

The 4 I's of Intended Influence:

A Parent's Guide To Intentional Intergenerational Discipleship

Someday (maybe sooner than you would like to think possible), your teenager will be ready to leave the nest and go out into the world on their own. What kind of person do you hope they will be when that time comes? Your answer to that "someday" question will determine (or should determine) how you parent today. That's because parenting with the end goal in mind is a wise way to parent.

Jesus grew in wisdom (**mentally**), stature (**physically**), in favor with God (**spiritually**) and man (**socially**) – Luke 2:52

Healthy teens will grow and mature in all four of these areas of life. As your teenager is growing and developing into the person they will become, study after study has proven that the most influential person in their life is going to be you, the parent. But recent longitudinal studies have also shown that in order to develop an emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually healthy teen, it is going to take more than you and your parental wisdom, guidance, or influence; it is going to take a community of trusted and caring adults surrounding your teenager. The results of these studies shouldn't come as a shock as their findings are no different than the words many of us heard our parents or grandparents say. The phrase "**it takes a village to raise a child**" originates from an African proverb and has long since conveyed the now-proven theory that it takes many people ("the village") to provide a safe, healthy environment for our children, where they are given the security they need to develop and flourish.

As a parent, when you are intentional about identifying and inviting trusted intergenerational voices (outside of your own) to speak into the life of your teenager, you create fertile ground and boundless opportunities for spiritual growth, mentorship, accountability, maturity, wisdom, and encouragement. This is **intentional intergenerational discipleship**. Connecting them to some hand-selected adults and then inviting those trusted adults to leverage their influence along the way through challenging, enlightening, walking alongside, and providing another voice of wisdom and maturity in the life of your teen is a critical and often overlooked part of faith development and discipleship.

That's why we created this resource! **This resource is NOT intended to be an aid for helicopter or lawnmower/snowplow parenting.** That is NOT healthy parenting, and it's not parenting with the end in mind. We do, however, hope that this resource will encourage and equip you with the tools you need to **identify** some potential trusted intergenerational voices and be more intentional when it comes to **inviting** those individuals into the life of your teenager to leverage their **influence** and create a lasting **impact**.

IDENTIFY

Did you know that as your teen is growing and developing, they need at least five significant adults in their life who are consistently encouraging them, challenging them, providing them with a positive same-sex role model, spiritually mentoring them, providing them with a positive opposite-sex role model, loyal to them, different than them, and older/wiser than them?

The Search Institute is an organization that has spent over 70 years interviewing and tracking tens of thousands of children and teenagers to better understand the importance of relationships across children's development. The Institute's findings show that when teenagers have strong relationships with caring adults, they are more likely to be engaged at school and more motivated to succeed academically. . . One study found that adolescents who have stronger relationships with non-family adults have higher levels of positive support, engage in less risky behavior, and have increased levels of overall well-being. . . These findings led the Search Institute to a simple yet profound conclusion: **"Nothing has more impact in the life of a child than positive relationships"** . . . But what exactly is a caring relationship? The report found that meaningful relationships share FIVE critical aspects that help children and teenagers thrive: 1. Adults showing students they care about them, 2. Challenging them to become their best selves while providing ongoing support, 3. Sharing power and showing respect, and 4. Expanding their sense of possibilities and opportunities. (Source: <https://blog.searchinstitute.org/new-research-report>)

Pause for a few moments to consider the life-changing potential of intentionally surrounding your teen with **FIVE** trusted intergenerational voices (coaches, teachers, small group leaders, family members, neighbors, friends, people in your church, etc.).

Next, take some time to brainstorm all the individuals you already know or are acquainted with who could meet the **FIVE** critical aspects mentioned above. List them all in the space provided below.



Now, take some time to prayerfully consider this list you've made and ask yourself, "If I could hand-select **FIVE** of these trusted adults listed to leverage their influence through challenging, enlightening, walking alongside, and providing another voice of wisdom and maturity in the life of my teen, which FIVE would I pick?" Another way to think about it is asking, "If my teenager needed someone other than me to talk to, share something with, or get advice from, who could they go to that shares our family's beliefs and values?" It's always helpful if these individuals are people your teenager is already listening to or wants to hear from. List them below.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Look back at your **FIVE** and make sure that your list of potential influence and impact is intergenerational and has trusted individuals from a variety of backgrounds (coaches, teachers, small group leaders, family members, neighbors, friends, people in your church, etc.) and highlights the different areas of influence/impact (encourager, challenger, a positive same-sex and opposite-sex role model, spiritual mentor, loyal, different than them, older/wiser).



INVITE

Once you have identified (after some time of prayer and consideration) your list of FIVE potential trusted intergenerational voices, the next step is to invite those individuals to be a part of your teen's life. This can be quite simple.

Facilitating this connection doesn't need to be difficult or formal. It can be as easy as:

- Writing the individual a note acknowledging and thanking them for their current investment and influence on your teen.
- Inviting them to coffee with you and your spouse.
- Volunteering on your teenager's team or team's support network.
- Scheduling a time to meet with them.
- Inviting them to join your family for dinner.

Take the FIVE potential trusted intergenerational voices from your list and write down one way you can facilitate a connection through a personal invitation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Inviting potential trusted intergenerational voices to be a part of your teen's life can be intimidating or awkward for some, but keep in mind that "Nothing has more impact in the life of a child than positive relationships," and therefore, the work (or potential awkwardness) of intentional intergenerational discipleship is worth it for your teen.

INFLUENCE

Influence requires opportunity and consistency. If you want to be intentional with intergenerational discipleship, then you have to help facilitate and nurture it. Creating a list of potential trusted intergenerational voices to be a part of your teen's life and even inviting them into the rhythm of your family is only part of it. Intentional intergenerational discipleship requires you to see the opportunities, provide the means for consistency, and give some encouragement along the way. Take a few moments to honestly answer the questions below:

- Do you see opportunities at your church to have your teenager spend time with people of different generations? If so, what are they? Are you committed to getting them there consistently?
- Are there any older family members who are living a life of faith that you could ask to pour into your teen? How might you facilitate opportunity and consistency with these interactions and conversations?
- Are you praying consistently and specifically for your teenager as you attempt to put them in situations where intergenerational discipleship can become a normal part of their life?
- Are you working in active partnership with the trusted intergenerational voices who have said yes to being a part of your teen's life (sharing teen-related schedules, concerns, celebrations, struggles, etc.)?
- Are you actively encouraging the trusted intergenerational voices who have said yes to being a part of your teen's life (thank you notes, small gifts, kind words, volunteering, etc.)?

IMPACT

Impact, especially a lasting impact, takes time, regularity, dedication, and great intentionality. Just as there are no world-renowned athletes, musicians, or scholars who were created overnight, a deep and lasting impact on the life of a teenager is no overnight sensation. But if you truly care about being more intentional when it comes to your teenager and intergenerational discipleship, there are some things that you can do as a parent to have a lasting impact and partner with others to do the same in the life of your teen:

- **Keep Jesus as your identity and put Him first in your own life.**

- “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” – 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Who am I? What is my identity? Where are my meaning and purpose in this life found? At some point, every parent (every individual, for that matter) asks these questions. And the way you answer those questions will determine how you speak to, act toward, and lead your children. This is why it’s crucial for you to understand that your identity as a person and as a parent is not found in your past, your failures, your current circumstances, or even in who your children are/what they are doing. Your identity and your worth are found in Christ and in Him alone.
- Do you know where your identity rests? Are you putting Him first?

- **Pray**

- “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” – Ephesians 6:18
- In parenting, it’s always helpful to remember two things: 1) You may be their parent, but the Lord is their Creator, and He actually loves your teenager more than you do 2) Your power is limited, but His power is limitless. There is nothing the Lord cannot do. He is sovereign over all. God is not bound by time, space, or your teen’s (or your) mistakes. So, why would you not go to the Creator to get guidance and wisdom for dealing with the created?
- Pray: Lord, please help me as a parent to guide my teenager in your ways and love them in the unconditional way that you love me. Give me the wisdom, patience, mercy, grace, and humility that only You can give. Help me, Father, to see my teenager through your eyes. Help me see clearly so that I can best navigate the daily chaos, responsibilities, problems, and joys that come with parenting. Would You surround my teenager with many trustworthy, caring adults who know, love, and seek to honor You—and who are willing to leverage their influence along the way through challenging, enlightening, encouraging, walking alongside, and providing another voice of wisdom and maturity in the life of my teenager?

- **Demonstrate Godly character in your home.**

- “[Jesus] answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”
– Luke 10:27
- In your teen’s life, you are the instrument that God uses to communicate and teach the most important thing that your teenager could ever know: the character, the love, the grace, and the plan of God in their life. It is the essential task that is assigned to you as the parent. Not the church. Not the government. Not the school. Not even the village. Every single one of those things is designed to help and support you, but none of those were designed to replace you. You were chosen by the Creator for this task. You were chosen (hand-selected) by the Creator of the universe to lead your teen spiritually.
(source: adapted from <https://crossroadsabc.com/article/6-biblical-truths-every-parent-needs-to-know/>)
- Do you demonstrate Godly character in your home? Do you demonstrate the importance and significance of having trusted intergenerational voices speaking into your own life?

- **Practice what you preach by showing grace, mercy, humility, and love.**

- “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” – Philippians 2:3-4
God doesn’t expect you to be a perfect parent. He knows full well that you are not perfect. What God wants from you is a willingness to step up and lead your teenager with what you have, driven by grace, mercy, humility, and love. God’s greatest gift to you as a parent, in His Grace, is Himself. He knows how hard your task is. He knows that it drives you past your ability. He knows that, more often than not, you have no clue what to say, what to do, or how to respond. He knows there are times when your anger gets the best of you. He knows every struggle you have as a parent. And He knows that the only thing in all the world that could help you would be Himself. See, the only thing that makes parenting even remotely possible in light of this truth is that God is with you. God is with you—even when it’s hard, when you are confused, when you feel like a failure, and when you’re angry/frustrated/heartbroken. In all these things, you can show His grace, mercy, humility, and love because you are not alone.
(source: adapted from <https://crossroadsabc.com/article/6-biblical-truths-every-parent-needs-to-know/>)
- Are you encouraging other kids in your church or community by being one of their FIVE as they grow in their faith? If not, what are some ways that you can get involved to help another child or teenager?