, and build up.

No teaching—no truth. Modeling kingdom living and teaching the Christian faith supplies the spiritual truth that flows through the “pipeline.” No pipeline—no influence. No modeling—no credibility.

When all three are present—the high probability is that your teenager, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of Christ.

## What Discipline Works Best?

You parent best when your parenting mirrors the way your heavenly Father parents you. He parents you with a perfect balance of His **justice** and **grace**.

Modeling God’s **justice** means you share His authority over your children (Proverbs 6:20, 19:18). You train them to honor you and your spiritual leadership (Ephesians 6:1–2).

You make decisions about structure, limits, and behavior and you enforce those decisions. You never stop parenting, even when you are tired. When teenagers pull against your decisions and structure, you hold the rope. You dole out more rope as they show growing maturity and responsibility, but you never turn loose completely until they leave to begin a new family with their mate.

Many parents respond to disobedience with emotional outbursts, sarcasm, or icy silence. These weak responses:

- Lead to cold, distant teenagers.
- Create emotional injuries that can last years.
- Seldom lead teenagers toward good behavior.

Parents who want kingdom kids to emerge from their homes will stop using emotional outbursts or manipulation as their typical response to bad behavior (Proverbs 18:21). Responding to bad behavior with negative consequences (discipline) is far more effective than sharp words or conditional warmth in changing the behavior.

Wise parents explain rules and limits to their teenagers when things are calm. They also describe what discipline will follow disobedience. Then, if teenagers later choose to disobey, parents calmly apply the discipline (punishment) they earlier promised.

Parents also need to show teenagers every time their good, biblical choices lead to positive consequences. Also, parents need to offer rewards in response to other good choices and evidences of growing character. Highlighting positives is just as important as giving attention to negative consequences.

A teenager can behave well outwardly yet the inner heart be far from God. Wise parents nurture in their teenagers a worshiping reverence and love for Christ that will result in increasingly Christ-like character and behavior.

Modeling God's **grace** means you love teenagers and extend emotional warmth without conditions. You communicate there is nothing teenagers need to do, change, or accomplish to earn your love and acceptance. You show genuine interest and empathy in their lives, and you establish their wellbeing as one of your very highest priorities.

## What Could Make My Love Stop?

When you as an adult are at your worst, does God withdraw His love from you? You may break the heart of God and you certainly will experience His discipline, but His love for you is unending. The love you demonstrate to your children should be the same. You deal with problem behavior with your discipline, but your love and relationship warmth are unconditional.

## How Does My Marriage Impact My Teenager?

Teenagers tend to embrace the faith of parents in a warm, lifetime marriage. Believing the marriage of parents will last is a primary source of emotional security. Questioning whether the marriage will last robs children of that security.

When children hear muffled shouts coming from the master bedroom, or they detect icy stares between parents at dinner, or they see flirting become rare they make their own evaluation about whether the marriage will make it. If teenagers decide the marriage is not well, their emotional security vaporizes, and their behavior worsens.

Parents wounded by a spouse may no longer feel motivation to rebuild romance to meet their own needs. But kingdom parents find the motivation to rebuild what has been lost for the glory of Christ and for the good of their children.

When you are warm and even appropriately affectionate toward your spouse in front of your teenager, you are taking a giant step toward rearing offspring who will embrace the supreme majesty of Christ.

## How Do Schedules Impact My Teenager?

Teenagers don't embrace Christ because they go to better schools, wear the proper labels, or have more elaborate vacations. They become spiritually vibrant young adults because, in part, they spend powerful hours enjoying your focused attention. Christ is calling families to balance the time one or both parents spend working outside the home—to rear a generation for His purposes.

Extracurricular activities should build emotionally and spiritually vibrant teenagers. When extracurricular activities take so much time that they make time with parents and family impossible, then they no longer are accomplishing their purpose.

Questions to consider:



- Am I pushing my child to overextend in hopes he will excel—because I want to live vicariously through his successes? Or in hopes she will win a major scholarship so we can more easily afford college or hold on to college savings?
- Has my family’s schedule become so crazy that too few minutes are available for focused attention on children, quiet conversations, and even spiritual instruction and leadership?
- If so, will I take a ruthless inventory to discover what is pulling family members apart evenings and weekends?
- Once I discover what is causing the craziness in schedules, will I ask for God’s leadership in knowing what changes must be made, and the strength and perseverance to make them?

## How Do I Respond to Tough Issues?

**Imagine** your daughter says, “I want you to go to the mall with me to pay for some expensive shoes, but I’m too embarrassed to walk beside you.” Or your son decides he has outgrown your family vacation and wants to just “stay home with some friends.” Can you relate to these thoughts?

### I am moving away

from answering typical behavior with outbursts or sulking.

from expecting family relationships to meet my own emotional needs.

from relational coldness learned from my own parents.

from keeping life so cluttered that I am usually distracted when I talk with my teen.

### I am moving toward

answering their need for growing independence with maturity, patience, appropriate discipline, significant amounts of time, and unfailing love.

finding all my fulfillment satisfied in the riches of Christ. Then I am free to love my spouse and my children with a sacrificial love that encourages in them a warmth toward the heart of God.

even when undeserved, saying “I love you” and hugging my children daily, even if I have to break the chains of the past.

simplifying life so I can give my children my undivided attention, especially when they are emotionally invested in the conversation.

**Imagine** your teen is emotional and unhappy with you or a decision you have made.

from telling my teenager to just be quiet or silencing their outbursts with my authority.

handling unpleasant emotions and words with maturity and thoughtful listening. (Silencing them will temporarily relieve my stress but will cause hidden injury that will resurface later.)

from only giving instructions and criticizing.

increasingly telling my children I am proud of them, I love them, they are a blessing to me and others, and they have abilities that are valuable.

**Imagine** the excitement of your teenager's social life, academic ability, artistic achievements, or athletic promise beginning to blossom.

from considering my teenager's spiritual life less important than visible successes.

so enjoying and valuing my relationship with the King that my teen's own growing relationship with Him is far more thrilling to me than any social, athletic, or artistic successes.

from compartmentalizing this area apart from Christ.

leading my teenagers to understanding their gifts as a platform to glorify Christ and join Him in fulfilling their unique purpose.

**Imagine** your teen filling life with music, movies, cell phones, and gaming.

from ignoring the media that fills my teenager's life.

staying aware and engaged with media's impact on my teenager.

**Imagine** the toll it takes to keep immorality in your life hidden from your teenager.

from the foolish hope my teen will live in moral purity even though secret parts of my life are impure.

welcoming the Spirit's refining work in my life that I might bring honor and glory to Him, and that I might then accelerate my teenager's own journey toward integrity.

## What's My Plan?

The Spirit of Christ will guide you as you develop your plan for spiritual impact at home. Here are some possibilities.

### Daily

**Pray for your children** every morning and throughout the day. Parents sometimes "receive not because they ask not."

Pray with your children "when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

- They need to hear the depth of your love for them revealed in those prayers.
- They need to hear how keenly you want to see spiritual impact radiating out from their lives.
- They need to hear you release them to God’s call and purposes.

**Talk about biblical truth** and your own spiritual life in the flow of family life, as you “walk along the road” (Deuteronomy 6:7). Examples:

- “I’ve been looking forward to breakfast, because I want to tell you what the Holy Spirit showed me in Scripture this morning.”
- “The truth of that sermon hit me hard today. Son, you need to know what I committed to God at the close of the service.”

## Model your faith, morality, and values before your children.

### Weekly

Weekly or more often, gather your family to “sit in your house” (Deuteronomy 6:7) for a time of worship. In addition to prayer and praise, you can lead a discussion from Scripture built around:

- What you are learning from your own daily time in God’s Word (the overflow of your spiritual life is valuable to your children).
- A printed guide church leaders have placed in your hands.
- What you learned from last Sunday’s sermon or adult Bible study group.

### Monthly

Monthly or more often, do something as a family to **serve others in Christ’s name**. Plan some of your outings to address injustice, spiritual poverty, or needs that already have touched the heart of your teenager. When families engage in serving others on a regular basis, teenagers form indelible mental snapshots that what matters most is not themselves, but Christ and His mission of redemptive love to others.

### Yearly

Yearly or more often, **go** with Christ as a family on mission’s adventures. You may need to partner with church leaders to become knowledgeable about opportunities for your family.

- Consider arranging family finances in order to take a family mission trip in the U.S. or internationally—either your family alone or with other families.
- Consider giving one day of a typical family vacation to do something of kingdom importance (feed people in the name of Christ, paint a ministry building, etc.).

## How Could I Pray Each Month?

Day 1. **Intentionality**—Give me the courage to aggressively reject being passive, boldly leading my family to adore Christ and what matters most to Him.

Day 2. **Honor**—Teach my teenager to honor, follow, and replicate my spiritual leadership, helping me to remove those things that make that unnecessarily difficult for them.

Day 3. **Warmth**—Father, permeate my family relationships with Christ’s warm and sacrificial love.

Day 4. **Modeling**—Refine me as a disciple whose example spiritually impacts my teenager.

Day 5. **Teaching**—Grant me the wisdom and determination to teach my children the praiseworthiness of Christ while at home and while living life together (Psalm 78; Deuteronomy 6).

Day 6. **Discipline**—Teach me to reflect Your justice and grace in situations needing discipline.

Day 7. **Time**—Help us to wisely maximize our use of time for God’s will and purposes (Ephesians 5:15–16).

Day 8. **Salvation**—Draw the hearts of my children to you in repentance and teach me how to saturate my children with the Scriptures able to lead them to salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

Day 9. **Truth**—Call my teenager to build a life on the Truth, Jesus Christ, while developing confidence in the reliability and authority of Scripture.

Day 10. **Excellence**—Call my teenager to do all things with excellence worthy of the King, in the power of the Spirit, for the glory of the Father.

Day 11. **Purpose**—Help my children to see Your purpose to conform them to Your image, commission them to Your mission, and involve them in a career fitting with that purpose (Romans 8:29; Luke 19:10).

Day 12. **Identity**—Guide my children to develop a self-image consistent with how You see them.

Day 13. **Discipleship**—Teach my children the joy of taking up their cross to follow Christ even when it costs them (Luke 9:23).

Day 14. **Grace**—Draw my teenager into daily and constant communion with Christ, not out of fear and legalism, but in joy and love and worship.

Day 15. **Confidence**—Grant my teenagers boldness, in their position in Christ, to humbly approach the throne for grace and mercy in their times of need (Hebrews 4:15–16).

Day 16. **Mission**—Enflame the passion of my child’s heart to daily join Christ the King on mission to free captives around the world from spiritual darkness.

Day 17. **Vision**—Give my children a vision for the majestic worth of Your Son, who by comparison makes all other things seem worthless (Philippians 3:8).

Day 18. **Contentment**—Lead my children to find perfect satisfaction in You—content with poverty or wealth—and give them trusting, rejoicing, thankful, and teachable hearts (Philippians 4:12–13).

Day 19. **Self-control**—Replace the influence of the world with the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Day 20. **Eternal**—Convince my teenager this life is temporary and create a desire to invest in eternity.

Day 21. **Giving**—Advance Your kingdom agenda through my and my teenager’s financial giving.

Day 22. **Culture**—Ground my teenager to reach people in the culture without being harmed by it.

Day 23. **Favor**—Grant my children the aroma of Christ’s love in relationships, that the favor of others might be a platform to introduce them to the winsome love, acceptance, and hope of Christ.

Day 24. **Pressure**—Prepare my teenager to stand up under pressure by and for the glory of Christ.

Day 25. **Strength**—Show my teenagers Your vast strength for living as they abide in Christ and walk in the Spirit (Ephesians 1:18; John 15).

Day 26. **Purity**—Fill my teenager with so much of Christ’s integrity that it springs forth into lifestyles and relationships that only bring honor to Him.

Day 27. **Love**—Reflect through my teen Your love for all, even when love is undeserved (Ephesians 5:2).

Day 28. **Healing**—Father, bring healing into the brokenness of my teenagers that their lifelong identity might be secured in the wholeness of Your restoration and love.

Day 29. **Spouse**—Give my teenager discernment to choose a spouse who facilitates the work of God in and through a lifetime marriage, that their home would launch impact on future generations.

Day 30. **Church**—Bring other spiritually healthy and alive adults into my teenager’s life to reinforce and supplement Christ-centered leadership at home.

## What Is My Church’s Role?

The family is the primary arena for the spiritual development of your teenager. Even though the church is second to the home in biblical and practical importance, it still is indispensable.

Wise parents want each of their children to have warm heart connections with at least three spiritually vibrant adults who model and teach biblical truth. Such relationships amplify the impact of parents and accelerate spiritual transformation. That is one of many reasons Christ calls all believers to share life in His Body, the Church.

**Sundays**—Parents and teenagers who embrace the supremacy of Christ take seriously the fourth of the Ten Commandments: “Remember the Sabbath day” by keeping it holy (Exodus 20:8; Hebrews 10:25). If you allow your teenager to skip worship on Sunday morning to work or participate in some competition, you have communicated your true priorities to your teenager.

**Church Relationships**—Whether or not church leaders are people of influence with your teenager depends in large measure on relationships. Relationships depend on consis-

tency. If your teenager is inconsistent in church and youth group involvement, relationships likely will be weak and influence diminished.

Parents who make church life a family priority are much more likely to see their teenagers in heart connections with leaders of influence there. They also are likely to see those children equally committed to a local church during college days.

**Parent Training**—Without specific training, most parents tend to reproduce the (sometimes) weak parenting approaches their own parents may have used. You and the other parents need to partner with church leaders in designing training events that provide instruction in both biblical parenting and spiritual leadership. Meeting together also provides time for you to pray deeply for each other's families.

**Practical Support**—You want your own children to adore and live for Christ and you want the same for their generation. Many of your hopes and dreams can be expressed through the student ministry of your church. You and the other parents need to find new ways to become involved with and support that ministry. Leaders who are discovering how central you are to the spiritual lives of teenagers will welcome your involvement.

**You are Not Alone**—If family issues seem overwhelming, your ministers and leaders can help you experience hope in Christ—your Rock and your Comforter. If needed, they can connect you with professionals who can guide your family through critical periods. And they can help you find print and online resources on family issues.

## A World Full of Possibilities

**What if** ... you challenged your teenager to go on a personal mission's adventure soon after high school—serving from three months to a year—internationally or in a challenging area in the U.S.

**What if** ... you opened a savings account now and encouraged family members and interested adults to join you in contributing on special occasions, so funds would be available for each of your children to go on such a mission's adventure.

**What if** ... the spiritually empty teenagers who pass through your home heard more of your own love for Christ and felt more of your warm acceptance.

**What if** ... you recorded your Scripture and prayer insights in a Bible or journal, and then made that a gift to your teenager.

**What if** ... you led your family to write a mission statement, placed it in a prominent place, and ordered your lives around this covenant between God and your family.

**What if** ... you partnered with church leaders to provide a beautiful ceremony that celebrates teenagers making promises of moral purity.

**What if** ... you helped church leaders organize a Bible study group focused on parents of teenagers—weekly considering the questions: How can this passage transform my life? How can I model and teach the truth in this passage into the heart and behavior of my children? What can I learn about parenting from these verses?

**What if** ... you partnered with church leaders to plan some events that bring together parents and teenagers—for worship, discipleship, service, or relationship building.

**What if** ... your picture albums were sprinkled with pictures of your family on mission with the King, sometimes with your church family, as you earmarked some vacation time each year for mission's adventures.

**What if** ... mothers took their middle-school daughters on a weekend getaway to bond with her, to teach her the truth about being a woman of God, and to join her in praying for her future spouse. And fathers did something similar for sons.

**What if** ... you invited the most significant adults in your teenager's life to assemble to speak blessings to him or her near high school graduation.

**What if** ... your teenager, in God's timing and by His Spirit, joins a generation that sparks an awakening to Christ in the church and then in the culture.

## How Do I Lead My Child To Christ?

Nothing in parenting matters more than where your own children will spend forever and ever. The stakes are too high to leave this issue with others. The following lines can help you prepare to talk with your teenager about this life-or-death matter.

The Holy Spirit gives power to the words of Scripture. Read each passage below to the person you seek to introduce to Christ.

- The Bible says there is only one way to Heaven (John 14:6).
- Good works cannot save you (Ephesians 2:89).

To trust Jesus Christ today, here is what you must do:

- Admit you are a sinner (Romans 3:23; 5:12; 1 John 1:10).
- Be willing to turn from sin (repent) (Luke 13:5; Acts 17:30).
- Believe that Jesus Christ died for you, was buried, and rose from the dead (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 10:9).
- Through prayer, invite Christ to be both Savior and Lord (Romans 10:10, 13).

A Sample Prayer: "Dear God, I am a sinner and need forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ shed His precious blood and His death was the payment for my sins—that I might be rightly related to God. I am willing to turn from sin and discover real life in relationship with You. I now invite Christ to come into my heart and life as my personal Savior and Lord."

### As You Lead Your Family, Remember:

- You are not called to be a perfect parent or a "successful" parent. You are called to growth in your own discipleship and in your biblical parenting. The results are in Christ's hands.
- There are no magic formulas or guaranteed plans in parenting (not even in this resource). You can parent exactly as described in Scripture, and your children still can turn their backs on Christ.
- We serve a God of second chances. When you make mistakes in parenting, God grants you forgiveness through the death of His Son, He wraps you in unconditional love, He puts fresh wind in your sails, and He sends you back to your children.
- Christ gives hope. When children become prodigals, parents never stop praying, loving, and hoping until they return.

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