

Special Focus, PARENTING: *How to Talk So Your Teen Will Listen*  
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1. Welcome, Scripture, and Opening Prayer
2. Use basic principles.
  - a. Listen carefully.
    - 1) Turn off the TV and/or put down the phone, computer, newspaper or whatever else you're doing.
    - 2) Make eye contact.
    - 3) Repeat in your own words what your son or daughter has been telling you. Ask him or her if you heard him or her correctly. (This assures him or her that you care and that you've listened and truly understand.)
    - 4) If a request has been made, act on what he or she said.
      - a) Do it right away if possible.
      - b) If it is not possible to act right away:
        - 1- Explain why, and give as close as possible a time when you'll do it or talk about it more.
        - 2- State the reasons as calmly and lovingly as possible why you can't or won't do what is requested. Offer, invite, and discuss alternatives.
  - b. Love is spelled T.I.M.E.
    - 1) Taking time with your son or daughter communicates that you value him or her. We spend time on what and whom we value. Spend time with each child individually. Try hard to give each the time he or she needs. (Make sure you spend the time with your spouse in accord with his or her needs, and attend to his or her needs in view of your child(ren) as much as possible, providing a good role model so the children learn what a Christian mother and father do.)
    - 2) Work on projects together.
      - a) Talking, especially regarding some subjects, is easier when attention is directed at an objective other than the two of you.
      - b) The project provides a catalyst for communication.

- 3) Offer to help with school work.
  - 4) Go out to breakfast together.
  - 5) Develop a hobby together.
- c. If you are not already doing so, start a time of family devotions. Dinner time has a special dynamic that can be used to great advantage to strengthen family relationships. Work hard to have that time together to talk about what is important to each member of the family.
- 1) Before dinner pray a prayer of thanksgiving.
  - 2) After dinner have a devotional time
    - a) Read a passage from the Bible. Beginning with chapter one of a specific book (consider Luke and, when finished with Luke, proceed to Acts). Read a portion, as much as attention spans allow, each day until the whole book (e.g., Luke) is completed. Unless focusing on specific subjects, reading a whole book of the Bible is more spiritually enriching than hopping and skipping around without a plan.
    - b) Talk about what you've read together.
    - c) Offer intercessory prayers. Ask others to pray also.
    - d) Sing a hymn. Select one of the great classics, e.g., "To God Be the Glory," "The Old Rugged Cross," or "Trust and Obey." From time to time sing a contemporary Christian song, e.g., "[Because He Lives](#)." Be careful to select those hymns and songs that have good theology that is consistent with the Bible. Ask your pastor for a list of such music. Sing along with a recording. At Christmastime, sing the great and theologically profound Christmas carols.
    - e) Read something interesting together, e.g., a one-minute mystery and try to figure out the answer.
    - f) Share humor.
    - g) Everyone pitch in to clean up the dishes.
  - d. When conflicts arise, follow Biblical guidelines.

- 1) First talk one-to-one. Identify the problem. Understand friendships. (Matthew 18:15; Proverbs 27:5-6; 29:17; Psalm 141:3-5). See also Proverbs 1:10, 29-33; 2; 3:11-27; 4:20-27; 5:21-23; 7:1; 12:15; 13:1, 20; 14:12, 15; 16:21-25; 17:6; 21:28; 19:20; 22:23-24; 23:19, 22; 24:1; 25:15; 28:9; Ecclesiastes 5:1; 7:5; 1 Corinthians 5:9.)
  - 2) Listen (Proverbs 12:15; 15:31-33; 29:20; James 1:19-21. Raise questions as Jesus did so frequently and perfectly.)
  - 3) “Be angry, but do not sin.” (Psalm 4:4; Ephesians 4:26-27; Proverbs 15:1, 18; 16:21-24, 32; 28:13)
  - 4) When you’re wrong, apologize. (Proverbs 15:18, 31; 28:13)
  - 5) When a squabble arises, ask yourself (and your spouse), “Is this a battle I really need to win?” (Proverbs 12:16) Don’t win the battle but lose the war. Always keep clearly in mind the main objective (raising each child to mature in Christ, e.g., Ephesians 4:12-15; Deuteronomy 6:4-8).
  - 6) Pray together. (Proverbs 15:29; James 5:16)
- e. Careful research on motivation reveals that motivation is largely internal.
- 1) Tap into the internal interests which drive your teen.
  - 2) Use stories. (See, e.g., *The Language of Love* by John Trent and Gary Smalley.)
  - 3) Use the law of reinforcement (behavior that is reinforced, i.e. rewarded, tends to be repeated) but carefully at this stage of development.
  - 4) Set limits; use discipline as necessary. (Proverbs 29:17)
3. Panel Forum (Ask the church youth minister, or other youth leader, to moderate a panel of teens. Include girls and boys.) The panel members will present their perspectives on the following questions and then respond to questions/comments from the floor.
- a. How can parents more effectively communicate and relate with their teens?
  - b. How can the trust issue (e.g., “Why do I have to tell you where I’m going? You don’t trust me!”) be resolved?
  - c. Add any other questions pertinent to the needs of which you are aware.

4. Read and view other resources, books, DVDs, carefully selected Websites, for further information, including the resources on these Websites:
  - a. [From Acorn to Oak 12](#)
  - b. [How Can Churches Facilitate Education Leading to Maturity in Christ Worldwide?](#)
  - c. [Dr. James Dobson Family Institute](#)
  - d. [Focus on the Family](#)
5. DISCUSSION.
  - a. Ask what questions or comments anyone has.
  - b. Offer to meet with parents, young people, grandparents, and others whenever they would like to do so.
6. Close the session in prayer, including asking God to grant to all of us his wisdom, guidance, and direction as needed in order to please him in all we do and be the parents of our children, who are actually his children, in accord with his will. Include also asking God to help us and our child(ren) be receptive to what each of us needs to hear and how to function best in God's sight.