

Practical Ways to CARE for Your Teens

We all know parenting teenagers isn't always (if ever) easy. As parents, we have to deal with everything from snarky attitudes to friendship changes to endless dirty laundry to learning to drive to navigating technology and trying to get into college. It's sometimes like navigating a maze blindfolded. But here's the thing: amidst all the chaos of school, sports, homework, friends, first jobs, hormones, emotions, and feeling like you're constantly repeating yourself to someone who is actively not paying attention, let's not forget about something even more important - nurturing their hearts and guiding them spiritually.

As parents, we care for our teenagers deeply. But let's be honest; it's easy to get caught up in the practical aspects of life or simply fall into a pattern of doing the things that help our teens move through life, get things done, find the things they've lost, and make it from one day to the next. But our teenagers need more than just rides to practice or reminders to clean their bathrooms, turn down the music, and chill with the attitude. They need us to show that we care for more than just their mere survival. They need for us to care for them in ways that go beyond just correcting them and getting things done. They need us to care and show our care for their mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. They need us to be their spiritual shepherds, walking alongside them as they navigate this crazy journey called life.

Our teenagers are craving real relationships where they feel a heart connection from a shepherd who is seeking to love and guide them along the way. It takes changing your mindset and focusing more on the molding of their heart than the directing their path.

We want to give you some things to think about when it comes to shepherding the heart of your teenager, along with some simple yet practical ways to do it. Below is a list of twelve ideas that you can incorporate into your everyday life and family rhythm. These ideas will hopefully help you both build a stronger relationship with your teenager and help them feel a different kind of love, one that is born out of how much you care for them.

1.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE: Demonstrate Christ-like character and values in your own life, modeling love, patience, forgiveness, and humility for your teen to emulate.

2.

LISTEN ACTIVELY: Practice active listening when your teenager shares their thoughts, feelings, and struggles, offering empathy, understanding, and support without judgment.

3.

ACTS OF SERVICE: Find simple ways to show your teen that you care for them without using words. Get their car washed, make their favorite dinner, or do one of their normal chores if they are having a stressful week.

4.

PRAISE AND AFFIRM: Find ways to praise and affirm your teenager, not for what they accomplish, but for who they are and how they are displaying Godly characteristics.

5.

PRAY TOGETHER: Take time to pray with your teenager regularly, both individually and as a family, seeking God's guidance and wisdom in their lives.

6.

HAVE INTENTIONAL CONVERSATIONS: Set aside regular time for meaningful conversations with your teenager about faith, life, and their concerns, providing guidance and perspective from a biblical standpoint. Capitalize on opportunities that pop up when driving them places or picking them up from things.

7.

ENCOURAGE INVOLVEMENT IN CHURCH: Foster your teen's spiritual growth by encouraging participation in church activities, classes, and service opportunities where they can connect with peers and deepen their faith.

8.

STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER: Engage in regular Bible study sessions with your teenager, exploring scripture together and discussing its relevance to their life and faith journey. This doesn't have to be forced or awkward; it can be as simple as texting them a verse or sharing a devotional with them.

9.

PROVIDE MENTORSHIP: Help your teenager find Christian mentors or role models who can offer additional support, guidance, and encouragement in their spiritual walk.

10.

CREATE A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT: Cultivate a home environment characterized by love, grace, and acceptance, where your teen feels safe to ask questions, express doubts, and seek spiritual guidance without fear of judgment.

11.

SET BOUNDARIES WITH LOVE: Establish clear boundaries and expectations grounded in biblical principles, enforcing them with love and grace while also allowing room for growth and learning from mistakes.

12.

STAY CONNECTED: Stay actively involved in your teenager's life, attending their events, participating in their hobbies, and showing genuine interest in their passions and concerns, demonstrating your commitment to shepherding their heart and nurturing their faith.