

Teen: 'Parents, We Follow Your Lead'

Every youth pastor out there has young people in their youth group. Hence the name "youth group." And those youth have parents.

This article is an open letter to them, the parents of youth, from a teen. It is your responsibility as youth pastors to forward this message.

Dear parents of teens:

We follow your lead. What I have to say may hurt, but I'm saying it out of love. Please hear me, despite my age, and take it to heart. The life direction of your teen depends on it.

Do you know more about pop culture or about God? Pop culture is not pro-God. It's more anti-God. Does it rule your teen's life? Does it rule your life? Do you know more about pop culture than you do about the Bible?

If you do, then why are you surprised that we are following your lead? Pop culture influences us. It does. Maybe that isn't a big deal to you. If it isn't, then you have a bigger problem than your teen does. We follow your lead.

Actions speak louder than words. You say you read your Bible every day, but is that true? Maybe you don't say it because you never do. If God is only spoken of on Sundays, then we will treat God as a Sunday-only-God. He will not have an impact in our daily life at all. Why? It's because we followed your lead.

Spend time with us. You could teach us so much about God's Word, assuming you talk about God outside of Sundays. Time

together is more important than buying us stuff. That's not the way to build a relationship. Talk with us about God and our relationship with Him. It's the commonplace talks about God with you that make a bigger impact on us than anything. It teaches us that God is more than just a Sunday thing.

Limit technology time. This one hurts me to say, but I'll do it anyway. Limit things like our iPhone, computer and TV. Being a teen myself, I get annoyed by this rule at our house, and your teen will be too. But, trust me, I find stuff to do. I write a blog and create videos to help influence others. It gets me doing constructive stuff, which actually matters. Not just playing on Instagram and Tumblr for hours at a time. Help us be more constructive. Set some time-limit rules and actually enforce them. Good things come from it.

Make us read. Encourage us to read the Bible and try devotionals. But let me warn you, if you don't do it, then don't expect us to either. We follow your lead. And along with that, ask them to read other books. Personally, I love to read, but other teens aren't so excited about it. Show them how much better it is than gossip magazines. Show them the classics or, at least, The Maze Runner Series (which actually asks the question. Do the ends justify the means?).

Make us learn Bible verses. You make us learn math, why not God's Word? This is one reason I think Awana programs are so great. Whenever we're in a tough spot, these verses will come to mind and help us remember what the Bible has to say about the situation. Hopefully, we'll really think about the verse's meaning. Remember this, garbage in—garbage out. God in—God out. This also goes back to point No. 1.

Talk with God every day. He wants to hear from you. It's not worthless; maybe you'll learn something, and we will do the

same. As I said in point No. 2, we teens mirror our parents all the time. Monkey see, monkey do. Encourage prayer (at meals, at night and morning ...) and buy some teen devotionals at stores like LifeWay, which will help with point No. 5.

This is not the youth pastor's job. Sure he shares some good advice with your teens, but YOU have to make this last. Encourage us; help us grow. The youth pastor is not the coach. He is on your team. You are the coach, and you will be held accountable—not the youth pastor. Teamwork is key. But don't blame the youth pastor when we only follow your lead.

So, there you have it! Try these out, and I promise you'll see a difference. Now, we are growing up and getting ready to start a new chapter in our lives (as much as you moms hate to admit), we're becoming adults. So start early. Because one day we'll have to make our own decisions, choose our own paths. Your job is to steer us in the right direction for when that time comes.

My biggest advice for you as parents is, get spiritually healthy first, because when you are spiritually healthy, then you do the right things. And we follow your lead.

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