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# From Command to Counsel

## Ephesians 6:1-4<sup>1</sup>

### The Biblical Parenting of Teens

So let me set the stage for our series.

#### Our Tradition

For over 20 years now, it has been our custom to set aside the month of January to preach on and address issues relating to family, marriage and parenting. This culminates in our Family Enrichment Conference the 4th Friday and Saturday of January. This has been an important tradition in the life of the Chapel. Yes, we often come back to the same texts and to the same topics. But we feel that these are an essential part of our life together and our ministry of the Word.

#### Our Topic

In our series last January we focused on Biblical parenting of children. The focus was on how to bring up younger children in both the instruction and discipline of the Lord. Biblical parenting involves both teaching children to obey and addressing the issues of the heart. It also involves correction, rebuke and the rod. Discipline is designed to help a child become wise, to help them deal with the simple foolishness and sinful tendencies of their heart.

Our topic this January is the *Biblical Parenting of Teens*. We are going to speak to both parents and teens. We will have a mix of Bible expositions and Biblically informed wisdom to share with you.

#### Our Teachers

This year, Pastor Devon, Pastor Mark, Ethan Merck and I will be speaking. We are all excited to be able to think together around this important subject.

#### Our Trajectory

Teens are in a transitional time of their lives. As we think about this subject together, we want you be aware of our trajectory – where are we going and how are we going to get there?

Our focus will be on thinking through several key transitions that are taking place in the teen years. Some are transitions for parents. Some are transitions for teens. All tend to be the opportunities for exposing the heart, expressing rebellion, exercising rigid control and resulting in conflict.

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We hope to see it as a time that you will be able to examine your own response to change, transitions, growth and independence.

Our topics will emphasize the “from... to...” aspect of this time of life. This morning for example, we will be talking about From Command to Counsel. This evening on From Home into the World. We will be addressing your teen’s salvation, your parenting in community, your resolving conflict and singleness, dating and marriage.

On some of these topics, the Bible speaks very generally. As we think about these together, we intend to give you some direct Biblical guidance and hopefully, some practical wisdom. We will help you think through some issues with heart oriented questions.

Now let’s turn to our topic this morning.

*How to parents and teens move from living under command to living under counsel?*

## **Some Practical Challenges**

### **The Core Issues in our Culture**

We have made the problem worse by failing to recognize how the world, our culture, has affected us.

#### **Children to Adolescence**

This term can be helpful as a way of referring to sons and daughters in this transition period. It is very unhelpful if it sets parental expectations and gives teens excuses. Just because a teen is in this transition, doesn’t mean they will be a certain way.

#### **High School to College**

Why do we think that for some reason 18 or thereabouts is the age to begin to let your teens have independence? Why do we think in terms of 18 or something like that? And now we have helicopter parents who are selling homes and moving to the same city where their son or daughter is going to college – ask almost any of those teens what they think about that.

The Bible and most cultures in history have seen sons and daughters as being mature enough around puberty to marry, to fight, to inherit their parent’s property, to be emancipated from tutors and governors. I want to challenge that whole notion. Rear your children to be independent while living in your home in their high school years.

#### **Independence = Rebellion**

There is a notion in our culture that says in order for anyone or anything to be independent then they must shake off the yoke and be on their own through the assertion of that independence. Well, that is true if the parents are demanding that the emerging 14-18 year old adult in their home live as they had the first 13 years. I propose that the Bible has a radically different view of this transition.

#### **Unbelievers vs Believers**

I want to say that this is one of the most tragic and destructive failures. When your son or daughter publically professes faith your basic and essential relationship with them

changes. They are first and foremost, now, your brother or sister in Christ. Yes, you are still their parent – but I contend that the Bible expects that we will recognize and respond to our believing teens in a different way than our other children.

### So what does it sound like?

Here are some sample challenges that parents and teens struggle with unless there is a deep commitment to growing according to God's design. See if you have said or heard any of these?

Category	Parents Say...	Teens Say...
<b>Obedience</b>	You will obey me regardless	I don't want to obey you. I had enough of obeying you
<b>Respect</b>	I am your parent, you will respect me...	I am a person, you will respect me
<b>Holiness</b>	In this house you will not disobey God	You disobey God in this house...
<b>Differences</b>	Listen to me...	Listen to me...
<b>Knowledge</b>	We know more than you...	Your knowledge is old and antiquated
<b>Insight</b>	We understand what is going on here	You don't understand at all...
<b>Maturity</b>	If you act like a child, I'm going to treat you like a child	When you treat me like a child, I'm going to act like a child, which is, in fact, always.
<b>Discernment</b>	I know what is best for you	I know what is best for me

There are many, many other areas that I could have chosen to illustrate the challenges. But these reflect a particular failure of both parents and teens in the transitional years.

## A Cluster of Connected Texts

What does the Bible say about this? Why do Christian parents often say some of these things?

<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

**Psalm 1:1-2** <sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

**Psalm 106:13–15** <sup>13</sup> But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel. <sup>14</sup> But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert; <sup>15</sup> he gave them what they asked, but sent a wasting disease among them.

**Proverbs 1:8–10** <sup>8</sup> Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, <sup>9</sup> for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. <sup>10</sup> My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

**Proverbs 1:29–31** <sup>29</sup> Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, <sup>30</sup> would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, <sup>31</sup> therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.

**Proverbs 2:1–22** (New Living Translation)

<sup>1</sup> My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. <sup>2</sup> Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. <sup>3</sup> Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. <sup>4</sup> Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures.

<sup>5</sup> Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain knowledge of God.

<sup>6</sup> For the LORD grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. <sup>7</sup> He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest. He is a shield to those who walk with integrity. <sup>8</sup> He guards the paths of the just and protects those who are faithful to him.

<sup>9</sup> Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go.

<sup>10</sup> For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy. <sup>11</sup> Wise choices will watch over you. Understanding will keep you safe.

<sup>12</sup> Wisdom will save you from evil people, from those whose words are twisted. <sup>13</sup> These men turn from the right way to walk down dark paths. <sup>14</sup> They take pleasure in doing wrong, and they enjoy the twisted ways of evil. <sup>15</sup> Their actions are crooked, and their ways are wrong.

<sup>16</sup> Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the seductive words of the promiscuous woman. <sup>17</sup> She has abandoned her husband and ignores the covenant

she made before God. <sup>18</sup> Entering her house leads to death; it is the road to the grave. <sup>19</sup> The man who visits her is doomed. He will never reach the paths of life.

<sup>20</sup> Follow the steps of good men instead, and stay on the paths of the righteous. <sup>21</sup> For only the godly will live in the land, and those with integrity will remain in it. <sup>22</sup> But the wicked will be removed from the land, and the treacherous will be uprooted.

We can observe some general principles from these cluster of texts.

## **Biblical Goals for Parents**

We hear from the texts some objectives that parents are aiming for. God calls you to faithfulness in the process, depending and waiting on Him for the product. Parents are aiming:

### **To train children...**

By teaching them what they need to know for all of life and godliness.

By disciplining them to help them grow in wisdom and to learn to bend their wills to the will of someone else.

### **According to the Lord's...**

**Precepts** To be faithful to what God commands you as a parent to be and do.

**Principles** To be able to observe principles from God's Word that guide wisdom decisions.

**Pattern** God our Father serves as a perfect pattern of parenting. The Bible often points us as parents and children to that example, particularly in chastening.

### **To Instill in Children/Teens...**

The fear of the Lord which is the beginning of all true knowledge and wisdom. Parents must orient their own lives and the lives of their teens towards God.

A respect for authority beginning with parents. Parents will then want to demonstrate honoring those God has placed in authority, teaching by example.

Obedience to God's Word understanding that we live in God's world and cannot violate His basic precepts and principles without consequence.

Wisdom and discernment in life so that they are prepared for life and especially for the Christian life if God chooses to save them.

### **Aiming towards...**

The Christian life without forcing a religious decision. Even if your children and teens are not yet believers, they should be taught so that if they are converted, they have a Biblical and theological literacy – they have knowledge that can be believed. Remember, what is not known, cannot be believed.

Making wise choices without living by lists. We want children who know how to live by principles and are not dependent on being told what to do in order to know what to do.

Being independent without being rebellious. Rear your children to become independent. We are not talking about disconnected or unengaged. We are talking about a process of letting go, giving freedom, allowing the consequences of choices all while still living in the home.

Having ordinary skills of life without limiting potential. Teach your children how to take care of themselves, to have basic life skills and to be ready for their part in society, in a home and at a job.

## **Biblical Goals for Teens**

The objectives that God gives to parents define some aims for teens to strive for during these transitional years.

### **To learn respect and obedience...**

By honoring and respecting parents. Yes, you are required to honor them *no matter what*. This honor is similar to what is required of you in reference to your teachers, your employers and those in your government.

By learning to fear God. You do live your life before the face of God. You will give an account to Him. Orient your life towards God while you young.

By examining the faith for yourself. God has allowed you to grow up with a parent or parents who are believers. You have the privilege of growing up in a church that tries to please God. Listen, learn and begin to love the God who is loved and served around you.

### **To become a mature adult**

By growing in wisdom. Aim to become a young person who is known to have wisdom beyond their years.

By developing life skills. Aim to be able to take care of yourself: to be able to cook and clean, to wash your clothes, to keep a checkbook, to manage money, and so on. Develop those skills at home by working in your home. Take care of your room. Wash your stuff. Help around the house. Learn all you can.

By becoming independent without rebelling. From a submissive heart, seek to please your parents while demonstrating the stability, maturity and responsibility that earns you independence. Learn to live both under and with your family.

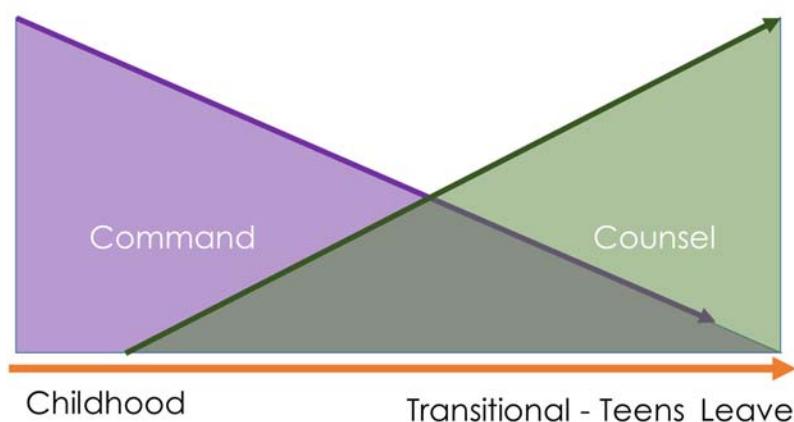
## The Change that is Needed

For many parents, there are some changes that needed to be made. These are often practical changes in how you run your home. But I want to call you to heart and attitude changes. These will form the foundation for real change.

### To Implement God's Design

God has a design for how you move from being primarily in command over your children to being in counsel with your teens. Teens, you have a responsibility to have a poise of heart to hear and to heed your parent's counsel.

That design is best represented by this simple chart.



This chart is designed to represent the transition that God has designed to take place.. In both parents and teens, there is an interaction with one another that is moving from primarily command and obedience to counsel and guidance.

A chart like this can only represent a very general reality.

### The Childhood Years

Early in child's life, they are commanded to obey. The relationship is an authority relationship. The parents are to exercise that authority with love and grace, with conviction and chastening. It is to be exercised with all that is intended by "nurture" and "in the Lord". But God has designed those years to instill a deep respect for and a poise to obey authority.

This will come through the Biblical and godly use of training, teaching and discipline. You are disciplining, chastening as a parent. You are driving folly from the heart. You are seeking to

### The Teen Years

As a child grows older, parents should begin to do more conversations, in-depth teaching, taking opportunities to challenge, correct, ask questions, expose bad thinking and heart issues. You are more and more thinking of your young person as an emerging adult, not as a fading child. You give them harder and harder things to do. You stretch them and encourage them. Everyone in the house lives by the house rules. These should be simple, few, principled and required of all, not just the teens.

And you let them fail!!!! You hear me? You let them fail. They have to assume responsibility for themselves. DO NOT shield your children from the consequences of poor,

foolish and sinful decisions. (*The possible exception here may be if a consequence would have long term and life altering impact.*) In grace and mercy you come alongside of them to help them get through the difficulty – but you don't keep them from the consequences.

Finally, you are more and more giving them freedom. Within the house rules, they can come and go. If they stay up till 4:00am playing video games, that's up to them – but they are expected to get up for school and church and Saturday chores regardless. Parents, teens will simply amplify your own self-indulgences and lack of self-discipline.

We reared our children to be ready to be on their own around 14-15. Until they graduated from High School, we treated them as adults as much as we could. We taught them to ask questions of us and even challenge us respectfully. And they had to suffer the consequence of foolish and sinful decisions. Lose your license? Ride the bus. Don't care when you went to bed but now you get up, as I roll them out onto the floor. Didn't do your assignment? You get an F. You deserved it. Develop friendships with adults. Engage conversations – don't dominate a conversation. Care for people and their feelings (Ok, Dad not the best example...) Look at adults in the eyes. Listen. Ask good questions. "Help me understand..." is your best friend.

### **To Trust in God's Word**

Now, you have to trust God's Word. You have to know it, believe it, understand it and live it. It is essential to feed you, sustain you, instruct you, correct you and rescue you.

### **To Submit to God's Working**

Remember that God is at work in your life and in the life of your sons and daughters. He is transforming all of and each of you. Everything that is going on is under the Lord's control. He is working out His good, wise and sovereign providence in all of you. Your teens are *not* out of control. All of your sinful, holy and wise choices are in His sovereign will. That should motivate all of you to greater reliance on His grace and greater efforts at pleasing Him.

### **To Be Pleasing to God Regardless**

Parents and teens must be committed to be pleasing to God regardless.

Parents, no matter how your children becoming teens turn out, you can still be pleasing to God. You will not have perfect children. Even God has only One perfect son.

Teens, no matter how your parents are, you can be pleasing to God. They may ignore the good teaching they are receiving and be authoritative, legalistic, harsh and show little grace. Or they may become disengaged, distant, uncaring, unlistening, and unavailable. But you can still be pleasing to God. You can honor them. Submit to them. Grow in wisdom. Love and grace yourself and become to them an example of what it means to be a believer.



## To Ask the Right Questions

What we have been saying is deeply connected to our understanding of the Christian life in the New Covenant. This means some people living in the household are believers, but some are not. Let me speak to this briefly and we will address it more in-depth later.

Both parents and teens are to respond to one another with faith working through love. Parents, these are questions to ask yourselves as you seek to move more and more toward counseling and guiding your teens in an environment of love, change and holiness. Teens, you should be asking yourself similar questions over your own heart, desires, direction and willingness to submit to and honor your parents.

What principles or Biblical truths?

What precepts or Biblical commands?

What priorities or Biblical urgencies?

What people or Biblical relationships?

What purposes or Biblical goals?

What patterns or Biblical examples?

What practice or Biblical traditions?

What pursuits or personal wants, drives, ambitions, agendas?

What processes or Biblical habits and disciplines?

What personal or heart issues?

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## Reflect and Respond

So now what? How do we make these changes in our homes? Let me suggest some steps of action that may help you.

1. Establish parental unity - Parents talk together to get on the same page. Do you both agree that this is the Biblical model?
2. Seek help from others - Parents often will need discipleship and encouragement. In very difficult cases of long-term failure or high levels of teen rebellion, Biblical counseling may be needed.
3. Identify and rank issues - This involves two steps if you have teens.
  - a. Parents work together to list and rank issues. They should also develop tentative solutions, changes, approaches, aims and possibly, repentance, confession and forgiveness.
  - b. Parents sit down with teens to explain the upcoming changes and to ask them to help identify and rank issues. Give them time to think through things. Start at this meeting to listen and to enforce respectful discussion.

4. Develop a transformation plan – these steps of action should be sensible, doable and transformational. The initial steps will go better if they are ones where the parents and teens are in substantial agreement. However, it must be clear that the parents are making the final decisions for their home. Teens may be in the decision process; but they are not in charge.
5. Implement with grace, love and flexibility
  - a. Parents, must lead, not drive. Parents must lead, not follow. Parents must model, not excuse themselves. Parents must listen as well as talk. Parents must be faithful, mature and gracious.
  - b. Teens must follow, not fight. Teens must submit, not resist. Teens must model, not excuse themselves. Teens must talk as well as listen. Teens must grow, change, mature and be respectful.

So much in so little time. Many of our homes are run in the Biblical way. Many would be willing to disciple those of you who might find this difficult. This is a community project, just as most of the Christian life.

So I close with **Proverbs 4:4–9** (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> My father taught me,  
“Take my words to heart.  
Follow my commands, and you will live.  
<sup>5</sup> Get wisdom; develop good judgment.  
Don’t forget my words or turn away from them.  
<sup>6</sup> Don’t turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you.  
Love her, and she will guard you.  
<sup>7</sup> Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do!  
And whatever else you do, develop good judgment.  
<sup>8</sup> If you prize wisdom, she will make you great.  
Embrace her, and she will honor you.  
<sup>9</sup> She will place a lovely wreath on your head;  
she will present you with a beautiful crown.”