

Have a New Teenager in Five Minutes

If you parent a teenager, you know how a cold shoulder from your own flesh and blood can cloud the brightest of days and weigh your spirit down with feelings of sadness, guilt and downright misery. And you'll do anything to bring it to an end.

Or will you?

Recently I found myself exasperated with one of my teenagers, to the tune of veins popping out of my neck. My voice was elevated until the phone rang—it was a call from a member of our church congregation. I answered the phone and heard myself change voices like one changes channels with the click of a remote. The lady must have thought I was the sweetest thing on the planet.

My daughter observed it all, and I could read her mind: *If only she knew.*

A while later, I made the journey down two flights of stairs to the basement bedroom where my grown girl hides away. I knocked softly and was granted entrance. I sat before her, took her hands and said, "I want you to know that there is something wrong when I speak to you differently from the way I speak to people at church. I was wrong, and I am sorry. I want to work on that."

And then I forced a painful lump of words through my throat: "Will you forgive me?"

She did, and I had a new teenager in five minutes. Warmth flooded in where there'd been icy separation.

Due to my own insecurities and those places in my soul that

God is still in the process of redeeming, there are times I feel 1-inch tall, depending on who I'm around. In the company of one or two certain individuals, I am the world's biggest klutz, am guaranteed to do or say something stupid, and have a brain the size of a pea. I'd just as soon hide away a while; it's less painful.

While I was feeling that way recently, my other teenager happened to be in "impossible mode." I was typically at a loss as to how to get her out of it, and I was also dealing with my own aforementioned social anxiety. In a quiet moment, I felt as if God spoke to me: "You should understand the way she feels."

A light came on quick enough to send me running to her side with this confession: "I think God is telling me something about our relationship. I make you feel like you can't do anything right, don't I?" (Instant tears.) "My condescending tone makes you feel very small and guaranteed to get into trouble, doesn't it?" (Flowing tears.)

I hugged her and fully owned my garbage. And again, I had a new teenager in five minutes.

I don't mean to downplay something that in many cases is much more complex than I can understand. Some teenagers have issues too deep for a five-minute apology. But I do know one thing. We cannot afford to undervalue the power of uttering what I believe are the 10 most difficult, yet most rewarding words in a relationship: "I'm sorry. I was wrong. Will you please forgive me?"

*Adapted from **Faith Bogdan's** blog. She is the author of Who Are All These Children and Why Are They Calling Me Mom? (Charisma House).*