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# A Letter from Pastor Chris

Dear Friend,

It is the desire of the Kids Point and Student Point Ministries of Grace Point Church to come alongside parents and partner with them in the gospel. These ministries exist as much for the parents as they do the children and students they serve. That's why this seminar exists.

We recognize that the world has changed. Teenagers are not growing up in the same world in which you grew up. During this seminar, we will explore the changing world in which we live, identify needs of the teenager, and offer some biblical principles for effective parenting. We simply want to offer you tools for your parenting toolbox.

Before jumping into the seminar, what captions would you place on the cover of this handbook? Notice the son is speaking and the dad is thinking. Have fun with this!

It is my prayer that your families will be stronger, and Christ will be honored.

for the Gospel,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Chris', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Chris



# PART ONE:

## Everything Is Changing

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### 1. THE \_\_\_\_\_ IS IN TRANSITION

Imagine growing up in a world in which the world is changing at a pace that is faster than ever before. Now imagine that your own brain and body are still developing as well. The changes that are occurring for today's teenagers are unmatched in our history.

You have probably heard these statements...

"Well, I was rebellious as a teenager, my parents were rebellious as teens, their parents as teens, it's what teens do."

As parents, it is important to remember this...

The world your kids are growing up in is vastly different from the world you experienced as a teenager. The context of adolescence has changed.

The word often used to describe the cultural changes is "postmodern." Part of the meaning of postmodernism is that things are changing so fast that nothing is "modern." Things are out-of-date quickly. Postmodernity includes the philosophical view that absolutes do not exist. There is no objective meaning, only subjective meaning. Meaning is defined by each individual.

We have allowed this thinking into the church! Have you ever said or heard someone say, "What does this passage mean to you?"

A much better approach to Scripture is to ask, "What was the author's intended meaning of this passage and how does it apply to you?"

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- How are things different now from when you were a teenager?
- How are things better?
- How are things worse?

#### **Things to Consider:**

- Avoid blaming your kids for things that are out of their control.
- Avoid idealizing the past.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ ARE IN TRANSITION

Teenagers are in transition. They are becoming adults. In most cultures, there are children and there are adults. The idea of adolescence was invented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by G. Stanley Hall (1904). By 1920, youth culture was in full force. The word "teenager" did not appear in an American dictionary until the 1950s. The first known use of the term occurred in 1939. More recently we have developed the terms "tween" and "pre-teen" to refer to eleven and twelve-year-old children. The term "tween" is a merger of the words "between" and "teen."

There are two primary stages of life: childhood and adulthood. Adolescence should then be viewed as the process by which one changes from a child into an adult.



5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24



5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

ADOLESCENCE



8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

It is better to think of adolescents as “emerging adults.” Every day, they are becoming a little less a child and a little more an adult. It’s a gradual process. Even though our brains will continue to develop into our mid-twenties, by the age of sixteen we have the capacity to function as adults. The greatest difference between a sixteen-year-old and an older adult is experience.

In the past, the child’s transition into adulthood was very definite and often celebrated as an event (e.g. rites of passage).

The Apostle Paul wrote, “When I was a child ... “ (1 Cor. 13). So, when did Paul become a man? The answer is one month shy of his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday; when he observed his Bar Mitzvah.

Consider how they are growing in these areas...

- A. \_\_\_\_\_: We can see their physical bodies are changing.
- B. \_\_\_\_\_: They can begin to comprehend abstract ideas.
- C. \_\_\_\_\_: They no longer want playmates; they want friends.
- D. \_\_\_\_\_: Spiritual growth is not automatic with age.

Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom (intellectual) and stature (physical), and in favor with God (spiritual) and men (social).”

### **Discussion Questions:**

- How can parents contribute to the development of their child(ren) in these four areas (i.e. physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual)?
- Watch the video, “Grace Point | 940 Weeks.” How does this video help you think about your child’s development?

### **Things to Consider:**

- Begin treating your teenager less like a child and more like the young adult he or she is becoming.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ ARE IN TRANSITION

Parents are in transition too. Teenagers are seeking their autonomy. It has been said, "The primary task of adolescence is to separate from parents in order to establish an identity of their own."

When you kids were younger, they were little carbon copies of you. They got their identity from being "just like mommy and daddy." Now they don't want to be you anymore. They want to separate themselves from you. They want to be themselves.

Parents must recognize their role in allowing their children to find autonomy. There are five stages of parenting that we all go through.

#### A. \_\_\_\_\_ (Birth – Age 2)

During the first two years of your child's life, you cater to their every need. Your schedule revolves around theirs.

#### B. \_\_\_\_\_ (Ages 2 – 10)

During these years, you turn things around and establish your authority. You control their environment.

#### C. \_\_\_\_\_ (Ages 10 – 14)

During these years, you start giving some control, but you are still in charge. For example, you can give your kids options from which they can choose, but you determine the options.

#### D. \_\_\_\_\_ (Ages 14 – 18)

By this time, your kids have fired you as a parent, but they hire you back as a consultant. They make more of their own decisions, while you help them learn from their mistakes.

#### E. \_\_\_\_\_ (Ages 18+)

At this age, you are finished controlling their lives. Your primary role is to show care. The process is called "weaning." There may be times that they "hire" you as a consultant or coach, but your primary role is to care.



Conflict between a parent and their teenager usually occurs in one of three areas:

**A. The Teenager's Need for \_\_\_\_\_.**

They tend to close the door to their room.

**B. The Teenager's Need to \_\_\_\_\_ from the family.**

They may desire to hang out with friends over family dinner.

**C. The Teenager's Need to \_\_\_\_\_ themselves.**

They will begin to behave in ways that express their emerging adulthood. This may take the form of rebellion, but not always.

**Discussion Questions:**

- What are the dangers or consequences of a parent that doesn't transition through these stages?
- Which of these stages do you believe is or will be the hardest for you as a parent? Why?

**Things to Consider:**

- Early teens: give them freedom, but not so much freedom that it will cause them harm.
- Middle/late teens: give them freedom, allow them to take responsibility for their own lives and face the consequences of their actions. You can no longer make all of their decisions for them. Parents who try to micro-manage their teenagers' lives are hindering their child's growth into adulthood. Don't be afraid to let them make mistakes. Just be there to help them learn from their mistakes. You can still administer consequences and discipline.



# PART TWO:

## What Teenagers Need

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### 1. Teenagers are expanding their \_\_\_\_\_.

Teenagers need relationships outside the home. It has been said that the three most important things to a teenager are: friends, friends, and friends. This is why a teenager's phone is so important to them. It is their connection to friends.

Here's why this is so important. The biggest question on the mind of an adolescent is, "Do you like me?" They already know the answer to this question at home. When they were children, they got an affirmative answer from their parents. "We love you. You are wonderful. You are the most important person in the whole world." That was great while they were children, but now they want to know, "Does anyone outside my family like me? Am I a likeable person? What do other people think about me?"

A friend is someone who answers, "Yes, I like you. I want to hang out with you."

This is one of the reasons why teenagers are so pre-occupied with their looks, the clothes they wear, and "fitting in with the crowd" in general. Their acceptance is at stake.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- Parents determine playmates for children. Teenagers determine friends for themselves. How do parents make this a healthy transition for the teenager and themselves?

#### **Things to Consider:**

- Don't over-react to your teen's choice of friends. Remember, your child chose them as friends because they accepted your child. What message are you sending your child when you reject those who have accepted your child?
- Support your church's student ministry.
- Be friendly towards your teenager's friends. Make your home a place where your teenager's friends want to hang out. Invite them for dinner, or to stay overnight, or to participate in some family activity or outing. Don't worry so much about the condition of your home. A spill on the carpet or a broken vase is a small price to pay for giving your teen and his/her friends a safe place to hang out and have fun.

## **2. Teenagers are equipping themselves for \_\_\_\_\_.**

Traditionally, it has been during adolescence when young people developed the skills they needed for adulthood. In previous generations, it was done naturally. Kids had jobs to do; they were given apprenticeships. Today, many young adults lack the skills they need to succeed in the adult world because they haven't had the opportunity to learn them.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- How can you help your teenager develop the life-skill of responsibility?
- How can you help your teenager develop stronger communication skills?
- How can you help your teenager develop good decision-making skills?

### **Things to Consider:**

- Kids today are faced with more choices than ever before. Yet many kids today have no real basis for making good choices.
- Trust your teenager with more of his/her own decisions. Teach your teenager how to make a good decision. Not based on coolness, feelings, what others do, but what is right, what will produce the best result, what the Bible says. Involve your teenager in decisions you make. Lead by example. Ask them for their thoughts. Let them see what goes into the decisions you make.

## **3. Teenagers are developing personal \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.**

Teenagers are doing some serious thinking about life, their values and faith. They are trying to make sense of all they have seen and heard since they were children, and it has got to make sense to them. Some studies have revealed that 85% of people who profess faith in Christ, do so during or before their teen years.

When your kids were children, they basically accepted everything they were told and believed pretty much what you (parents) believed. But now, they want a belief system of their own. What they come up with will probably be what they take with them into adulthood.

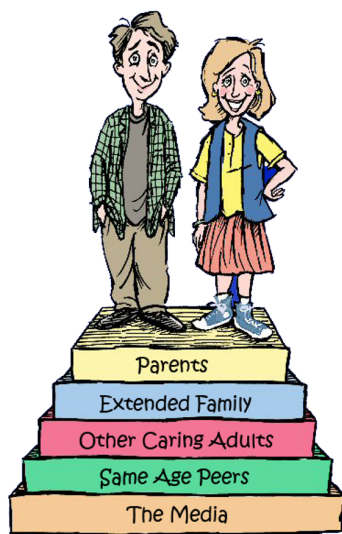
It is important to know your families core values and beliefs. These are the ones that you want to pass on to your children. Core values

should be understood in your family as the “non-negotiables.” Your core values are not up for debate. If you wait until your kid is a teenager before trying to establish the non-negotiable core values, you’ve waited too long.

Let’s look at the most powerful influencers on teenagers (in order of greatest influence (A) to least (E).

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

However, when a child’s parents are absent, the “extended family” and “other caring adults” disappear from the list. The only reason “same age peers” and “the media” have influence over teenagers today is because they lack the adult influencers which are inherently a greater influence.



While “the media” is listed last, keep in mind it is still among the top five influencers and has a greater influence when adults are not involved.

### Discussion Questions:

- What is a non-negotiable core value that you desire to instill in your teenager? Have you communicated the importance of this value?
- What surprises you about the list of most powerful influencers on teenagers?

### Things to Consider:

- Teach them the Truth of God’s Word.
- Model your core values and beliefs through your actions. What you do as a family (creating a family culture) teaches your children what is important and what is not.

# PART THREE:

## Principles for Effective Parenting

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1. \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_ lead to \_\_\_\_\_.

Believe it or not, teenagers want rules. It's a well-kept secret, something they will never tell you directly and one they will deny if you ever confront them with it, but it's true. They need rules and limits. Without parameters by which to live, teenagers, like all of us, will not have a sense of security and will not know what is expected of them. Without clear rules, teenagers will eventually act out in inappropriate ways, exhibit behavior problems and maybe even get into trouble with the law.

### Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the rules you have for your kids?
- How do you keep the relationship warm with your kids?

### Things to Consider:

- As with most people, kids will be more likely to obey the rules if they have a good relationship with the rule-maker.

In his book *Serving God*, Ben Patterson tells this story:

"Once upon a time, a woman was married to a perfectionist husband. No matter what his wife did for him, it was never enough. At the beginning of each day, he would make out his list of chores for her to do, and at the end of each day, he would scrutinize it to make sure she had done all that she was supposed to do. The best compliment she ever received was a disinterested grunt if she finished everything. She grew to hate her husband. When he died unexpectedly, she was embarrassed to admit to herself that she was relieved.

Within a year of her husband's death, she met a warm and loving man who was everything her former husband was not. They fell deeply in love with each other and were married. Every day they spent together seemed better than the day before.

One afternoon, as she was cleaning out boxes in the attic, a crumpled piece of paper caught her eye. It was one of the old chore lists that her first husband used to make out for her. In spite of her chagrin, she couldn't help from reading

it again. To her shock and amazement she discovered that, without even thinking about it, she was now doing for her new husband all the things she used to hate to do for her old husband. Her new husband never once suggested that she do any of these things. But she was doing them anyway—because she loved him."

Your kids are no different. At school, don't they usually perform better for teachers they like?

- Two important relationship builders are time and talk. Good dialogue includes a lot of listening. Most teenagers complain that their parents never listen to them. Take time to listen. God gave us two ears and one mouth, use them in proportion.

## **2. Catch your teenager in the act of doing something \_\_\_\_\_.**

This is a great way to keep your relationship warm. Be a positive person around them, affirm them, and acknowledge when you notice they did something right! Become a member of your kid's fan club!

I like being around people who like me. I also hate being around people who criticize me all the time. Kids are no different. If you are constantly "on their case," they will tend to avoid you and steer clear. They would rather be with people who seem to like them.

Know your teenager's love language...

- A. Words of \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Physical \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Quality \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Acts of \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

Know the importance of affirmation...

- A. Affirmation will help you stay \_\_\_\_\_ to your kids.
- B. Affirmation will build \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What are some "good" things your teenager has done this week? If you didn't acknowledge it, it's not too late!

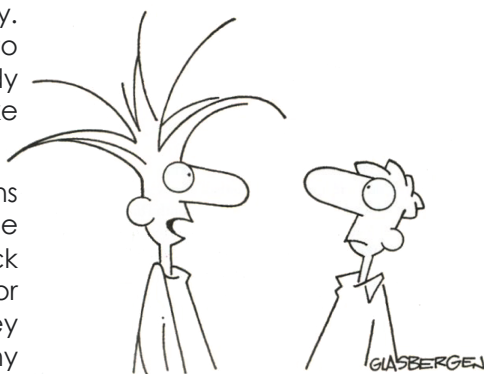
### Things to Consider:

- Whenever you see or hear your kids doing something you like, let them know about it. Your kids really do need and want your approval.
- Don't miss opportunities to praise your kids. If we rarely see them doing anything right, perhaps it's because we don't expect them to. Have you ever been surprised when someone else tells you what a well-behaved kid you have? We sometimes fail to see what others see.

### 3. Identify your \_\_\_\_\_ as a family.

If you want, you can be ticked off 24-hours a day. There is always something to be mad about. But nobody wants to live in a house like that.

I've often had conversations with parents who use the phrase, "You've got to pick your battles," as an excuse for not doing the things they know they should. That is why I add the caveat that core values should never make their way to the battlefield.



Core values are the principles that guide our thinking and our behavior. In other words, they give direction to your life.

#### A. Decide what core values are important to your family.

Ephesians 5:15, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise."

The wise man knows what core values are guiding his walk. That word "circumspectly" carries the idea of giving great thought and consideration." The Bible is saying "pay close attention to the things that are giving direction to your life." That's core values.

#### B. Eliminate the things that conflict with your core values.

Ephesians 5:16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

The idea here is to make good use of every opportunity you get. The days are evil, and they will conflict with your core values.

### **C. Dedicate daily time to your core values.**

Ephesians 5:17, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Core values are not something you can turn on and off like a switch. Since they are the principles that drive our thinking and behavior, as long as we are thinking and doing stuff – we have core values. The question is, "Do those core values reflect the will of God?"

When you know your core values and your family shares those same core values, your parenting will be stronger, your marriage will be stronger, and your life will be richer.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- What do you fight over?
- What do you think is worth battling with your teenager?

#### **Things to Consider:**

- Take some time as a family and draft your five to ten core values as a family. Discuss why they are important to you. Agree that these core values are non-negotiables and will not make their way to the battlefield.
- Say "yes" to your teenager whenever possible. Instead of hearing, "no" or "not right now," look for opportunities to simply say, "yes."
- Dr. James Dobson in his book *Parenting Isn't for Cowards* writes, "I have seen parents fight battles over non-essentials such as the purchase of a first bra for a flat-chested, pre-menstrual adolescent girl. For goodness sake! If she wants it that badly, she probably needs it for social reasons. Run, don't walk, to the nearest department store and buy her a bra. ... The objective ... is to keep your kids on your team. Don't throw away your friendship over behavior that has no moral significance. There will be plenty of issues that will require you to stand like a rock! Save your big guns for those crucial confrontations."



#### 4. Break the \_\_\_\_\_ before it breaks your family.

There are a number of difficult issues which many parents don't talk about with their kids.

##### Discussion Questions:

- What are the issues that you are having difficulty discussing?

##### Things to Consider:

- Look for teachable moments that you can initiate the conversation.
- Do your homework. Know what God's Word says about difficult topics.
- Your small group at church should be a place of support and wisdom for addressing these issues.

#### 5. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ your teenager's growth into adulthood by making life too easy for them.

There are many ways that parents impede their kids by making life too easy for them. Here are a couple of quick tips...

##### A. Wean them off your wallet.

##### B. Resist rescuing them from consequences.

Teenagers need to experience consequences. Consequences teach kids the relationship between what they do and what happens to them. This is the main way a person learns how to become a responsible adult.

##### Discussion Questions:

- When was the last time you allowed your children to face the consequences of their actions? What happened?

##### Things to Consider:

- Teenagers are masters at playing parents against one another in this area. When the "Dad ATM" is "out of order" they will quickly see if the "Mom branch" is open.



## **6. Remember: \_\_\_\_\_ is better than nothing.**

This is a very important point: Don't be discouraged because you are not the perfect parent.... or if you think you've blown it in the past. None of us are perfect parents, but all of us can be a little better than we are right now. Something you've heard or thought about during this seminar has made good sense to you. You thought to yourself, "I can do that. I'd like to do that." So do it! Don't think you have to do everything we've talked about during this seminar. Just do something. And remember that "something is better than nothing." All of us can do something. Right?

God will bless that. He is in the business of taking the little things we do and blessing them. Just like He took a few loaves and fishes and fed a multitude, He is able to take those few little things that we do right and use them to do some incredible things in the lives of our kids.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What is one thing you heard during this seminar that you would like to implement in your parenting?

### **Things to Consider:**

- If you are looking for a church, Grace Point Church is here for you! Visit us online at [www.GracePointLKN.com](http://www.GracePointLKN.com) for more information.



\* Sources: "Understanding Your Teenager" by Wayne Rice & David Veerman.

[www.justaphase.com](http://www.justaphase.com)

[www.thinkorange.com](http://www.thinkorange.com)