

The Exchange Zone



April 2008

“The Top Twenty List, Part Four”

Because of the missions trip to Juarez last month I was unable to send out a monthly newsletter. This month I want to return to our discussion of “The Top Twenty List” for parenting teens. Remember that our first 12 principles are covered in the December-February issues which are available on the Exchange Zone web site.

Much of the focus of our principles so far has emerged out of the conviction that we are to be the chief disciplers of our sons and daughters. Though this is true, it does not follow that we are to be the only influence upon them. Our thirteenth parenting point is to acknowledge that teens also need others besides parents to influence them. They need to learn to love other believers (Jn. 13:34), to live in harmony with other believers (Rom. 12:16), be kind to and forgive other believers (Eph. 4:32), to spur on to love and good works other believers (Heb. 10:24), bear the burdens of other believers (Gal. 6:1ff.), and pray for another (James 5:16). Additionally, they must learn how to benefit from persons who have diverse gifts within the body of Christ and to benefit others (1 Cor. 12). The rest of their lives they will be part of the Church, serving alongside other believers. Part of our intentional discipling of them must be to help them learn how to do life with other Christians.

What is more, God has made us to develop in such a way that as we get into the teen years we begin desiring to have more influence on others and vice-versa. Certainly, this desired new freedom must be given in a context of mom and dad continuing to stay connected, but not to give it at all is to short-change our youth’s discipleship. So encourage and pray them into good solid mentoring and peer relationships!

Number fourteen is pray and work hard at keeping in touch with what your teen is doing. Though you shouldn’t jump to conclusions or nag them if you sense something that needs attention, nevertheless, make it your goal to share your heart and passion with them and also to know what is going on in their world.

Another principle we must remember is to love and respect our youth (1 Cor. 13; 1 John 4:8). We should not seek to be their buddy, nor should we be afraid of their disapproval. However, we should make sure that they know we love them and respect them. This can be hard, especially if they have some history of getting in trouble or have made some mistakes. Yet, think about how important it has always been to you that people the closest to you respect and love you! Then realize that it is the same with your own children. If all they see from you is the disciplinarian, they most likely will “become discouraged” (Col. 3:21).

Number sixteen out of our top twenty parenting list is simply to choose your battles wisely. We all have bad days, will word things in such a way as to be misunderstood, or legitimately forget to do something. In those times we want people to treat us well, not jump to conclusions, and not make more out of the

situation than is warranted. If that is how we want to be treated, then we should treat our teens in the same manner (Mt. 7:12). It can be so easy, out of fear for what might happen to them, to interpret certain things our teens do or don't do as intentional disobedience and rebellion, or to conclude that a decision they have made is worse than it really is. Sometimes it is good to take a step back, pray, wait, and find out more before we "go charging in!"

None of these principles is "rocket science," nor are they things that are necessarily new to you. However, they are of such a nature that we must regularly be reminded of them. If God has convicted you that one or more of these principles is absent from your parenting, take the time right now to pause and ask God to help you improve in that particular area.

Passing On The Baton With You,

Tom Barnes