

Parenting Adolescents

Guiding with Grace and Grit

Before You Begin

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6, NIV) is a promise many parents cling to, and a promise that can feel very far away in the middle of the adolescent years. Scripture is honest about how hard this season can be for a parent, too: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV) speaks to a real temptation in these years, correcting out of frustration rather than out of love. This reading is meant to help you look honestly at how this season is going, for your teen and for you, and to bring some of what you're carrying into the light.

Please complete this on your own. Some questions ask how often something is true of you day to day. Others ask how much you agree with a statement, or how true

something feels for you right now. Each question shows a row of labeled buttons. Just tap the one that fits best. Four open questions follow the rating items. When you're finished, you can email your responses to someone you trust, if you choose to.

The Push and the Pull

Adolescence asks a teenager to do something genuinely difficult: pull away from their parents just enough to become their own person, while still needing those same parents' guidance, safety, and love more than they'll usually admit. “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21, NIV) captures the real risk on the parent's side of that tension, holding on too tightly, or correcting too harshly, in a way that pushes a teenager further away rather than closer.

At the same time, “Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire” (Proverbs 29:17, NIV) is a reminder that letting go is not the same as letting everything go. Adolescence still needs real boundaries and real guidance. The work of this season is holding both truths at once: loosening your grip on control while staying every bit as present, engaged, and available as your teen actually needs.

Parents of adolescents are asked to navigate an unusually wide range of pressures at once, often with little warning about how fast any of them can shift. Peer influence starts to outweigh parental input just as a teenager's judgment is still developing, and the pull of technology and social media adds a constant, often invisible layer of comparison, distraction, and risk. Some parents watch a pattern of substance use or another compulsive behavior take hold before they've even had time to name it. Rebelliousness and defiance can surface seemingly overnight, testing boundaries that once held without much resistance. And running underneath much of it is a harder tension still: a teenager pushing for independence they haven't yet earned the judgment to handle responsibly, leaving a parent caught between loosening the reins and stepping back in, often without a clear sense of which one is right in the moment.

Communication and Connection

1. I feel like I can have honest, calm conversations with my teen.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
○	○	○	○	○

2. I feel disconnected from what is really going on in my teen's life.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
○	○	○	○	○

3. My teen seems willing to come to me when something is wrong.

Hardly at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Completely
○	○	○	○	○

Boundaries and Discipline

4. I have clear, consistent boundaries in place for my teen.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○

5. I find myself either over-controlling or under-involved, rather than balanced.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
○	○	○	○	○

6. My spouse or co-parent and I are united in how we handle discipline.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○

Letting Go and Trusting God

7. I feel anxious about decisions my teen is making or will make.

- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Often
- ○ Always

8. I am able to release control of my teen's choices to God, rather than trying to control every outcome.

- ○ Hardly at all
- ○ A little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ Completely

9. I trust that God is at work in my teen's life, even when I can't see it.

- ○ Hardly at all
- ○ A little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ Completely

Your Own Heart as a Parent

10. I have shown patience with my teen, even when they've been difficult.

- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Often
- ○ Always

11. I carry guilt or self-doubt about my parenting.

- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Often
- ○ Always

12. I feel supported, by a spouse, church, or community, in raising my teen.

- ○ Hardly at all
- ○ A little
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ Completely

In Your Own Words

13. What is the hardest part of parenting your teen right now that you haven't said out loud to anyone?

14. How has your relationship with your teen changed as they've grown older, for better or worse?

15. What is one area where you know you need to let go of control, but are struggling to?

16. Is there anything about parenting your teen, practically, emotionally, or spiritually, that you'd like to talk through further?

Growing Together

A few concrete steps tend to help parents navigate this season with both grace and consistency. Consider working through these together, with a spouse or co-parent if you have one:

Pursue Connection Before Correction: Prioritize understanding what's going on with your teen before jumping to fix or correct their behavior.

Set Boundaries With Both Grace and Consistency: Agree together on clear expectations, and hold them steadily rather than reactively.

Release What You Cannot Control: Name specifically what you're trying to control that actually belongs to God and your teen, not to you.

Protect Your Own Support: Find other parents, a small group, or a counselor who understands this season, so you're not carrying it alone.

Pray Specifically for Your Teen: Set aside regular time to pray by name for your teen's heart, choices, and future.

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to look honestly at this season, both what your teen is facing and what it's asking of you. Parenting an adolescent is rarely a season of easy answers, and the honesty you've brought to this reflection is itself a meaningful step toward guiding your teen well, without losing yourself in the process.

Suggested Christian Resources

For those who want to go deeper, these resources offer additional biblical and practical insight into parenting adolescents:

- Chapman, G. (2016). The 5 Love Languages of Teenagers. Northfield Publishing.
- Townsend, J. (2006). Boundaries with Teens. Zondervan.

Share Your Responses

Nothing is saved or sent automatically. This opens your own email app with your responses filled in.

Your name (optional)

Your name

Send to (email)

pastor@church.org

Email My Responses

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