

Equipping Your Teen to Love Jesus—All the Way Through Graduation

My kids did (mostly) awesome in college. They got good grades, made good friends and blossomed into godly adults. All my kids went to secular local and state colleges, yet their relationship with God grew. Looking back at their teen years, here are some things that prepared their hearts most.

1. Involved parents. John and I loved having teens. We had dinner nightly with them, we served in church together, and we enjoyed long talks. To do this we had to be open and available. We cut back on our personal recreation, work and goals to have time with them. This prepared our children's hearts by proving they were worthy. They had the attention of their parents and didn't seek it from unhealthy relationships in college.

2. Cheering parents. Two of our teens were involved in homeschool basketball. In Montana, this meant driving hours and hours for one or two games. During this season, our whole family piled into our SUV. We drove them, and we cheered them on. For our son who didn't play basketball, we also took interest in his pursuits. Our teens had our praise, approval and cheers. They didn't enter college with gaping holes in their hearts that needed to be filled up with substances or risky behavior.

3. An open-door policy. John and I wanted our home to be the one where all the teens hung out. We had an open-door policy. Our house was open for their friends to join us for dinner, games or just hanging out. We made sure our house was teen-friendly and filled the fridge and pantry with snacks. And sometimes their friends came to hang out even when our kids

weren't there! Our children had solid friendships with other godly teens when they entered college. Their foundation allowed them to be friends with unbelievers too, yet also remain strong in God.

4. Other supportive adults. Our teens had an amazing youth minister's family who was deeply involved in their lives. They had other caring adults they could turn to for encouragement and advice. We encouraged these relationships, knowing that sometimes it's easier to talk to an adult friend than a parent. They had a support system that gave them strength for the challenges of college.

5. A knowledge of God's Word and a deep commitment to God. Our children were not perfect in college. There were times they messed up (like when our daughter performed in a theater production we considered questionable). Yet when they didn't want to listen to our advice, God's Spirit and God's Word spoke to them. When my husband and I couldn't get their attention, God did. Their relationships with God pointed them to truth for college and beyond.

What about you? In what ways are you preparing your teens' hearts for college? {eoa}

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