



## Singapore Newsletter

æ This Issue æ

- ◆ I will be glad when...
- ◆ Key Principle
- ◆ New classes starting
- ◆ Kids take their cue from Dad
- ◆ Help! My teen is rebelling
- ◆ A Steadfast Heart
- ◆ Teen Challenge: Q&A

Dear GFI Family

*This issue we focus on Teens! Again and again when GFI does talks or run classes, the most common and heart wrenching stories or questions have to do with teens. For those of us whose children have not reached the teen years, "Those who have an ear, let him hear!" For those who are into it and are working on it, we want to say, do not give up, "For with God, nothing is impossible." For those who are sailing through it because you have worked while the sun is out, we want to say we are proud of you and can you please write to us to share and encourage?*

*This month is the exams month for many families; remember to invite the Lord into the studies. Remember, virtues learnt far outweighs A★.*

*Dorcas Li*

### New Toddler Class Starting 10 Oct

Every Mon 7.30pm  
at  
IRAS Building  
(Opp Novena MRT)

- How to be pro-active in your training of your toddler.
- Learning should not be by chance.
- What is structured day?
- Weaning, what food to give? How to prepare?
- How to get toddler to eat happily?
- Potty training

Registration form and details of the class is available on-line at [www.gfi-singapore.org](http://www.gfi-singapore.org)

Register your interest and reserve a place now.

### I will be glad when...

Often young parents delay enjoying their child until he has reached a certain stage of growth. When he is an infant they say, "I'll be glad when he gets out of diapers or quits cutting teeth or learns to walk."

Then they say, "I'll be glad when he starts kindergarten." Then it becomes, "I'll be glad when he starts school." Later they say, "I'll be glad when he graduates/" On and on it goes until the child is grown and gone, and the parents have never really enjoyed any stage of his life. They were always waiting to be glad 'when'.

We postpone being glad until everything is perfect which we all know is never going to happen in his life. We need to learn to rejoice and be glad in the Lord this day and every day along the way toward our goal.

*"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" Romans 5:3*

*Excerpted from Joyce Mayer's Daily Calendar*



**Key Principle: Virtuous Way Chapter 3  
Touchpoints of Love**

*Everyday we choose to love,  
and everyday we choose not to love*

## In spiritual matters, kids take their cues from Dad

By David Murrow

You've heard it said that fathers are the spiritual leaders of the home. Now there's a study to prove it.

Researchers from Switzerland examined whether parents' religious habits were transmitted to their offspring. They studied different variables, but one critical factor towered above the rest: the practices of the father determine whether children grow up attending church or not. And here's the shocker: the habits of the mother have almost no influence over their kids' future devotion.

Consider these findings:

- When Mom is a regular churchgoer but Dad attends infrequently, just 3 percent of their kids go on to become regular churchgoers.
- When Mom is regular but Dad never attends, just 2 percent become regular attendees.

Now, let's flip the chart. What if Dad is faithful?

- When both Mom and Dad attend church regularly, 33 percent of kids grow up to attend regularly.
- When Dad is regular but Mom only goes once in a while, the figure jumps to 38 percent.
- Here's the real bombshell: when Dad is faithful but Mom never attends, 44 percent of the kids end up as regular church attendees!

**Bottom line: in spiritual matters, kids take their cues from Dad.** If Papa doesn't go to church, chances are very slim that his children will become regular worshippers. If the kids see religion as "Mom's thing" they are more likely to become disenchanted. But if Dad leads by example, children are twenty-two times more likely to become lifelong churchgoers.

This trend is present in U.S. churches as well. Curtis Burnam, a 20-year veteran of youth ministry has seen it time and again. "Kids who are taken to church by Mom but not Dad are harder to keep in church. They tend to drop out at higher rates when they reach adolescence. They are also harder to engage when they do come to youth group. This is true for girls as well as boys."

Why are these findings so alarming? Because men are dropping out of America's churches. Consider this:

- In 1952, the typical U.S. protestant worship service drew an adult crowd that was 47 percent male. Today that figure is 39 percent -- and falling.
- On any given Sunday there are 13 million fewer men than women in U.S. pews.
- Almost a quarter of married, churchgoing women attend services without their husbands each Sunday.

- According to Barna Research, men lag behind women in every area of Christian endeavour (except the senior pastorate).
- Few churches can establish or maintain a viable men's ministry.
- The majority of churchgoing men do nothing midweek (other than pray) to grow in faith.

Two obvious questions come to mind: why are Christian churches losing their men? And why are churchgoing men so uninvolved? Jesus enthralled men. Rival faiths such as Islam inspire fanatical allegiance from young men. What's the difference?

I studied this phenomenon for five years, and wrote my findings in a book titled, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nelson Books, 2005). If I had to summarize my conclusions in one sentence it would be this: The modern church system is not designed to do what Jesus did: reach men with the Good News.

No, today's churches, without even realizing it, create an environment where women and tots thrive, but men feel hesitant and restrained. How so? **Without even realizing it, modern churches default to a feminine spirituality.** For instance, we focus almost exclusively on Christ's gentle side. A good Christian is always soft, sweet, and sentimental, focused on family and relationships instead of goals and achievement. Common church practices such as handholding, sitting in a circle and sharing your feelings, public reading and singing make men feel uncomfortable or incompetent. Today's praise songs present Christ as lover rather than leader. I could go on.

So men depart (or go passive). This in itself is a tragedy. But the greater loss comes years later, when the next generation turns its back on church, despite their mothers' superhuman attempts to grow them into spiritual champions.

It's time to face the truth: **if we're going to pass a lifelong faith to our children, we must re-engage men.** No amount of Sunday school, VBS, or youth group will do the trick. We might as well fold up our flannel-graphs and go home. In fact, we might reach more kids by canceling the entire children's ministry and focusing our efforts on men. This strategy would, in the long run, produce more lifelong followers of Jesus.

Kids need one thing: to see their fathers following Jesus. The question is: do we have the courage to transform the local church into a place where your average guy can connect with God?

*Article* is available for down load from [www.gfi-singapore.org](http://www.gfi-singapore.org) under "Articles"

## Help! My teen is rebelling!

Although rebellion is basic to man's nature and the root cause of many human conflicts, we have discovered that rebellion itself on the part of teens is not necessarily the root cause of all parent-teen crisis. Many times it's not rules that teens rebel against but the authority who set the rules. We learned from observing teens in conflict with their parents, that when a teen is known and characterized by ongoing rebellion, the root is usually as much relational as it is moral.

Ouch! We know that statement can hurt, and we realize there may be many catalysts to rejecting a relationship. A physically or emotionally absent father, an overbearing mother, drugs, alcohol, physical and emotional abuse, not enough or too many rules, an over-bearing mother, drugs, alcohol, physically and emotional abuse, not enough or too many rules, an under-controlled or over-controlled child, divorce, remarriage—all of these factors can produce stress. However, whatever the cause, the object of rejection is always the same—the relationship with parents. Why? Because that's where pain is felt. The striving for independence, the confused search for identity, the frightening influence of peers, the anger and battles of wills, the yelling, screaming, and threats—these are all symptoms but not the cause. For teens characterized by rebellion, they are conclusions not starting points. If you want to fix the problem, work on the relationship.

Our comments here are not intended to minimize the significance of sinful patterns of either teen or parent. However, we do want to speak directly to the power of right or wrong relationships, which often discourage or foster sinful conflict. Relationship building is the key to successful teen parenting, but it often takes time. There are no shortcuts to building new relationships or mending old ones. This takes effort, and there may be some pain involved.

Our society doesn't like pain. We want it to go away—now! In our efforts to get relief from our misery, too often we look for temporary solutions that mask the problem but will not fix it. Parents struggling with teens too often look for medicine that will mask the problems, rather than getting to the root cause. Often we want to fix the child, his youth group, his school, or a particular circumstance, but none of those "solutions" will fix the problem.

We suggest an alternative approach. We believe that when you stop trying to improve your teen by controlling him or his circumstances and instead focus on improving your relationship with your teen, two things happen. First, you put focus where it belongs—on relationship. Second, you start to parent by your influence, rather than by your authority.

Source: *Let the Children Come Along the Adolescent Way*, Chapter 3, by Gary & Anne Marie Ezzo

### A steadfast Heart

Give me, O Lord, A steadfast heart,  
Which no unworthy affection may drag downward;  
Give me an unconquered heart,  
Which no tribulation can wear out;  
Give me an upright heart,  
Which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside.  
Bestow on me also, O Lord my God,  
Understanding to know You, diligence to seek You, wisdom to find You,  
And faithfulness that may finally embrace you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thomas Aquinas

# Teen Challenge: Questions & Answers About Popularity, Peer Pressure, and Self-Image

Message as of 2005-07-21



Parents are faced with varying levels of challenges. For some parents, it is trying to get their teens to turn off the light in their bedroom. Other parents are dealing with more grave matters: drugs, sexual promiscuity, and criminal activity. The series of questions and answers below provides general suggestions that fit a broad range of challenges with teens.

## Question Summary

1. My teenager is starting to hang around with the wrong crowd. What can I do?
2. My teenager would do anything to be accepted by the group. Should I be worried?
3. My teenager is very popular in school, but I'm getting reports that he (or she) is unkind to those not in the right clique. Is it my place to say anything?
4. My teenager is not the most attractive or popular person in school. She tries to be accepted by the popular kids, but they only ridicule her. What can I do?
5. My daughter doesn't think I notice, but I'm beginning to suspect she's got an eating disorder. How can I be sure? What can I do to help?

### **1. My teenager is starting to hang around with the wrong crowd. What can I do?**

The reason we never think our kids are hanging around with a bad crowd when they're in third or fourth grade is that those kids didn't look so bad back then. They seemed pretty normal, though perhaps not particularly well behaved. Now, when those same kids are sixteen or seventeen, we wonder how we could have missed it. Your child may be hanging around with the very same kids, only now you see the glaring moral disparity that was almost invisible before.

We get nervous when we look at these kids and see the signs of where some of them may be headed in terms of the trouble they could potentially get into. We know we don't want our kids to go there. But from the child's perspective, nothing's changed. These are still the same kids they've always hung around with.

Any approach you take to attempt to lead your teen away from these peers must rely on the power of your relationship with your teen. You need to sit down and have an honest talk about the types of behavior that are right for your family. If your family has established a common moral stance, you can appeal to that. Point out some of the more dangerous aspects of particular lifestyles. Hopefully your teen will agree with you that there is a disparity between what those friends are like and what your family stands for and will see the need to make a break.

But don't do it in time of crisis. When your teen says, "Mom, can I go over to Matt's house today because we're going to spend the weekend together?" that's not the time to say, "No, I don't like Matt." Your timing is probably as important in these conversations as the words you use. When talking about any important issue with your teen, make sure you operate in periods of non-conflict.

Keep the concept of substitution over suppression in mind. If you're going to attempt to suppress a relationship, make sure you're ready to substitute something in its place. If you're going to tell your teen that these are not the best kids for her to hang around with, you'd better be establishing relationships with families that have great kids. Provide a natural alternative. You simply can't cut off relationships in your kids' lives without providing a substitution. Sit down with your teen and have a talk. Ask her what qualities draw her to these friends. Then ask how she feels these qualities and these friends are going to help her reach her goals in life. As kids get into the teen years, you want them to come to their own conclusions. You provide guidance, but you don't make the decisions for them. It's so much better for your teen to say, "Yeah, maybe this guy really isn't the best one for me to hang around with," than for you to dictate that to her. When your teen realizes for herself that someone is a bad influence, she'll be more willing to break off that relationship. But if you dictate with your authority, you're just asking for strife.

**2. My teenager would do anything to be accepted by the group. Should I be worried?**

Sometimes it's a good thing to want to be accepted by the group. Peer pressure isn't always bad. If it's a positive group, with values you agree with, then it may be applying positive peer pressure on your child. He may clean up some behaviors just because of his new friends. There are personality, temperament, and love language variables that may make your teenager predisposed to want to be accepted by or close to a group. However, if you're pretty sure that isn't the case with your teen, you should try to determine what it is that is motivating him to want so badly to be accepted by this group. We all need to feel accepted and appreciated. But if a teen is willing to do nearly anything to be accepted, it may be cause for alarm. Help your teenager evaluate exactly why this is so important in his life that he's willing to compromise who he is to be accepted by them.

You may find that this is really a need for more time with Dad or an indication that you've got an independent family as opposed to an interdependent one. Or there may be some deficiency in the child's self-perception. If he feels that his own identity will be enhanced by just being friends with these people, then you as his parent need to deal with the root issue (the lack he feels in his own self) rather than the symptoms.

**3. My teenager is very popular in school, but I'm getting reports that he (or she) is unkind to those not in the right clique. Is it my place to say anything?**

It's always your place as a mom or dad to be a moral compass. This behavior, if true, calls for correction. Correction simply means "putting back on track." This situation does not necessarily call for discipline. It may be more appropriate to provide moral correction. Point out how his actions may be hurting others. Isn't it wonderful that your teenager is well accepted? If you have a child like this, you have the opportunity to instill graciousness and empathy. Teach your popular teen to reach out in kindness and gentleness to those who don't have everything he has. A teen who is friendly to those who are less popular is attractive in a way that transcends nice looks, clothes, and teeth.

**4. My teenager is not the most attractive or popular person in school. She tries to be accepted by the popular kids, but they only ridicule her. What can I do?**

By Gary Ezzo and Anne Marie Ezzo  
Article is available for download from [www.gfi-singapore.org](http://www.gfi-singapore.org)

Usually when your teen desires acceptance by a certain group, it's saying more about your teen than about the group. The key question is why your teen feels she has to be accepted by this particular group. Sit down and talk with her. Ask her what it is this group offers that she desires. What would she gain if she were accepted by this group, and what would it mean about her if she weren't? Listen for clues about what she feels she's lacking that she thinks this group would provide. That's where you should focus your efforts to help your daughter.

The hard truth is that life is not fair. Not everyone will like your child. Young people can be terribly cruel to one another. If this group is rejecting your daughter, it may also be because of insecurities of their own, because confident people welcome new friends easily. Take this opportunity to gently teach your child. Rejection hurts. Right now she's feeling like the outcast. But that won't always be the case. Help her to understand that she will often be in a position of accepting or rejecting others. Now that she knows how awful rejection feels, she can determine to reach out to others in the future. Have her seek friends from outside the "in" group. She may find that there are more neat kids outside the group than inside.

**5. My daughter doesn't think I notice, but I'm beginning to suspect she's has an eating disorder. How can I be sure? What can I do to help?**

Eating disorders are serious business. There are specialists in this area who can give you information that will allow you to evaluate and attempt to understand the problem. Good information is also available on the [Internet](http://Internet). The first step is to get educated. If after you've learned a bit, your suspicions seem to be confirmed, consider taking her to a specialist.

Usually at the root of any eating disorder is a feeling of non-acceptance by those who are close to her, especially her father. If your daughter is showing signs of an eating disorder, Dad needs to get more involved. It is amazing what a bicycle ride or walk in the park, or a trip to the mall with dad can do for a daughter who is struggling with her own acceptance. In a case like this, parents should concentrate on purposefully expressing their unconditional acceptance of their teen. If you find yourself in this relational context and realize you haven't been extending unconditional acceptance, then this is a good place to start bridge-building back to your daughter's heart.

Have you visited our website recently?  
[www.gfi-singapore.org](http://www.gfi-singapore.org)