

When Your Kid Wants to Date

It was Wednesday night. My husband, Kyle, returned home from picking up our teen from youth group.

Kyle knew something was up because of how much time Keegan spent talking with his small group leader after youth group ended. I received a text message just before the boys arrived home.

“Keegan has something he wants to talk to us about.”

That text left a lot of room for my imagination to wander. But I didn't let it. Keegan's a pretty level-headed kid who is mostly focused on two things: video games and friends.

I wasn't completely surprised he would ask about dating. Though I don't relish the idea of him stepping into this realm, I also know it's part of his progression into young adulthood.

We had a great conversation with him about what dating can look like at this season in his life, what expectations we have for him, what we want to see in him to know he is mature enough and more along those lines.

But that isn't what this post is about. Given that I'm on the cusp of learning how to parent a teen, I am *not* the person to dole out advice.

This post is about how the conversation came about. And the beautiful relationship a student ministry can have with a family when church and home partner together.

You see, Keegan has loved being involved in student ministries at our church. And over the past two years, he's had some great small group leaders leading his crazy group of boys every week. He's developed friendships with his leaders, and subsequently he trusts them. He listens and cares about what

these men have to say.

So when Keegan knew he had a tough topic to tackle with his parents, he had a safe place to gain advice.

His small group leader coached him on what to ask us and how. He challenged Keegan to respect our decision and where we land on the topic. He equipped Keegan to initiate a conversation rather than demand an outcome.

So today, we're talking about dating with him.

Tomorrow there will be tougher conversations to tackle.

But we know we're not in this alone. We've got other people invested in Keegan's process of learning how to live out his faith.

Keegan's small group leader lives out the value of partnering with the family. We trusted how he would guide Keegan before this conversation ever happened. We trust him even more now.

One of the best things we can do for our kids is help them engage in an environment where other Christ-followers have the opportunity to influence them, invest in them and help them embrace an authentic, relevant faith.

For all the times I earn a "Needs Improvement" on my parenting report card, this is one of those moments I can step back and say, I think I actually did something right this time.

Gina McClain is a speaker, writer and children's ministry director at Faith Promise Church in Knoxville, Tenn. Her marriage to Kyle keeps her marginally sane, while their three kids (Keegan, Josie and Connor) keep her from taking herself too seriously. Visit her blog at [for more information about her ministry.](#)