



## Intentional Parenting

### Part 3 – Doing Life with Your Teens and Adult Children

We're in a series called Intentional Parenting. We're actually finishing today with a message called *Doing Life with Your Teens and Adult Children*. We're not talking today about parenting your adult children because that season in life is done for many of us, but we still have influence. We've been talking a lot about that. I want to start with Psalm 127. I love this psalm because it reminds us of God's gift of children to us, but then it also talks about the strength and protection that we find in a family.

We read in Psalm 127 – ***Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. 4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior... It's one of my favorite word pictures about children.... are children born in one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.*** Blessed is the one that when he stands before others, he has a name and has children standing behind that name for protection and safety. I just love this – ***They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.***

So, I'm grateful for this. I know there are times, as a parent with teens and adult children, that our teens will kind of explain to us how life works. I did this to my parents. I would tell them how life works. I remember when I paid taxes for the first time at 12 years old. I called accounts and everything and I was trying to explain to them all about taxes at the age of 12. Then when they become young adults and they are explaining life to you, one of the skills we need to learn... and this is where we start today. One of the skills we need to learn as parents is we have to learn how to freak out on the inside.

We can't let what's going on affect us, and we can't show shock and disappointment. We can't be this overt when we disagree. (Nancy Pelosi tearing up speech) There couldn't be a better clip to describe this because President Trump is in front of her going, "Thank you. Thank you." If you've been a parent for a while, you've got to learn to be a little more subtle like Speaker Johnson (rolling his eyes and shaking his head).

There are some people right now that are bugged. "Is this church democratic or republican? I need to know right now. They showed both sides." The whole point... Don't get caught up in the politics. How many millions of memes are going to be created from that last clip? That's the same face I make when Amy is ordering on Amazon Prime. It's a skill. We know it's a skill. You have to freak out on the inside.

I share all that to say Cary Nieuwhof says this, and it's where we start today. *"It's hard to reach the next generation when you're rolling your eyes at them.* It's hard to have influence when we're constantly showing contempt.

John Gottman says, *“Nothing shows contempt in a relationship more than an eye roll.”* You think you’re eye-rolling the conversation for the issue, but an eye roll always goes past the issue and past the conversation to the core, to the soul of the person.”

Like in marriage, when you roll your eyes at your spouse, you think you’re rolling your eyes at the conversation to say, “I don’t want to talk about this right now.” But your spouse hears, “I don’t want to talk to you right now.” It’s true with our young people as well. We have to watch the eye roll.

Years ago, I was in a parent meeting, and I heard Sue Head from College of the Ozarks say this. She said, *“Your children will struggle, let them.”* I cheered. I was the only one in the parent meeting that went, “Whoo-hoo... Bring on the struggle.” Because we know the struggle is good, and that’s how we grow. This is how we learn. And too many helicopter, hovering parents just constantly over their kids, wanting to protect them from all hurt and loss and harm and difficulties.

Again, I’m not talking about your child walking over to a stove with a boiling pot of water... You know I’m not talking about that. They’re getting ready to take a bike out into a busy street where there are cars coming. You can scream stop. There are appropriate times to scream as a parent, but we also know that we need to be the calmest person in the room when our children are the loudest. But I would add to what Sue said. I sent this to her so I’m not correcting her at all. I said, “Yeah, my children struggle, let them, but it will be hard to watch. It’s going to be very difficult to let them go through this life lesson, to let them experience this.

What I’m learning now as a parent of adult children is I have to know when to coach and know when to cheer. The heart of this series and the heart of this church is to walk alongside you during this season of life, as we’ve talked about parenting the last two weeks and we end this today. We brought in a lot of question and the majority of questions fit in this message. And we will address a couple of them, but we’re really addressing all of them because we printed them out and put them in categories. The questions all fell into three categories – Faith, money, and boundaries.

We are going to start with **faith**. We’re going to go to Proverbs 22: 6 that has caused a lot of angst for parents. But when we talk about faith... We talked about it for two weeks leading up to today. In Deuteronomy 6: 4-7, we read – **4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.** We want this on the hearts of our children for them to know there is a god, there’s only one God. He is the Lord, and he is our Lord. **5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments...** Mom and Dad are to be upon your hearts first. Because what’s on your heart will find it’s way onto the hearts of your children. **...that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children.** How do you do that? It’s your everyday, ordinary walk around life. **Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** It’s your everyday, ordinary, walk about life. From the time you get up in the morning until the time you go to sleep at night. As you sit at home, as you walk along the way. All of your activity, right? You’re having conversations about the Lord.

So, when we get to this first question... and a lot of people ask, “What do I do when my child didn’t take this, it didn’t find its way onto their heart?” This verse has caused angst for on parenting for more Christian parents than probably any other verse in the Bible for parenting. **Start children off on the way they should go. We’ve been talking about that. Impressing a love for the Lord upon the hearts of your**

**children.** Sometimes we get caught up in the second part of this verse and we neglect the first part, but remember, when we read Proverbs, and we are going to see several of them today, proverbs are not promises. They are not guarantees. It's not if you do this, this will happen. Proverbs are principles for life that if you do this, this tends to happen. If you work hard, you'll get a return. But some of you have worked hard, you've gone to the ant, you sluggard, considered its ways, you've become wise. You worked hard and then some calamity hit your family. So, these aren't promises of god, they are proverbs.

You say, "We did this..." But focus on the first part of this that, Mom and Dad, it's still our responsibility to send our children with the truth of god's word and a love for the Lord. But Look – **Even when they are old, they will not turn from it.** There are many of you in here that you have continued in the faith from the time you left home and yet there are parents in here that I know are dealing with the pain and the hurt and the struggle of a child that is not walking with the Lord. You would say, "I have a prodigal son or a prodigal daughter." We have grandparents in here with prodigal grandchildren. We hope that the application today is helpful as you continue to lead, as you continue to have influence.

That's what I want to encourage you with – a couple of things on this. If you have children who are not walking with the Lord, your adult children are still watching and listening. You can't control them, but you still have influence. You're like, "Ted, they've cut us off completely." You still have influence, even if it's not very much. I want to encourage you. Trust God to work through the messages you wrote on their heart when they were in your home.

Do not stop praying for them. Do not stop pleading with the Lord. I met with countless parents after the first gathering this morning. And the pain of drug addiction, alcoholism, and lifestyles that they don't approve of, and just taking a path so far from the way they were raised. Through tears, Mom and Dad sharing... Mom and Dad, don't stop trusting God and don't stop praying.

For some, a different path doesn't always mean a wrong path. That's what we are going to have to learn as parents and we'll talk more about that. So, that's the faith piece. We're going to address that in the application.

**2. Money.** Lot's of questions on this. I'll be honest with you. I'm pretty shocked at what some adult children expect of their parents. I'm not going to roll my eyes, but I may get a little louder. It kind of blew my mind some of the questions that we got. I'm not going to be able to share them all, but let me give you one of them. "We've been completely cut off from any contact from our daughter and grandchildren for many years because she asked for a large amount of money that we were unable to give her. What advice do you have for this very sad situation?"

You get it, right? This ain't easy stuff. Proverbs 13: 22, another one that I want us to unpack and understand, says, **A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children.** Is this talking about money? Yes. But it's talking about a lot more than just money. **But a sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.**

John Piper explains it this way and I think he really does a good job unpacking what a proverb is versus a guaranteed outcome.

"I don't think the point of this proverb is that a good man should or has a duty to leave an inheritance to his children and grandchildren."

That's why Tommy Nelson says, "*Make sure the last check you right in life is to your children and make sure it bounces.*" No don't do that. You don't have a duty to this, but then in general, a good man has the resources and ability to do it. In other words, he's lived his life, he's worked hard, he's saved, he's managed money well.

Some of you know this. You maybe have an uncle or maybe a grandparent, or maybe a parent that was foolish with money their entire life. They never managed money well. And they died broke, not because of calamity that hit them, but because of laziness or slothfulness. This scripture goes on, but John Piper explains the point of this proverb is that children and grandchildren will experience blessing because they had a good man for a father and a grandfather.

If I could just say this to adult children in the room. Your parents raised you; they sent you out, but at this point in your life, your parents owe you nothing financially. And to have that expectation and that expectation to be tied to a relationship with them.... I don't know if you know this, but people are living a lot longer. Your parents are going to need money in their old age to take care of them. Look at the seniors. "Spend some time on this. I want a good home. I don't want one a roommate..."

So, listen. I kid with my dad all the time. "I'm still a little shocked that I'm the executor of your will and the one who makes the decision on when to end your life." That doesn't seem very... I don't know who thought that through, but that doesn't make a lot of sense. "Dr. pull it, I've got a meeting today." I'll be honest. I can't imagine. I've never had this conversation with my parents. I know some of you have.

Here's another one. I'm not going to read the whole question, but there's a family sharing their grief with the relationship they have. They have one child that got married. They don't celebrate birthdays and holidays and all that, but they've requested that the parents keep receipts for gifts they buy the other grandchildren and then take that money and put it in their 529 account for their kids.

I'm not rolling my eyes, but I have to keep my mouth shut on that one. If your relationship with your parents is tied to expectation on money...

I'll tell you another one I have to work through all the time... And I'm not a business guy. I don't do a lot of consulting with business, but I've worked with a lot of families, and high-capacity families that have built businesses and then they sell their business. We have many families in our church that have done very well building and selling businesses. But the expectation of children on that business when mom and dad sell it... They're like, "I just assumed that we worked that hotel together and that you weren't going to sell the hotel, but I was just going to take it over, and it was going to become mine."

I want to tell you, you are responsible... I'm going to say this to the young adults in the room and the adult children, you are responsible for meeting your aging parent's physical needs. This is one of the reasons we have to work hard. We are a sandwich generation. My kids know, as they finish up college and all that. I'm still responsible financially for some obligation with that, but then you have parents on this side that you have to begin thinking about taking care of.

Paul said it very clearly to timothy, ***Anyone that does not provide for their relatives and especially for their own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*** The government is not responsible for my parents, I am. I can't even put that on you. I have to figure out ways to make this work.

You're like, "We built a business and why am I not being trusted with it? I just want to encourage you. If you are in that situation where your family has built something that you think you should take over, Proverbs 21: 5 – ***Whoever can be trusted with very little, can also be trusted with much.*** In other words, if your family owns a restaurant, you, in your teen years and young adult years, you be the best waiter and best waitress in that restaurant. You Show up early and you stay late. And you work hard. If it's a hotel that your family owns, I'm telling you... be there early making beds. We all love making beds. I talk to hotel owners all the time and they will tell you it's the part of the job they hate the most. But being faithful with the little things.... Then you can be trusted with much. ***Whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.***

So, I know the pain that comes with this and the responsibility. Money was a big one to be addressed and I just want to encourage those who feel their parents owe them something to back that off and don't tie it to the relationship.

Mom and Dad, there is going to be application for you if you find yourself in this situation like several members of our church have found themselves in.

**3. Boundaries** – There are three keys to make a boundary work. I'm going to try to keep this as simple as possible. You just got married and you're trying to figure out what you're going to do about Christmas. Or maybe before that, what are we going to do about Thanksgiving?

First of all, you have freedom to do Christmas however you want. You now have two sets of parents, and you have two families. Okay, this is a boundary and I hear it all the time. I have one friend that says they want to get up in the morning on Christmas morning in their pajamas and open gifts and they don't want to have all the other family. They'll go do family stuff later, but that's how they want to do it. That's a great boundary. You can establish that. But the key is you have to communicate it. Too many people establish boundaries and never communicate it because they don't want to hurt feelings. You are actually creating even more hurt feelings.

So establish a boundary and clearly communicate it. You're like, "Can I do it through text because that's going to be a tough phone call? Communicate it and then, for relationships to thrive, you have to honor the boundaries. This is my favorite proverb for boundaries for a mother-in-law and father-in-law, father-in-law of which I am one. Proverbs 25: 17 – ***Seldom set foot in your son in law's house. Too much of you and he will hate you.*** Now, this is a proverb for wearing out your welcome. I just want to say to the mom in here, Sandy Gumm, you on the front row so you're an easy target. No, I'm just kidding.

Here's the bottom line. Mom, you're loving, you're kind, you're generous, you're always available and willing to help, but sometimes you just may be too much. Here's something you can do. I've been doing this with my daughter and her husband. I'll ask them, "Am I being too much right now? I'll back off. I'm still figuring this out." Those are the main issues that have been covered and then asked about in our church.

Now, what we want to do is cover some application, and to do that, Jim Burns wrote a phenomenal book called *Doing Life with Your Adult Child*. So, we've adapted that title today, we've done a bible study here at our church and many of you went through that. It's a phenomenal book and I'm going to take the five application points today directly from Jim. But to help me do that and to give us a better understanding into the hearts and minds of teens and particularly young adults, I would love you to give a nice warm woodland hills welcome to our student and young adult pastor Jared Kolter.

I have to tell you about Jared. Over the last couple of years, we have watched Wednesday nights at woodland hills and on campus explode. It's been so encouraging. I love stopping by campus and spending time here on Wednesday night, so thank you for your leadership. You've actually surveyed some, so we'll run through these and he's going to give some practical ways. I brought him up because I'm also listening. I don't need to just be teaching the stuff, but I am trying to be a little bit more like Speaker Johnson.

So, number one on application today. You don't need to turn every moment into a life lesson. My daughter, Corynn, told me that all the time and she would even look at me when I would start to turn it into a life lesson. I had to learn when to back down.

Jared: Same here, Ted. The other day, I was driving down our street and hit a squirrel and my kids were in the car so I... No, I didn't turn it into a life lesson. That was me trying to make a joke. So, I've been in student ministry for about 20 years and have had the opportunity to collect some real data along the way. Are there any students in the room. Young adults? Hopefully, you feel encouraged by this morning as well.

So we surveyed our students and it was kind of fun to see the results of what they had to say. The overwhelming response is simple. The feel cared for by you all. Parents – way to go. Grandparents – good job. That's pretty cool right? The other thing that they led to on the survey was essentially they would love your trust. Their like, "Hey, that hard thing I'm walking through at school? Trust me, I can get through it. And, "Hey, could you just trust me? I'd like to have social media, Mom and Dad." So, you guys have to live in that tension, parents, of like how do we balance the fact that they're constantly wanting to press the gas pedal on growing up? but you also have to be wise and discerning in when it's appropriate to give more freedoms.

So, that said, the really cool part that we saw in the survey and the statistics is that your voice is important in their life. I think so many times we can mute that and say, "My kids just aren't listening to me, or they don't want to hear what I have to say." "My young adults that are growing up and out of the house don't want to hear what I have to say." I don't think that's true. I think your voice really is important.

So, if you find yourself this morning having lost influence in that relationship, view it as a bank account. I heard this in my premarital counseling. Lauren and I were going through premarital counseling as a bank account. I know we've talked about that here. It's like make withdrawals and make deposits. So, sometimes in our relationships we make deposits by the things that we do and sometimes we make withdrawals and sometimes, in the teenage years you can't always tell whether you're making a deposit or a withdrawal, right parents? So, that's just a little bit tricky.

But all that to say things like caring for a person, listening well to them. Living a life of integrity, like living with vulnerability, intentionality. These are things that make deposits. They are good things. I think so many times though we can think that our expertise or experiences are what we should lead out with. I can't remember who said this, but they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. You've probably heard that adage. And I see that time and time again with students. They want you to invest in a relationship with them. They want to feel like they can trust you. The experts are calling that this generation is the generation of relational authority. So, they value deep relationships. The ways you can make withdrawals are obvious also, but just in the current political season, thank you for the videos, Ted. Your political rants a lot of times are not deposits. It's pretty obvious, but young people are like, Will you please?

Ted: I love something you say. Every moment into a life lesson, which is my tendency as a teacher, actually communicates to my kids, "I don't trust you."

Jared: Yeah, that's huge. Young people, do you agree with that? It's like Man, if you're standing on that every moment is a life lesson, we're accidentally communicating a lack of trust.

Ted: Number 2 is Trust that experience is a better teacher than advice. And a lot of times, unsolicited advice with our adult children is almost all the time seen as criticism. Jared, you have a great story about your dad instructing you with a little experience.

Jared: He let me live into the experience... I look back on this and I thank him for it, but, at the time, I was making it a sport, as a college freshman to see how many classes I could actually skip and still get straight A's...

Ted: And that's our student pastor.

Jared: All that to say I started realizing that was a bad trajectory and probably wouldn't help me learn the things that I needed to learn to be an educator or be a person who was respected. So, I started buckling down and I went to the financial aid office and realized that. It was after visiting the registrar and realizing it was going to take me about 8 ½ to 9 semesters to graduate. And if you do the math there, you can't graduate in 8 ½ semesters, right? All that to say it was going to take me the old college victory lap, 9 semesters, to graduate. I think I probably, in a panic, called my dad and was like, "What are we going to do?"

What a funny story, but all that to say, my dad, very calmly responded with "We've helped you out thus far and we'll help you get through your senior year, 8 semesters. But the 9<sup>th</sup> one is on you, bud." Message received, right? That was a hard thing to hear, but at the same time, what a great lesson because I think what he was communicating was "You're a capable adult and you can handle this. You are responsible, ready, set, go. I remembered that every time I made a college loan payment. In my 20's. So, a great opportunity to trust that experience is a better teacher. He let me experience the hardship of making payments.

Ted: Pastor Ted Burden was our worship pastor for years here. He still has one of the best stories on this I've ever heard. He kind of blew off his freshman year too. He didn't take it seriously, didn't get the grades. He goes back his second semester freshman year, still not making the grades. He comes home

with his laundry for spring break, does laundry. He's headed back at the end of spring break, second semester, and his dad comes out the car and says, "Teddy, I have to ask you a question to get your opinion on something. You see this tree over here?" Now it's springtime so it's budding out a little bit, but only about half the tree is budding. He said, "Your mom and I disagree on what we should do with this tree. I think it's done, and she thinks we need to give it one more season. Should I take the tree down or leave it up? Teddy was like, "Cut it down, Dad..." Talk about a great parable. His dad said, "Teddy, you are that tree. You go back and take school seriously,"

"Ted: Our roll as parents must shift from being controllers to being coaches and advisers.

Jared: I think in this point like just to drill it home is so important for us and some of this for some of you may be really easy because you have more of a relational bent and maybe you don't. Maybe you're very logical and you can be both, it's okay. But the idea there is you're going to have to flex your relational capacity in this season. And so, if you've found yourself having lost influence in ways to regain influence in the life of your young person, it is pretty self-explanatory. It's the idea that we need to listen well. We need to listen with curiosity and then we need to do a good job responding to our young people. In other words, if a young person is sharing with me... not to divulge anything, a young person just shared something with me a couple of weeks ago that was like major life altering. It's good for me to hear that and then What to do a couple of weeks later? To follow up. I think it's really important for us in this phase of a young person in their growing up and in their understand and taking on more responsibility, to ask good, intuitive questions.

And then to listen well, but then to respond with "what should you do?" "What are the next steps?" In the role of coaching, I think it's so important for us to not just give the answer. So, parents with teenagers, I know that it's such a tendency of us to want to jump in and give them the right answer, but I think in this season, it's so good for you to equip yourself with some coaching questions. Like, "What you're sharing with me sounds really hard. What are you going to do about it?" Then that leaves this uncomfortable space of them having to come to a solution in their own volition and not to just rely on your advice or your expertise in an area.

Ted: As we run through these. We need to let go of our expectations and allow our adult children to discover their own path. And it's very important to understand that a different path doesn't always mean a wrong path.

Jared: Expectations are a really tricky thing. And I think, for us, we parents have to let go of our expectations of what we think ideal or perfect should be. This phase is all about mistakes. We say this a lot in our home. "Hey, it's okay to make mistakes in our home, but we just don't want to repeat them."

It reminds me of a story a friend shared with me a long time ago. It was about ten years ago. His daughter was in our ministry, and she was in a severe crisis. It was like a really hard thing, one of those things where parents want to swoop in and save you from the pain and the hardship that you're going through. And I remember what he said to me, it really stuck with me. He said, "Jared, I'm convinced that God is writing my daughter's story." It hit me kind of hard. He said, "I just know that as a dad, like my tendency is to want to swoop in and save her from the pain of the circumstances that she's in, but I'm convinced that the pain is creating something beautiful." I was like, "Whoa that was deep. I need to write that down." All to say, as we're thinking about how we lean in, it is so good to let our kiddoes struggle through something and struggle through it well.



Ted: This last one is the subtitle of Jim's book. If you don't want to read the book, this subtitle alone is worth the price of the book. *If you want to maintain influence with your adult children, keep your mouth shut and the welcome mat out.* Stephanie Watson gave me a great one after the first gathering. She said, "It should read keep your mouth shut, the welcome mat out, and the refrigerator stocked." Can I get an amen on that. How many of you wanted your house to be the place where your kids and their friends would come and hang out. What a great way to have influence in their lives.

This last one is where we land the plane.

Jared: I think just having a soft place to land is the key here. So, that means thinking about walking a mile in their shoes and just being the kind of person that says, "Hey, this phase is about mistakes, and we are going to walk into this with grace and we are going to be forgiving.

My encouragement to you would be to be a person that wants to invest in young people. I love what you said. It's so hard. I think we were making this joke up on our staff, like "I'm a couple of degrees away from a "get off my lawn" kind of person. You can't influence a generation of young people if you're shouting at them to get off your lawn."

Ted: What are some ways we can support teens, young adults in their journey with their parents, but also in the ministry of what takes place here on Wednesday night at this church.

Jared: Yeah, please pray for us. We are trying to keep the pathway that leads to Jesus, really, really easy around here. And that's not to water down the message, but we want it to be easy for students and young adults to encounter Jesus on Wednesday nights and we need your prayers and support with that.

But also, I think it involves, if you are so inclined, to step into the world... like if you don't know any of the names of any young adults or young people, what a great opportunity. And the ones that you do know, do you pray for them that they would grow deep in their knowledge of their savior and grow deep roots of faith? I want us to be a church that invests heavily in the next generation. We are blessed to have elders and leaders at this church that desire to pour into the next generation. As we do that, I just hope that you would dive in with us, that you would be supportive in prayer, but you would also engage in the young people that are sitting next to you this morning.

Ted: Would you bow your head with me for just a moment. We want to do something a little bit different to end our time together. Before I pray, and I want to pray over a very specific parent and grandparent in here as we close, but you have a child that is not walking with the Lord. An adult child not walking with the Lord, and you want the prayer of your church family around you, I'm just going to invite you as we pray to stand right where you are, here and all the way across campus. If you're watching online, stand at home as a sign of this. But you're like, Ted, I want to be used by God as a voice of influence in the life of my child. And again, knowing all the pain and all the hurt, I look around and I see a lot of parents, a lot of grandparents, and I just don't ever for a minute think God can't use your influence in the life of your child or grandchild.

Father, for all of those standing, there is a story behind each person standing and we can talk about a generation, we can talk about a culture, we can talk about a country, but for those standing, it is a son, it

is a daughter, it is a grandson, it is a granddaughter, and hearts are breaking. I pray that turns into each one standing across this campus into a moment of reflection today and seeking you for ways to coach, ways to cheer, ways to influence as they continue to point their children to the truth, to point their children to the Savior. That they would model the gospel of Jesus in their hearts and in their lives and their homes and in their everyday, ordinary walk around lives.

And for the prodigals whose hearts are cold for you, that the Holy spirit would call them by name and bring them to repentance and faith in Jesus. Thank you for a church that believes in the next generation and seeks to honor all that is taking place through Jared. Bless Jared. Cover Jared... I know the conversations that he has on a weekly basis. Everyone that works in our student and young adults ministry, cover them in the blood of Jesus. Protect them from evil, fulfill your purpose in their lives and in their ministry here. And this church gathers around them. We will support them with resources, with prayer, and say we take this very seriously. Thank you for a church that understands this.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, there may be a prodigal right now who has cut off all communication with Mom and Dad, and they don't know how to honor their parents, they don't know how to esteem parents as highly valuable. I pray that today they begin to seek out that relationship. And I pray for the heart right now, the parent with a toxic child that they just can't have a relationship with or the child with a toxic parent that they can't have a relationship with. We are going to pray and trust you to work through that.

We pray all of this in the authority of the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.