

# Where's the Manual?

## Parents urged to stay involved in teenagers' lives



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**H**ow are your summer projects going? Usually, you do a little planning and wait for it to get warm enough to dig in. It's really the unexpected projects, however, that can most test your character. You know the ones—no experience, no manual, no time and no money. Our garage door falls in that category. I found myself, once again, working on it with little success. The big problem was that I had received no manual for it. This is where the connection to raising a junior high student comes in. If you don't follow the manual, you're in for a lot of frustration.

### Expect Change

We all know to expect things to change when kids enter junior high. I have seen countless times where the cute, polite, good child turns into a moody, rude, "who cares about grades" and "by the way, you don't know what you are talking about" kind of kid. These almost inevitable expressions of discovering self-identity rarely go smoothly.

If you haven't figured it out yet, your manual is God's Word. In it, Ephesians 6:4 states, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." The phrase "bring them up" means they are not to raise themselves, nor are their friends to develop their values and morals. It is **your** responsibility to be directly involved in your child's life.

### Stay Involved

It's predictable to see parents quite involved in their children's lives, that is until junior high. That's when I often see parents back off in an attempt to give their teenagers "space." I wish to respectfully challenge that pattern. Underneath the fight for freedom and the "leave me alone" statements, what your young teenager wants more than ever is for you to really know what's going on in his or her new world. Teens are non-verbally asking you, "What do you think of me?" "Is this really OK—or not"? Parents are still the number one influence on teenagers.

### Slow Down

Please stay involved and act on your intentions to slow down your life. If you don't have a consistent family night together, then something is

wrong. I see the results of busyness on a student's life. Little family time leaves the training and teaching up to other sources—often the ones you would not choose. I see too many teens raising each other. I see a lot of parents acting as mere taxi drivers, uniform washers, chefs, maids, loan officers and butlers in the lives of their students. Remember, you are the parent. You are the one with the command to "bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

### Stay directly involved in the lives of your growing teenagers.

- Love them through their various attempts at self-identity.
- Slow down your life so you can invest wisely in their lives.
- Act on the fact that you are the parent, not the servant.
- Keep the big picture in mind. As a parent, you are serving God and are the steward of your children. What God thinks matters more than trying to keep a teenager happy.

Adjusting your current course may require some change and even sacrifice, but it will benefit you and your child immensely in the long run.

My encouragement to you is, "Stick with it." The Student Ministries staff is here to support you. We're grateful for the privilege of coming alongside you to influence your child for Jesus Christ. We look forward to seeing the results when they become the adults God created them to be!

