

Offer Teenagers Positive, Age-Appropriate Discipline



Like many aspects of parenting, discipline can get trickier as children turn into teenagers. Although your kids are outgrowing timeouts or the loss of television privileges, they haven't outgrown the need for loving, healthy boundaries-and consequences when they mess up. Discipline methods may change as kids age, but the goal is the same: shaping them into responsible, respectful Christian adults who internalize God-honoring boundaries and good behavior.

Even when teenagers have more say in their rules, parents still have important roles to play. You clearly communicate and enforce the expectations and limits. You stand your ground when teenagers challenge your authority. You discipline (and follow through) in a calm, consistent way. You're present during good and bad times, assuring teenagers that you love them even when they mess up. Finally, you model good behavior, showing how loving obedience yields rewards.

Parenting expert Jim Burns says the goal of discipline is to teach kids responsibility, not to evoke obedience. "Our job is not to always prevent our children from making mistakes but rather to make certain they learn from their mistakes," he says. This needs to be done in a relaxed, respectful way, and it's the parent's job to establish this tone. "Shame-based parenting, when parents attempt to influence their kids' behavior through shaming, nagging, and negativity, simply doesn't work in the long run," Burns says.

Read on for more insights about the power of positive and loving Christian discipline.

In the Bible, the book of Jonah tells of a prophet who learned a tough lesson about disobeying God. Group's Live Bible offers these insights into God's relentless pursuit of people who try to flee from him:

Trying to run away from God is a fruitless venture. He may let you off the hook for a short while, but in the end his purposes will be realized.

You can choose to live outside God's best for you, or you can participate with him in the big picture he has designed for your life, your circle of friends, your community, and the world. When we try to run away from God, we miss out on the joy of obedience.

The prophet Jonah is a quite complex (and sometimes humorous) character. As we watch, he attempts to do the exact opposite of what God asked him to do: Go to Nineveh.

We're a lot like Jonah-complex and sometimes humorous in how we respond to God. Read Jonah 1-3 with your teenager. Each of you just might see yourself in Jonah's story.

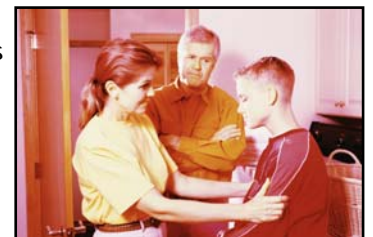


Check out these interesting statistics about teenagers and discipline:

- In an online poll, 273 teenagers responded to the question "What types of discipline do your parents regularly or usually use on you?" The top answers were:

- o Loss of privileges such as cell phone (51%)
- o Being grounded (40%)
- o Physical punishment (22%)
- o None; they either don't believe in discipline or are too wimpy to be confrontational (20%)
- o Assigned extra household chores (19%)

- In the same poll, kids were asked how strict their parents are. Almost half (43%) of kids agreed with the statement "They let most things slide but are strict on the big stuff." But 12% of kids agreed with the statement "They're unpredictable; they go between strict and permissive, depending on their mood, how they feel, or maybe what phase the moon is that day."



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Your teenagers probably have strong opinions about this hot topic. Dig deeper by asking them:

1. What types of discipline and consequences are appropriate and inappropriate for teenagers, and why?
2. Should teenagers have a say in how or when they're punished? If so, explain.
3. When parents are handing out discipline, what should be their motivation and goals?
4. At what age should teenagers be responsible for controlling and monitoring their own behavior, and why?
5. How do people develop self-discipline? How strong has yours been lately?

A NOTE FROM TRAVIS

I'm excited about the month of November. On the 10th of this month student ministries is planning a four day mission trip with FBC Hemet. Pastor Troy (from FBC Hemet) has many years of experience going down to Tijuana and this fall he has invited us to join him. Our trip will be over the Veteran's day weekend returning on Sunday. This is the first time in many years that student ministries have gone down to Mexico, and it's my hope that we can make this a yearly trip. We are going to be working with three different ministries: *Spectrum* who run a bath house, *Reflect* who bring meals to children of prostitutes, and we'll help out at a local Orphanage where the team will stay during the 4 days in Tijuana. This year I will take a smaller group of five students to "scout out the land" so to speak, and most likely take larger groups in the future.

The other thing that I'm excited about is our "Dinner Together" night with the high school group. The high school staff and I decided that it is important to get to know the students in an informal setting, so we determined that each time we finish a series we would have a dinner together with the group. Our first "Dinner Together" will be on November 2nd at 7pm. Benna Lovato has agreed to cook for us insuring a great success for our first meal.

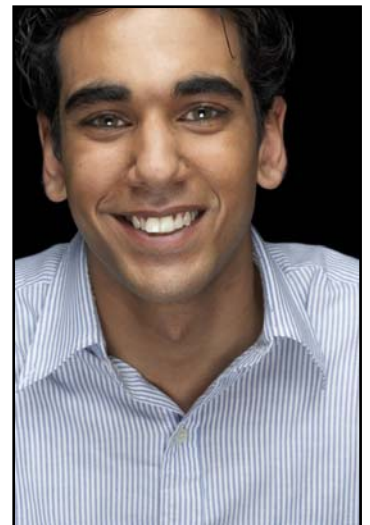
Lastly I would like to thank all of you for having a good sense of humor about our rainy day car wash. We raised over \$500 for youth ministry camps/trips and I know we couldn't have done it without you all. A special thanks to Steve and LuAnn Martin who organized the entire event.

What's Up With Kids

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, youth ministry author Doug Fields shares his insights about the necessity and value of discipline.

Discipline is like a root canal. It isn't fun, but it's good for you. Both are simple but decisive procedures that keep decay from destroying a whole structure, whether it be a tooth or a person. Once done, the weak and painful is restored to a state of strength and usefulness. Biblically speaking, discipline is a necessary good because of evil. Discipline is a positive promoter of spirituality, morality, and relational integrity, which the Bible refers to as "righteousness." So while discipline may keep the peace, its primary purpose is to help teenagers mature spiritually. There's the connection between discipline and discipleship. Often, the act of speaking the truth (with an attitude of grace) can help jumpstart a young person's growth process. Here are some helpful discipline tips:

1. Expect good behavior. Set a tone of positive expectation. Be genuinely surprised when you don't see it.
2. Communicate clearly. Don't waste rules. Teenagers will remember and follow only a few. Also, clearly communicate about consequences. It isn't fair to surprise kids by disciplining them with measures they're unaware of.
3. Enforce lovingly. The consequence for not following the rules is worthless if not enforced, and to enforce means you need to follow through.



Use these three steps with grace and truth. Our goal is always a desire to help kids, not to demean them in any way. If you ever feel like you're disciplining in anger, hold off and act at another time.