

Appendix

THE
GIFTS OF
THE
SPIRIT



1 CORINTHIANS 12:1

TEN WAYS TO HELP CREATE A SPIRITUAL GROWTH CLIMATE IN THE CONGREGATION

- 1. Give priority to developing your spiritual life.**

Prayerfully examine your spiritual discipline. What would help you go deeper in your relationship with God?
Prayerfully examine your total stewardship: time, talent, money. How might God be leading you into deeper commitment and freedom?
Set some personal spiritual growth goals for the next six months.
- 2. Provide leadership in seeing that the church offers spiritual growth programming.**

Offer Bible studies, retreats, prayer groups, etc.
- 3. Work from the conviction that every Christian is gifted by God and has a ministry.**

Become aware of your own spiritual gifts and use them in ministry, either within or beyond the church.
Help others become aware of their spiritual gifts and match gifts with ministries. Encourage the exploration of new ministries as people express passion for a need they see.
Help others in the church make a conceptual shift from "slots to be filled" to "ministry opportunities for those with needed gifts." When a group is looking for persons to perform tasks, raise the question of spiritual gifts.
- 4. Pray for the church daily.**

Intercede for the needs of members and needs of the church as a whole. Support other leaders with your prayers.
- 5. Participate in corporate worship with a sense of joy and expectation.**

Help others make an attitudinal adjustment from being spectators and consumers to being active participants in worship.
- 6. Ask God to deepen your love for others in the church body.**

Model the fact that Christian love is not primarily a feeling, but a commitment to do everything you can to help others fully develop as the persons God wants them to become.
- 7. Share your witness concerning what God has done and is doing in your life with others.**

Sharing witness with other church members helps increase their faith and yours. Witness helps create a faith climate, with the assumption that God is alive, real, and vitally active in our lives!
- 8. Help the church continually focus on their mission.**

State creatively, persuasively, and often that the primary purpose of the church is to continue the reconciling mission of Jesus.
Encourage the congregation to discern its mission focus, what God is specifically calling the congregation to be and do.
Continually raise the right questions when programs are planned and budgets are considered. The right question is not "What do we want for our church?" but rather, "What does God want for God's church?" Another right question is, "Does this help us fulfill our mission?"
- 9. Help the congregation work constructively through change and conflict.**

Help members realize that if there is spiritual growth in the congregation, change will naturally follow. Change inevitably brings conflict.
Provide a steady, unafraid presence in conflict situations. Practice good listening skills.
Model and encourage skills that help congregation members work through conflict, such as direct, honest communication and working through appropriate channels.
Express trust that the benefits of faithfulness to Christ's mission will be worth the trauma of change.
- 10. Express trust that God will provide for our needs as we venture into mission.**

Help members examine the scriptures and see that God has always called God's people to venture in faith.
Encourage good stewardship and planning, but also encourage moving ahead into new ministries (If we wait until we have enough people and money, we may wait forever!)

Spiritual Gifts Inventory

Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

Israel believed that God created two urges—one toward evil, the other toward good—and that everyone was born with both. The mind set on God, represented the good impulse, while the flesh—natural instincts—represented the other; and it was the duty of every Israelite to keep their evil impulse in line so they wouldn't sin.

The apostle Paul described obedience as the mind set on God trying to get the members—the rest of the body—to cooperate. Like other Pharisees, he had tried to stop himself from sinning by:

- Pitting the good impulse against the flesh (mind over matter)
- Reciting the evening prayers (saying the magic words)
- Occupying himself with Torah (burying himself in Bible study)
- Considering the fate if the wicked (scaring himself)

Unfortunately, his members were under the control of the flesh—the old person he used to be without a shred of good in it—and regularly refused to go along with his good intentions. Though the old person was crucified with Christ, crucifixion takes time: Christians have to carry their cross, the transforming sufferings Christ left behind for them to experience beyond His cross, *until* self is finally dead.

It took Paul a while, but he eventually figured out that the old man was behind his ongoing tendency to sin—and was **at war** with the good intentions of his mind. Every time he went head-to-head with the flesh, it took him prisoner and made everything turn out wrong—because he relied on good intentions to make his members obey. Eventually he realized, *I may want to do good, but I don't have the ability to carry out my good intentions*: the flesh stands between my good thoughts and bad actions. The flesh did such a good job of preventing his body from cooperating with him, he called it a corpse (body of death).

Paul cried out for help; he needed intervention—someone or something greater than himself—had to rush in like a mighty river, lift his limp, lifeless, defeated body, and sweep him away. Christ answered his prayer. Paul's prayer on behalf of the Ephesians helps to explain what happened. ON that occasion he prayed to the heavenly Father that he would: *strengthen you with might by his Spirit in the inner person, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith... that you might be filled with all the fullness of God — (3:16-19)*.

The new person on the inside will never show himself on the outside, unless someone mightier than the flesh takes over the battle for him. When Paul realized he did not have that power, he surrendered command to Christ, **believing** that the Son of God in his heart, pumping commands to his body, would eventually subdue and conquer his evil impulse. Strengthened by the Spirit who brought him to life in Christ, Paul put his trust in Christ and began walking in the power of the Spirit who opposes everything the flesh stands for. As he explained to the Galatians: *live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. The acts of the sinful nature are... But the fruit of the Spirit is... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit — (5:16-25)*.

The Spirit shows himself through spiritual gifts—supernatural abilities that enable Christ's followers to serve the church in spite of the flesh. When we exercise these gifts, we bear fruits of the Spirit—we carry out and bring to the surface the good intentions of Christ in our hearts, muscled past the flesh by the Spirit's awesome power. In the process of cooperating with the Spirit, not only do we deny the sinful nature what it wants, but we also keep the lid on the crucified old man's coffin.

So instead of **OPTIONAL**, Spiritual Gifts are **MANDATORY** for the Christian life, essential to winning the war against the flesh and becoming a new person filled with all the fullness of God. Exercising spiritual gifts will help Christ to help you to turn the tide against the sinful nature and sin, to function as God designed you, and to contribute what you should to your church as a member of His body.

The following inventory measures your potential for spiritual gifts. Let the results guide your attempts to discover your own giftedness, according to the instructions given in the previous section of this manual.

Survey of Spiritual Gifts

1. I would enjoy directing a vacation Bible school, recreation program or special event in my church.
2. I feel lead to develop and start new churches.
3. I like to make things with my hands which can be used in the church.
4. I have the gift to immediately distinguish good from evil.
5. There is nothing I like to do more than to encourage someone else in their faith.
6. I can tell anyone, anywhere about Jesus and what he did for my life.
7. I often feel I know God's will even when others are not sure.
8. I see myself as a person who is very generous when it comes to giving money to the church.
9. People have told me I have the gift of healing.
10. I am the one who often cleans up after church or youth group is over.
11. Inviting people to my home is one of my favorite things to do.
12. I have interpreted in church when someone has spoken in tongues.
13. I have often expressed truths about God's word that has given insight to others.
14. I believe I know where I am going and other people seem to follow.
15. I often give hope to those who are in need.
16. Many incredible acts of God have happened to others through me.
17. I would like to be a missionary.
18. I am musically inclined and love to sing and play an instrument.
19. I find great satisfaction in caring for the spiritual needs of friends and people I know.
20. I can pray for long periods of time without getting tired, distracted or bored.
21. I have given others important messages that I felt came from God at the perfect time.
22. I could be described as an "others-centered" person.
23. I like to explain biblical truths to people.
24. I believe I have a prayer language which is in a tongue unknown to me.
25. People have told me that I am a wise person.
26. I can give others responsibilities for a task or project and help them accomplish it.
27. I believe I have been called to live a life in which I set an example for other Christians to follow.
28. God has gifted me with creativity and the ability to make things with my hands.
29. If something is from Satan and not God, I know it right away.
30. I believe I have the ability to comfort those who are "off-track" and help them get back with God.
31. When I consider people who don't know Jesus, I have extreme sadness and a heavy heart.
32. I find it easy to trust God even when things seem to go bad for me or others.
33. I have no problem giving my money or other resources to the church or those in need.
34. When I have prayed for a sick person and they have made a miraculous recovery.
35. I don't think twice about doing a job that might not bring me praise.
36. I love to put on parties, cook, decorate, and make people feel good.
37. There was a time someone spoken in an unknown language and I understood them.
38. I greatly want to understand biblical truths.

39. I like to lead, inspire, and motivate others to become involved in God's work.
40. I believe I have the gift of mercy.
41. God has used me to perform miraculous signs and wonders.
42. I feel comfortable when I am around people of a different race, culture or language.
43. I would really love to lead people in worship through my music.
44. I feel God is calling me to be a pastor in a local church.
45. When I pray, I often see immediate and amazing answers to my prayers.
46. I believe I have the ability to reveal God's truth about the future.
47. I enjoy meeting the needs of others.
48. I think I have what it takes to reach a Bible study or lead a small group.
49. I have spoken in tongues.
50. I believe God has given me the ability to make wise decisions.
51. I am able to set goals and plan the most effective way to reach them.
52. I feel called to serve in a leadership role which allows me to encourage many believers.
53. When something is broken, I can fix it.
54. I feel I have the gift to "test the spirits" and know what is good.
55. I have the desire to learn more about counseling so I can help others.
56. I have led others to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
57. I trust in God for supernatural miracles or radical answers to prayer.
58. I am confident that God will take care of me when I give cheerfully and with sacrifice.
59. I have the ability to heal.
60. I don't have to lead, I love to follow and help make things happen from behind the scenes.
61. Nothing brings me more joy than to prepare a dinner or a meals for people in need.
62. I believe I have the gift of interpretation of tongues.
63. I have the ability to learn new insights on my own.
64. People seem to look to me for leadership and to make decisions.
65. I like to visit nursing homes, hospitals, and other places where people need comfort.
66. Others have said that I was used by God to bring about a supernatural change in their lives.
67. I adapt easily to a different change of settings and environments.
68. I believe God has given me a real gift of music to share with the body of Christ.
69. When sitting in church, I am often thinking what I might preach on if I were the pastor.
70. One of my favorite things to do is spend time in prayer.
71. I desire to speak messages from God that challenge people to change.
72. You'll frequently find me volunteering my time to help with the needs of the church.
73. I would like to teach a Bible study in the church or in my school.
74. When I speak in tongues, I feel God's Spirit inside of me.
75. I believe God has given me the gift of wisdom.
76. I enjoy learning about management skills and how organizations function.
77. I feel that I am set a part for a higher calling and desire to strengthen God's people.
78. Nothing would bring me more joy than to build a Cross to go in the church sanctuary.
79. I believe I can tell when someone is really a Christian and when someone is faking it.

80. I have helped others in their struggles and am known for my encouraging words and attitude.
81. I always think of new ways to tell my non-Christian friends about Jesus.
82. My belief in God is very strong and I almost never have doubts about my faith.
83. It makes me happy to give my money and personal items away.
84. I have healed someone physically, spiritually, or emotionally.
85. I will sacrifice my own time and energy in order to assist someone else.
86. I love to entertain people in my home and wait on them while they are there.
87. God has shown me what someone is saying when he or she is speaking in tongues.
88. I do extremely well in school and always make very high grades.
89. When I am in a group I am usually the leader or take the lead if no one else does.
90. I would like to work in a ministry to orphans, the homeless, or the physically handicapped.
91. I believe I have the gift of miracles.
92. I believe I could learn a new language and culture in order to minister in another country.
93. I write songs, lyrics, that I know are from God and that he wants me to share with others.
94. I would really like to nurture and shape people in their ongoing relationship to Jesus Christ.
95. People often tell me that whenever I pray, God always seems to answers my prayers.
96. I believe I have the gift of prophecy.
97. I believe I have the gift of serving and would rather serve than do anything else.
98. Because of my teaching, others have gained a better understanding into who God is.
99. An unknown language comes to me when I am at a loss for words during my prayer times.
100. I usually see clear solutions to complicated problems.

Spiritual Gifts Answer Sheet

In the blanks below, put the number of the answer you feel most fits your response. Then add up the four numbers and put the sum in the "Total" column. **Much = 5, Sometimes = 3, Little = 1, Never = 0.**

<i>Rows</i>	<i>Answers</i>				<i>Total</i>
A	1 ____	26 ____	51 ____	76 ____	_____
B	2 ____	27 ____	52 ____	77 ____	_____
C	3 ____	28 ____	53 ____	78 ____	_____
D	4 ____	29 ____	54 ____	79 ____	_____
E	5 ____	30 ____	55 ____	80 ____	_____
F	6 ____	31 ____	56 ____	81 ____	_____
G	7 ____	32 ____	57 ____	82 ____	_____
H	8 ____	33 ____	58 ____	83 ____	_____
I	9 ____	34 ____	59 ____	84 ____	_____
J	10 ____	35 ____	60 ____	85 ____	_____
K	11 ____	36 ____	61 ____	86 ____	_____
L	12 ____	37 ____	62 ____	87 ____	_____
M	13 ____	38 ____	63 ____	88 ____	_____
N	14 ____	39 ____	64 ____	89 ____	_____
O	15 ____	40 ____	65 ____	90 ____	_____
P	16 ____	41 ____	66 ____	91 ____	_____
Q	17 ____	42 ____	67 ____	92 ____	_____
R	18 ____	43 ____	68 ____	93 ____	_____
S	19 ____	44 ____	69 ____	94 ____	_____
T	20 ____	45 ____	70 ____	95 ____	_____
U	21 ____	46 ____	71 ____	96 ____	_____
V	22 ____	47 ____	72 ____	97 ____	_____
W	23 ____	48 ____	73 ____	98 ____	_____
X	24 ____	49 ____	74 ____	99 ____	_____
Y	25 ____	50 ____	75 ____	100 ____	_____

Summary of Spiritual Gifts

Tally your totals here, and rank your gifts by score to set an agenda for discovery

GIFTS	TOTALS	RANK
A. Administration	_____	_____
B. Pioneer	_____	_____
C. Craftsmanship	_____	_____
D. Discernment	_____	_____
E. Support	_____	_____
F. Evangelism	_____	_____
G. Relentless Faith	_____	_____
H. Giving	_____	_____
I. Healings	_____	_____
J. Helps	_____	_____
K. Hospitality	_____	_____
L. Explanation	_____	_____
M. Knowledge	_____	_____
N. Leadership	_____	_____
O. Showing Mercy	_____	_____
P. Miracles	_____	_____
Q. Missionary Service	_____	_____
R. Music	_____	_____
S. Pastoring	_____	_____
T. Mediation	_____	_____
U. Prophecy	_____	_____
V. Relentless Witness	_____	_____
W. Teaching	_____	_____
X. Tongues	_____	_____
Y. Wisdom	_____	_____

Sometimes the Spirit takes control of *natural* talents for the LORD, especially:

Craftsmanship – Exodus 28.3-4, 31.1-5, Acts 18.3, 2 Kings 12.12

The gift to use hands, minds and skill to build up the Kingdom through artistic and creative means for the glory and honor of God.

Music – 1 Cor 14.15,26, Mark 14.26, Eph 5.19, 1 Chronicles 9.33, James 5.13

The gift of bringing praise to God and leading the body of Christ in worship through various forms of music, singing, instruments and choirs.

Spiritual Gifts and Children



Read through the key Bible passages on spiritual gifts and you will discover that spiritual gifts are not age-based. There are no exemption clauses apart from being a true Christian. Every believer, including children, has at least one spiritual gift. [1 Corinthians 12:7, 18](#); [1 Peter 4:10](#).

In young believers, these gifts are not always evidenced or developed because of where they are in their life experience. If given a spiritual gifts test, for many the results will be inconclusive. That, however, does not mean that they do not possess gifts. What it does mean, is that they need our help to see who they are in Christ and to help them identify and develop that which He has given to them. We need to provide them with the tools to discover their spiritual gifts and a means to mature in the use of their gifts. You may want to implement the following ideas before considering the use of a spiritual gifts test with children:

Provide teaching about spiritual gifts and God's design for the church.

Help young people to understand God's purposes for the church and for their lives which include serving in His church. Help them realize that they have a part to do right now, not just when they are older.

Provide opportunities for them to serve.

Children need to develop a base of experience in ministry so they can begin to identify how they may be gifted. Encourage them to get involved in a variety of ways. Offer a consistent diet of ministry opportunities. Involve them, as you can, in the various aspects of total church life where they can work side by side with adults. Suggest that families serve together as teams. God will use these opportunities to grow passions within their hearts and to surface and develop their spiritual gifts.

- Allow children and youth to plan and lead their own programs, under supervision, of course. Soon you will see the leaders and teachers emerge among them.
- Take them on ministry field trips to nursing homes, children's hospitals, and the like, and soon you will see those with the gift of mercy blossom.
- Get them involved in work days around the church and soon you will see children with the gift of service looking for work.
- Make them a part of your short-term mission trips and soon you will hear some answer the call to be a missionary or evangelist.
- Seek volunteers among them to be nursery workers and soon you will see children with the gift of helps offering their services on their own.

Be careful, in the process, that you do not use coercion or a reward system to get them involved. They need to learn to serve out of love and obedience. They need to understand that serving is a worthy enough calling in itself that they do not need to be bribed in order to do it.

Provide affirmation and feedback.

When Jesus sent out his disciples to minister, He took the time to discuss how it went with them. Why would we do any less with the children and youth whom we deploy into ministry of any kind? First, they should be included in training opportunities. Second, they should be affirmed in what they are doing. If there seems to be an area in which they do particularly well, tell them. Third, provide feedback afterward. Evaluate with them what happened, both the positive and the negative. Offer suggestions on how they might improve. Or, if they just don't seem to be suited for a particular type of ministry, help them find something that may be a better fit.

Provide role models.

Adults ought to be setting a good example for the kids. So many adults, however, do not do their part. This can send a strong message to them contradicting all your verbal teaching about why they should get involved. If you expect young people to get it, you better work at making sure the adults get it.

Provide prayer support.

Develop a prayer base for the children and youth of your church that goes beyond praying for only the troubled ones. Pray also for those who seem to be doing well and who want to be a part. They need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit in whatever they do for Him just as much as an adult does. The last thing we want to do is grow kids who are self-sufficient and self-reliant in their Christian walks. We do not want them to start their life of service learning to do it in the flesh. Both their motivations and means of serving need to be an outgrowth of abiding in Christ who said "apart from Me you can do nothing." Following are some suggested prayer topics which can be personalized:

- Pray that the teaching ministry to your children goes beyond mere head knowledge and generates into a real love for the Lord which in turn translates into a true desire to serve Him.
- Pray that the church is willing to involve young people in ministry in ways that contribute to the work of God in your midst. Pray that the leaders of the different ministries in your church have wisdom to see how young people can help and communicate through both words and actions that they want children and youth to be a part.
- Pray God will use opportunities to serve in even small ways to grow a passion within their hearts to follow His purposes in their lives.
- Pray they will learn early in life how God has equipped them to serve and that they will follow His design in their lives.
- Pray they will learn the balance of sitting at Jesus' feet and serving.
- Pray for their walk with the Lord.

Your Teen's Spiritual Gifts

How to help your teen discover his or her spiritual gifts and gain direction in life

A spiritual gift isn't a natural ability with which you're born. It's not an office, position or job you hold.

Spiritual gifts are abilities that allow you to perform specific tasks beyond the realm of human skill. They're given to believers in Jesus Christ only, and they're given as gifts — not as a result of your maturity level, prayer or education.

Whether all spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible are still available today is a controversial issue. But it's generally agreed that every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. It's up to your teen to discover, develop and exercise his or hers. You can help.

Tell your teen that understanding one's spiritual gifting has several phases. He can begin by praying to understand the gift(s) the Holy Spirit has already placed inside him. Explain that you don't ask for a gift, you ask to be made aware of it.

Next, encourage your teen to learn by doing. Help her get involved in situations where she has to depend on God's Spirit to get something done. Let her work on projects inside and outside your church, getting ongoing, honest feedback from spiritually mature friends and leaders. Suggest that she ask your youth pastor, a coach or a teacher who knows her well what gifts that person sees in her.

There's no "complete" list of spiritual gifts, but partial lists are found six times in the New Testament. You may want to read these passages with your teen:

- Romans 12:6-8
- 1 Corinthians 12:6-10
- 1 Corinthians 12:28
- 1 Corinthians 12:29-30
- Ephesians 4:11
- 1 Peter 4:11

This discovery process offers two benefits for both you and your teen. First, it's one of the greatest "treasure hunts" you could ever embark upon. Second, it lets you steer your teen toward experiences that reveal and cultivate gifts that can be used for a lifetime.

Your Teen's Brain Preference

Your teen's brain has two separate but connected halves known as the left and right hemispheres. Each controls different ways of thinking and perceiving. Your teen uses both sides of her brain but has a preference for one over the other.

When you do something that's in line with your brain preference, it doesn't take a huge effort. But a task that requires using the other side of your brain makes it work 50 to 100 percent harder.

The left side of the brain handles sequential, logical, rational thought. Memorizing, spelling, vocabulary, language and mathematical formulas come easily to it. So do following rules and making decisions based on logic, proof, and facts.

The right side of the brain, meanwhile, is in charge of creativity and feelings. While the left side takes bits of information and arranges them in a logical order, the right side entertains random thought patterns.

What does all this mean for your teen's future? It means she'd better take her brain preference into account as she considers the kind of work she'll do and where she'll do it.

Whether she's at work or in school, her brain will want to stay on the side where it functions most naturally. Forcing herself to use the "other" side of her brain all the time can lead to headaches, fatigue, burnout and frequent illnesses - not to mention procrastination, frustration, mistakes, poor concentration, moodiness, memory problems and a pretty low view of herself.

As your teen thinks about what classes to take, remember that subjects like these may be easier for left-brained people: math (algebra, statistics or calculus), history, civics, reading, technical writing, research, electrical engineering, public speaking, debate team, typing, accounting and bookkeeping.

In which career fields do you find more left-brained people? Corporate presidents, chief financial officers, lawyers, physicians, accountants, bookkeepers, auditors, dentists, electrical and electronic engineers, assembly-line workers, managers and supervisors of all types, operating room and intensive care nurses, mechanics and machinists.

On the other hand - or hemisphere - which subjects in school may be easier for right-brained people? Math (geometry, trigonometry), biology, music, creative writing, foreign languages, drama, dance, choreography, chemistry, physics, art, design, philosophy, sociology and cultural anthropology.

In which career fields do you find more right-brained people? Consultants of all types, philosophers, emergency room physicians, psychiatrists, artists, writers, entertainers, musicians, composers, elementary and high school teachers and coaches, actors, dancers, designers, interior decorators, counselors, chaplains, public relations and marketing people, pediatricians and pediatric nurses.

Your Teen: Extrovert or Introvert?

Being extroverted or introverted isn't a matter of whether your teen "likes people" or "doesn't like people." It's about where he goes to get energy and where he focuses most of his concentration. Introverts find energy in their inner world of ideas, so they require less from the outside world. Extroverts find their energy in things and people; pulled by this outer life of action and interaction, they spend less time with thoughts and concepts.

Can you have both "innie" and "outie" traits? Sure.

Is it better to be an innie or an outie? Neither. Both have their strengths and weaknesses.

If your teen is more of an extrovert, he tends to like action and gets along well in social settings. He's likely to be an optimist. He gets bored or impatient with slow jobs and slow people, enjoys talking on the phone, and is generally confident and relaxed. He tends to work well under pressure, like when he takes tests.

What jobs do extroverts tend to like? Look for those that provide lots of activity, variety and stimulating input. Your teen probably will do best where he has plenty of interaction with people, many things going on at the same time, and deadlines to meet. Extroverts also enjoy jobs that let them turn ideas into reality.

In which career fields do we find more-extroverted people? Here are some: marketing, restaurant managers and workers, actors, salespeople and sales managers, dental hygienists, bank and office managers, religious and personal service workers, hairdressers and cosmetologists, self-employed business people, and teachers.

If your teen is more introverted, she tends to focus her energies inward; she's energized by times when she can be alone to ponder her thoughts, let her mind wander. She needs time to reflect before taking action. She's always asking questions (though not always out loud), tends to be more negative than positive in her outlook, and may get tagged as a pessimist. She tends not to work so well under the pressure of exams.

What kinds of jobs work well for introverts? Consider those that would allow your teen to work alone for much of the time, and where the stimulation level is low. She'll probably do best where she can have her own quiet space and work at her own pace. She may prefer an environment with fewer deadlines, one that lets her think up ideas and overcome the challenges that stand in the way of their becoming reality.

In which career fields do we find more-introverted people? Electrical and electronic engineers, chemists and other scientists, librarians, archivists and curators, mechanics and other repair people, lawyers, computer programmers, physicians, health technicians, priests and monks, and college professors.

Teaching Teens the Life Skill of Renewing Their Minds

The world is full of counterfeit truth claims, but you can teach your teen to live according to God's reality

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2, NIV).

The most important skill you can teach your teen is the renewing of his mind. The mistake many parents make is to try to renew their teen's mind for him. Renewing the mind is a day-to-day process of thinking biblically. You might remember in our last issue we talked about how to choose God's reality as the Bible defines it rather than alternate and counterfeit versions of reality. The car commercial that promises significance through horsepower and luxury is presenting a "truth claim" that is counter to the truth claims of the Bible.

The world is full of counterfeit truth claims, but you can teach your teen to live according to God's reality. When the mind is renewed, God's will and reality become clearer. You may be thinking, But how do I teach my teen the skill of renewing the mind? To get started, you should first prepare your teen.

Preparation

Begin by making sure your teen has the right set of expectations. Some people approach God's Word with the wrong set of expectations.

For example, does the Bible promise that if you follow all the commandments, you will have no struggles in life? Of course not. But it's not uncommon for a person to read the Bible with this kind of faulty expectation.

When your daughter opens the Bible, what should she expect? Teach her to look for who God is and what His world is really all about.

Next, help her understand that reading the Bible is having a conversation with God. As she reads, she can look for things that apply to her own circumstances and place in life.

The next step in helping your teen to renew their mind is to give them a biblical perspective.

Perspective

Put God's Word into the context of your teen's everyday life. Many parents make the mistake of assuming their teen's world is the same as their own world.

Start by looking closely at your teen's world. Walk in his shoes. Listen to the messages he gets when he walks into the classroom every day where a biblical worldview is challenged.

Consider the effect of video games he plays or TV he watches. Your first challenge is to step back and evaluate the messages your son is getting throughout the day.

Next, help your son gain a biblical perspective on these messages. Ask:

- "What did you hear today that would have sounded out of place at our dinner table?"
- "What are the promises that you heard on TV tonight? Are they true?"
- "What message does that video game convey?"

Speak about God's truth in contrast to the other messages. You might say: "The Bible says you and I are going to live forever, and we have a unique opportunity every day to do things that will last into eternity. What do you think we could do today that would last forever?" Or, "When God looks at you, what does He see?"

In addition to helping your teen gain a biblical perspective, you should also teach them about spending personal time with God.

Personal Time With God

Help your teen carve out regular, daily time with God to study the Bible and pray.

When I was a new Christian at the age of 17, a Young Life leader said to me, "If you read your Bible every day, God will tell you all kinds of things that will help you know how to live your life!" Boy, that got my attention.

Encourage (don't nag) your teen to commit to a specific time every day. Have him pick the time and spot.

In my own parenting, this challenge led my wife and me to talk with our 14-year-old son about canceling all the video game time for the rest of the school year to make room in his life for prayer. Commitment takes sacrifice.

Here are other suggestions:

- Start out small (perhaps 10 or 15 minutes to begin). Divide the time into three simple activities:
 - Pray (ask God to speak through His Word and to give understanding)
 - Read
 - Reflect (ask "What did I just hear or learn about who God is and what His world is like?")

- **Learn the art of asking great questions.** Jesus asked so many good questions. In fact, He often answered a question with a question! Start by carving out time for you and your teen to talk. Engage your teen with life questions that apply directly to your teen's circumstances. For example, you might ask, "Have you ever read anything in the Bible that might apply to that?" or "Have you looked at Proverbs to see what God might have to say about that?" **What you can't do is ask a question that has an obvious answer or that implies you already know what the right answer is**, kind of a "warmer, warmer" sort of hunt for the answer. Make the question a legitimate one so your son finds the answer on his own. Of course, there are no hard and fast rules. Recently my son accompanied me on a business trip where we had a heart-to-heart talk. I was ready with life questions to get us talking. Before I started rattling off the questions, I asked God what He thought I should focus on. His answer surprised me: "Ask him what was his favorite part of the day."

Quality Time With God's People

Learning from God's Word is a corporate activity. Your teen should learn from God's Word with other people, starting with you.

Listen to Dr. Dobson or another radio teacher on a regular basis, discuss the sermon at the dinner table during the week or attend a family camp this summer.

Psychologists say your teen's peer group is important to his development as a person.

Find rich environments where your teen can learn from God's Word with his peer group. Often that will be a Bible-focused youth group, but it also might be a Bible study you start in your home, or a conference teens attend together. Continually evaluate the quality of the teaching and converse with your teen about what he is learning.

Finally, in helping your teen to begin renewing their mind, emphasize the importance of the quest for truth.

Quest for Truth

Discovering what it means to live out our faith is a lifelong journey as we integrate what we believe with every area of life.

God will be with us, which is the most important part of the quest.

Teach your teen that God desires to reveal His truth to us. God is personal. He talks to us all the time: through creation, through others, and most clearly through His Word.

We can trust God's Word, expecting that He will do what He promises: speak to us, lead us, provide for us, give us everything we need for life and godliness in Christ Jesus.

Share your own quest with your teen so he knows the power of your story. Learning to think like a Christian requires renewing the mind. Teaching your teen how to do this and live according to God's will, and why that's important, might be the best gift you can give.

Be Your Teen's Role Model

How parents can be good role models

What is a role model?

When we say someone serves as a role model, we mean the individual is someone others admire or try to emulate. For teenagers this often means the person is someone they want to be like — whether it's because of the person's lifestyle, athletic prowess or the attitudes the person shows.

Some of those role models are celebrities out of your teen's reach (athletes and movie stars), while others are in his or her own circle of influence (youth ministers, teachers and other parents). What do those people have that make them attractive to your teen?

What teens crave

Why do teens look up to the other adults in their lives? Whether or not we like it, parents are sometimes considered the enemy. Teenagers might see their moms and dads as judgmental and unconcerned about their lives. Two qualities, therefore, are crucial to being a role model.

1. A role model is understanding, not condescending. When 13-year-old Jenny seemed especially upset about a boy not liking her at school, her father said, "That's nothing to worry about. You're too young to even think about boys." When the dad spoke those words, he was telling Jenny that her concerns were not important. Yet it was serious in her 13-year-old world. Role models try to connect with a teen to understand what he or she is going through. They do so without belittling the teen's problems or downplaying the triumphs.
2. A role model is a friend but also a leader. We often think that to be a role model to our teenager we must know the name of every new movie or be able to use teenage slang. That's not necessarily true. While most role models understand the teen's life and are friendly, they also take on a leadership role with them. Role models provide answers, insight or suggestions about the teen's struggles — oftentimes from their own experiences.

How parents can be good role models

- **Be available.** Let your teenager know your door is always open. While your son or daughter may not beat down your door every time he or she has a question, your teen is more likely to do so when you have left that door open. Say phrases such as "I'm always here for you" or "I'd love to hear about your day." Don't apply pressure, but let your teen know you are there for him or her.

- **Listen to your teen.** Being available to your teenager does not mean listening with one ear and then giving a long string of advice. Listen to your teen first, then ask follow-up questions. Don't jump in with advice (even when you clearly see what should be done). Instead, proceed slowly, asking your teen what he or she thinks should be done.

Being a role model to your teenager may seem like an impossible undertaking. But realize that your young person needs someone just like you — someone who loves him or her and who can point in the right direction.

Christian Family Values

The heartbeat of the Christian family!

Families need Christian family values if the traditional family unit is to remain strong. Marriages are ending in divorce at record numbers. Many children learn their values from television, movies, and music instead of from their parents.

Our culture is attempting to redefine the definition of "a family" to placate the voices of a small minority. We are told that it's okay for a child to be raised by two men or two women.

Some common misconceptions...

- Fathers are not needed in the home
- Children are not negatively affected when Mom works outside the home
- Children can make lifetime decisions before they even enter puberty
- Spanking is harmful to children and should not be practiced

These are only a few areas that society is attempting to blur for the Christian family. If you have experience with any, or all of the above misconceptions as I do, then you probably are in agreement.

A father that is absent from the home is felt very deeply by the children. A Christian family should do everything possible to keep a family together. Marriages are more brittle today than ever before. So are the children. All of the broken marriages leave countless children behind in the aftermath; fearful, and often angry.

These tragedies need to stop. This is not what God intended for us. This must all surely break His heart.

We all need to regroup our families around Christ—in our homes! The home is where Christianity begins, grows, and blooms—the center of our experience with Christ that prepares us for every aspect of life. So, huddle around the family altar daily—to study, pray and train for life. The whole family needs a biblical foundation to recognize truth and expose lies. Solomon was right: **Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted**—Ps 127:1.