

SUNDAY CLASS: Parenting 4 – Ages 12-18

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 March 2025

Preacher: Gil Balch

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, guys. Let's go ahead and get started. I appreciate you taking time to come to these classes and think about and pray about and learn do all we can to help raise our kids.

It is an important task, one of the most important tasks we have being a parent. So just thank you. We're grateful for you.

Off the top, I just want to say I need all of these things. Each one of us are in need. I am in need of each of these things that I'm telling you.

I'm provoked and I need every one of them. And much of what I got comes from this book. I recommend this book, Age of Opportunity by Paul Tripp. It's actually his first book, and I'd love to give one of these out.

I have a few other resources to give out to you guys. Age of Opportunity, great book. But a lot of this material comes from that. So I'll give this out at the end. But yeah, let me pray and we can jump in.

[1 : 0 7] Gracious Father, thank you that you are gracious. Thank you that you have given us children. That's the fruit of the womb. And our children are a blessing and an inheritance and a treasure, Lord.

And I thank you for each one that's represented by these families here. Would you bless our children, bless our teens and our preteens and our postteens, Lord. For you pour out your spirit on them and cause them to have faith and turn to you, repentance and trust in you, God.

And guide us as we humbly confess our need and recognize your rightful place in our lives. So help us. Give us ears to hear today, Lord.

So we ask that you would be glorified in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So what do you think of when you hear the word teen? You think about kids getting too big for their britches or rebellious young people?

You know, when you add the word teen to another word, it suddenly takes on a negative connotation. I'll give you an example. Teen driver.

[2 : 1 7] Driver, find word, suddenly put teen in front of it, negative connotation. And so I think that comes from, in some ways, a bit of cynicism.

It's as if the child we knew. Actually, I remember growing up when we had young kids, when our kids were growing up, and they would act out. I remember people telling us that, you know, just wait until the kids get teens.

It was like there was just something hanging over. Or like when the kid got older, we would suddenly, they would suddenly become teenage monsters. And we'd be unable to control them at all. Hormones would take over.

And if you could make it to age 20 without losing a limb, it was a miracle. You just want to kill each other. And there's nothing you can do about it. Regarding teens, the tenor of our culture is that I think that teens are virtually unreachable.

So there's a lot of cynicism. And it's, I think it's like many parents fear that a teen's going to be the leader of a violent neighborhood gang.

[3 : 22] So do we expect too little of our teens? Do we expect too little because of the biological changes that are happening? Do we think that their transition through puberty and into adulthood allows them to get a pass on trust and obedience?

Or is it that there's just so much trouble in these teen years that it causes us to retreat? And this is actually the reason that Paul Tripp wrote his first book, Age of Opportunity. And he says there in that quote, The opportunity is in the trouble.

As their worlds expand, And heart is being revealed. This period of a person's life is a tremendous opportunity. Their troubles and their temptations Aren't a block for what God wants to do in our lives and their lives.

It's the very place that the Lord wants to meet them. So I want us to look at four things in trying to help us come against the cynicism in parenting. I'm going to look at the principle.

A principle is not the only principles. The only things we need to look at. The principle, the anti-goal, the goal, and the strategy. So first, the principle.

[4 : 41] Do you remember what it was like being a teenager? Do you remember the self-consciousness? The intense self-awareness?

The desire to fit in. And when things went wrong, it felt like things were over. I remember when I was a kid in middle school, There were some students in the cafeteria who were putting chocolate milk cartons in kids' seats And hoping they would sit down on them.

Well, I was coming back from the bathroom in the cafeteria And one of my friends put chocolate milk in my seat. And I saw what he was doing. I jokingly pretended to sit down. Well, he ended up just pushing me. And I ended up sitting down, falling over and sitting down in the chocolate milk And splattered all over the place.

And got chocolate milk all over my pants. The problem was, this was the 90s, and so whitewashed jeans were in. So these whitewashed jeans and huge chocolate milk stain all over the back of my pants.

And I just remember that anger and resentment, embarrassment. In some ways, just thinking, I was not going to recover from that one.

[5 : 54] I felt like my life was over in many ways. And so, you know, I just want to have that in the front of my mind. And we need to have that in the front of our minds so that we can see our teen with compassion.

So, we also need not only compassion, but a biblical view of our teenagers. But there's a problem. The Bible doesn't speak about teens.

There's nothing to say about teenagers. That word is not used in the Bible. But the Bible does speak about and to young people. And much of it is addressed in the book of Proverbs.

Now, Proverbs is, of course, for all of us. But in the original context, part of this book was Solomon speaking to his son. Or other fathers, even, speaking to their children, to their sons.

Proverbs 1, 8, and 9. Solomon says, Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Their graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. Proverbs 23, 26 says, My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

[7 : 06] So, Proverbs lets us listen in to a father instructing his child. And what's the tone of these instructions? What's the tone of these texts?

I think it's that adults and teens generally, we generally, have very little hunger for wisdom or correction. So, Proverbs 8, 11 says, Wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

There's just instruction to gain wisdom. We don't naturally have it. Proverbs 12, 1. Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

We also, and our teens also, lack a heart awareness. Proverbs 4, 20, 23, through 23 says, My son, be attentive to my words. Incline your ear to my sayings.

Let them not escape from your sight. Keep them within your heart, for they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

[8 : 12] Heart awareness is our natural disposition. So, I think in some ways, part of our cynicism of teens may stem from the fact that a young person's natural bent is toward not wanting to receive instruction and not having awareness of their own heart.

So, we need help. We need help with our teenagers. We want to help them see the bigger picture. Help them to see their place in God's plan. And so, just like all the other stages of parenting, the battle still rages in the heart.

It's no different. You know, in the elite world of sports, the lessons are the same. I saw an interview with a guy who coached elite sports athletes.

And to Carl Lewis, he was saying, the coach to Carl Lewis was saying the same thing that he was saying to middle schoolers. Stay in your lane. Be focused. And in many ways, it's the same with parenting our teens. It's an issue of the heart.

We want to address the heart. So, number two, the anti-goal. Anti-goal. Parents fear, in some ways, the big three sins.

[9 : 27] Drugs, alcohol, and sex. And anything we can do to keep them from these things is a win. So, we look for ways to control behavior. But as the teen ages and our control wanes, the young person will begin to act more in line with the condition of what their hearts are.

This may be one of the many reasons that young people throw off any kind of Christian roots in their college years. Their hearts may already be distant from God. And when restraints are lifted, they rebel outwardly.

Already in line with what's happening in their hearts. This is why Paul says, in many ways, in Colossians 2, If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive to the world, do you submit to regulations?

Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body. But they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

The heart is what drives each one of us, including our teenagers. Of these verses, I love what Paul Tripp says about this. That long quote, he says, As Paul so powerfully states, it lacks any value for restraining sensual indulgence.

[11 : 00] What he means is that it does not deal with the source of a person's wrong behavior, the sinful desires of the heart. Peter says that the corruption in the world is caused by evil desires.

We have to work at the level of the heart desires within our teenagers, or we will win lots of battles and ultimately lose the war. So it's not enough to be detectives, jailers, and judges.

We must pastor the hearts of our children with the kind of faithful, watchful care for their souls that we receive from the Heavenly Father. We want to pastor our teens.

Those who pastor their teens, befriend them. They ask heart-probing questions. They listen and offer counsel, not so much speaking in monologues, but in conversation and about real life issues.

To pastor our teens means that we don't let them set the agenda for relationship. We aren't satisfied with distance, avoidance, or silence. In times of trouble, the parent isn't cross-examining the accused, but lovingly sees the opportunity to address the heart with God's word through discussion.

[12 : 15] Pastoring our teens assumes the continual involvement of parents. And so while our authority over them decreases, our influence should increase.

There's a graph over here in your sheet. And by authority, I mean the sense that in order to get the child to do what you want them to do, it's because you're bigger and stronger and you have authority.

You can make them do it. That's why the Lord made babies small in many ways. And what I mean by influence is that your child has an increasing willingness to place himself under your authority because he trusts you.

So that's what I mean by authority and influence. So authority probably should go down as the teen ages and influence should go up. That means we have to become masters at rhetorical speech, asking great questions as Jesus did, engaging, gently prodding, at times confronting, but in a way that's winsome and not demanding, persuasive, not like a brick wall.

So, for three, the goal, Psalm 112, 1 says, Praise the Lord.

[13 : 38] Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments. The one who fears the Lord delights in commandments. And isn't that what we want for our teens?

Delight in the Lord's commandments. Fear of God and joy in God are so closely related. So in Genesis 28, the Lord confirms his covenant with Jacob.

God gives Jacob promise after promise. He says, I'm the Lord. I'm giving you this land. Your offspring will spread out. The earth will be blessed. I'm with you. I won't leave you. Promise after promise until Jacob awoke from his sleep in Genesis 28 and says, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.

He was afraid. And he said, How awesome is this place? The same word for fearful. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

God's giving him good news, and Jacob is fearful. And if the fear of the Lord and joy in God are so closely related, then it makes sense that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[14 : 48] When we fear God, we want to obey him. Or as Psalm 112 says, we delight in his commandments. So roughly a third of the Bible is given to judgment.

Maybe prophets. So much judgment. And often in the middle of the judgments, the prophet or man of God says that they may fear my name. God's people are to be in awe of the holy judge of all.

And he's the same one, the judge of all, who's come to be our Savior. And in this, we want to fear and delight. So we want to continually set these things before our teens.

Help them to see God's holy and righteous standards the Lord has for us. Read the prophets with your teens. And explain the good news of Christ and pray that it's a delight to them.

So number four, the strategy. For a year or two now, I've had the privilege, the opportunity to have weekly dates with my kids.

[15 : 54] So we'll go to coffee once a week on Sunday. So I'll rotate through each of the kids. And it's just a time to spend a couple hours drawing them out. Sometimes I'll have specific things that I want to talk about.

Other times we just sit and chat. And it's a treasure. And I love those times. Our kids love these times. It's been so valuable to keep conversations going.

But I'm inspired by Paul Tripp when he said that he visited his kids after work each day. He intentionally went to each one to check on them.

In his book, *Age of Opportunity*, he recalled a time just when his son opened up and discussed the struggle he was facing, giving Paul an opportunity to point him to the Lord. And his point is that these conversations just don't happen.

Just don't happen naturally or easily. It takes intentionality. Daily pursuit of our children. It's so difficult. But it's so valuable.

[16 : 53] Especially in these short times that we have. Daily is important. And why daily? Hebrews 3 tells us, Take care, brothers, lest there be in you any evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And we need to engage our teens daily.

And because of the prevalence of sin, because of the strong temptation toward unbelief, because falling away happens slowly.

We need constant comprehension of teens. It's preventative. It's restorative. So we would have loved them enough to draw them out, ask questions, and to lead them.

But you might ask, What do we talk about? Surely they'll have things to talk about, but sometimes not. So how do you lead them? What are my priorities?

[18 : 01] Glad you asked. Let me give you three brief topics that I think we should be engaging our teens with. These are very light touches. These aren't exhaustive, but just some ideas that I thought are important for teens to be addressed.

A is biblical manhood and womanhood. So if your child came and asked you, What does it mean to be a man or what does it mean to be a woman?

What would you say? If you asked your teen to describe what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman, what would they say? Are they interchangeable?

Would the list be interchangeable when you ask your teen? Would it be kind of the same? It's like, Well, that really applies to men and women. Let me again remind us that men and women are not the same.

They are not interchangeable. And so there are things in the soul of a man that are different in the soul of a woman. What it looks like for a man to glorify God looks different than what it looks like for a woman to glorify God.

[19 : 02] So I encourage you parents to dig into this topic. And this is a light touch just to plant the seed of exploring for yourself so that you can help lead your teen into understanding true biblical masculine strength for men and true biblical feminine beauty for women.

So I have resources for each of these little topics. For that one, I want to recommend *Men and Women in the Church* by Kevin DeYoung. I have a copy of that I'd love to give away at the end. The second B is *Christian Calling*.

This doesn't just mean career, but it's more of how are you discussing the future with your teens? Are you talking about dating, marriage, school, career, their Christian calling?

Do the discussions you have with your teen mostly involve pragmatics? Are they just about, We've got to do this, we've got to do this, you know, Good job, work hard, don't have sex until you're married, maybe a little more than that.

I think it's important that we keep Christ at the very center of these kind of topics. For example, college. What's the metric in helping them choose a school?

[20 : 12] Assuming they go to school, what would be the metric for helping them? Is it their desires? Is it their wire, money, security, a job? I would ask, what role does the church play in that decision?

In some ways, what good would it be if your child went to the prestigious school, got a fantastic education, nailed the job, made a ton of money, but the local church is not in there, not in the picture?

I would argue that that's in vain. That may be in vain. And so it may be that the top priority is considering the local church and choosing a school, especially if it's away from home, helping them find a local church.

It's something that, in many ways, we're commanded in Scripture. We're to give ourselves to the body of Christ. It's what we're called to as Christians. This is God's will for our lives.

It's the thrust of the New Testament. There's just an example in Acts 2.42. It says, They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

[21 : 22] They devoted themselves to the local church. But there's no command in the Bible for what school they go to, what job they have, even who they marry. So we want to keep the priorities that Scripture gives in front of our children.

One resource that I would recommend for that is a YouTube series from Trinity College of Louisville.

Just a husband and wife talking about some of these topics. And it's very good. C, utilitarianism. This one's a little different.

I also put in parentheses kind of motivation. I think we need to consider having conversations about motivation with teens. We live in a day where it seems like apathy is a virtue.

How many times have you gone to the grocery store and seen young people in pajamas? I don't know if they're changing into pajamas or if that's just... It's like trendy. Being just not caring about things seems to be...

[22 : 23] And I think especially... But it just carries over into motivation. Especially when it comes to hard things. Or we don't see their reward right away.

And young people may be more vulnerable to this because they don't have years of experience under their belt seeing how doing small things actually does pay off. I mean, they may be told that, but they just don't have the years of experience seeing that play out.

I think they tend to live with a functional utilitarianism. And just briefly, utilitarianism is a way of judging what's beneficial only by its utility.

Basically, it says, if it feels good and it brings happiness, do it. But if it brings pain and unhappiness, if it's uncomfortable, it must not be good.

Don't do it. It's living only for the moment. It's impulsive and has no vision for doing hard things. It happens when our teens ask the question about learning calculus and saying, when am I ever going to use this?

[23 : 28] And it often makes them say, what difference does it make if I make my bed? No one's going to see it. Or it sometimes comes in growing weary and doing good, especially in serving in small ways.

But Luke 16 reminds us, one who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much. One who is dishonest in very little is also dishonest in much.

So we need to remind our teens that to be faithful in little will help them be faithful in much. And there's a lot that happens when we're faithful in little things and serving in the local church, especially learning to set up chairs, organize a tote, troubleshoot a projector, take care of a screaming baby.

None of these things are wasted in God's economy. God uses them to shape our character. And often our calling comes out of faithfulness to the Lord in small things like this.

God uses what seems like a waste of time or boring in his kingdom. Nothing's wasted. Scripture is against utilitarianism, Christ being the ultimate model.

[24 : 38] Don't let your teens settle for living for immediate pleasures. Resource I have for this is Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney. Whitney. In addition, Habits of Grace by David Mathis.

So those are three themes that you can speak to your team. Again, not exhaustive. I want to mention briefly just a couple of priorities for parents.

Have you noticed that when your cell phone is turned off, there's a little black screen. It's reflective and you can kind of see yourself. It's like a little mirror. But when it's turned on, it's actually more reflective.

So Google and social media has algorithms to track what you're searching, what you're looking at, so that it puts in front of you, even more of what you're searching. So it's like a mirror of our own hearts.

It's a mirror of who we are. And so I think the same is true for our teens. Many times, their reflection, our habits, of our reactions.

[25 : 44] are your teens anxious or fearful? Maybe we need to deal with your own anxiety or fear. It's not unequivocally true.

Our teens are individual people. But we do influence them. And we do influence them. One of the best examples in Scripture, I think, is from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

It says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. And these words that I command to you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. This is everyday life. As we instruct, we teach, we correct. Yes, we use words, but we do it by our example.

[26 : 46] The implication is that we're doing these things by example as well. So I think, in many ways, one of the best things you can do for your teens is tend to your own soul.

Tend to your own godliness. Deal with your own heart. It may be that our idols are what's getting in the way of our teens. Last, I do want to leave you with some hope here until you're not here to understand the things that the Lord worked over in my life and my heart as well.

One, I just want to say your teen can be godly. They may be already, but if they're not, they can be. That's a simple... Then there's a chance.

That's right. That's right. We're going to have faith in the Lord. Sometimes we can be hopeless. Is anything going to change? Yes, I'm telling you there's a chance.

Is that a high problem? I want to know. I'm teasing. They can desire the things of the Lord. They have a high calling to follow Jesus.

- [27 : 53] They can't live for Him. It's not unrealistic. John 17, 20 says, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. Jesus prays for us.
- He prays for them. He's for your team. He's given us all we need for life and godliness, as 2 Peter says. And He's called you to this task.
- He's going to equip you. But second, I just want to say, pick one thing out to take with you. Anything that you may have heard that stuck with you, just pick one thing. It may be that you're looking at this and you're like, I'm pretty good.
- I'm doing great. Great! Still pick out one thing to take with you. But if you're like me, maybe the temptation might be to be overwhelmed with certain things. And I would say, just take one thing.
- The Lord knows your limitations. And we work best when we focus on one thing. So find the one thing that stands out that you think the Lord would have you work on and work on that.
- [28 : 52] So I want to say we have an amazing group of teens in our midst and I'm thankful for them. I love them. You love them. Our church loves them. And I'm proud of them.
- So we are blessed to have them. And they're a blessing to your family. I'm grateful for them. They're a heritage from the Lord. Two things and then we're going to transition.
- Kind of a hard transition now. I'm going to pray and then I want to show you some books and I'll leave them at the back. And then I've asked Abe, Sam, and Buddy. We've got about maybe 10, 15 minutes left.
- If you have questions for them, I would love for you to, these are guys that I commend to you who have more experience than me and have parented teens well.
- they've made mistakes. But we're going to chat with them, have a quick little panel discussion. So if you have any questions, be thinking of those. I'm going to pray and then we'll transition here. We pray.
- [29 : 48] Oh Father, we need you. We lay these things at your feet and we ask for your grace and help in parenting. Would you probe our hearts and prick us and bring to mind things that we need to grow and work in.
- And we thank you that you give us the grace to do that. Lord, you do not leave us alone. You do not forsake us. You have not forsaken our teens either. And I'm grateful for that. Lord, would you bless our teens?
- Cause them to grow in faith, to trust you. And I pray that you'll be glorified in their lives in Christ's name. Amen. Would you three come up here? Grab a chair. I'll tell you to pull the screen.
- The, uh...