

15 Practical Tips for Raising a Godly 15-Year-Old

Our oldest child turns 15 this month. Wow, where has the time gone? When he was born in 2002, we didn't really have a clue what a smartphone was, and 9/11 was still very fresh on our minds. But as the years have quickly flown by, and the world has rapidly changed since, so has our family and our parenting. We've learned some important things over the years that I truly believe have helped us to experience success in our parenting.

In reflecting back on 15 years as a parent, here are 15 lessons learned:

1. Be intentional in the younger years.

The youngest years are crucial, yet many parents coast through them, thinking they have more to come to get it all right. Never underestimate the incalculable and foundational value of those early years.

2. Exercise consistency.

Children need it. Parents often lack it. It takes discipline and teamwork as parents to make this happen, but consistency is king when it comes to parenting. Even when it's tough, do what it takes to be consistent.

3. Live by example.

Your children will not just become what you say; they will become who you are. Your children are simply mini versions of you. Whatever you are becoming, so are they.

4. Lavish them with love.

Kids need unconditional love and acceptance, regardless of

their behavior. Even when a child has done wrong or disappointed you, may they never question your love for them.

5. Give them time.

To a child, love is a four letter word spelled t-i-m-e. And nothing takes the place of time—not money, not gifts, not freedom. They want you, which requires that you regularly spend quality time with them.

6. Pay attention and show affection.

Kids love to be shown attention and affection by their parents. This includes more than just time, but your physical touch, words of affirmation and gifts of love.

7. Honor their mother or father.

The way you treat your spouse is quite possibly one of the most important things you can do for your children. Their little eyes are watching and learning how to live life from your example.

8. Admit when you're wrong.

Kids need to see lives lived that are honest and genuine. You don't always have to be right because sometimes your child will learn more good from your mistakes than from you trying to cover them up. Be open, honest and willing to say you are sorry when you're wrong.

9. Remember, it's OK to ask for help.

Many parents have already walked the path you're currently on successfully. Don't be afraid to ask for help and seek out the wisdom and advice of others who have the voice of experience.

10. Time flies. Don't waste it.

It's so hard to believe we only have a few years left at home

with our oldest. How is that possible? Didn't we just bring him home from the hospital yesterday? Everyone who ever told you that time flies, and you didn't believe them—you should have. Never underestimate the life-long value of how you spend the moments, days and years you have while your kids are still living at home.

11. Lavish praise, praise and more praise.

When I recently asked my son what makes him feel most loved, he said, "When you praise me for what I do right, not just notice when I do wrong." Ouch. Kids need lots of praise and affirmation for doing things right. Whether positive or negative, you always get more of what you affirm.

12. Teach responsibility and work ethic.

A child who understands the value of work will not only excel in it but will more likely become a responsible and hard-working adult. A child not given opportunities to earn what they have will be more likely to struggle with an attitude of entitlement.

13. Teach them the value of a dollar.

Most money habits for life are formed when we are children, but those habits affect us and our future families for good or for bad for the rest of our lives.

14. Don't cry over spilled milk.

Kids will be kids. Be patient. Remember that they are still learning. There are some things that are not worth getting upset over as you keep the big picture in mind.

15. Talk to God about your kids as much as you talk to your kids about God.

All in all, we've learned that at the end of the day, or the 18 years, we will release them into the rest of their lives

and trust the One who gave them to us in the first place with the results. Our desire is to trust Him every single day until then, believing that He can do more in their hearts and through their lives than we could ever do on our own.

What parenting lessons would you add to this list that you have learned? {eoa}

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