

Position Paper Two

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Introduction

Marriage is so foundational to God's plan for humanity that He performed the first marriage between Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:24.¹ The covenant of marriage, according to John Piper, in fact is important because..."it is God's doing...is for God's glory...and is the display of God."² God also blesses married couples with children and in Genesis 1:28 it says, "God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..." and Psalm 127: 3 says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward." Without a strong, covenantal, godly marriage, however, parenting children, especially teens, is a challenging path. Thus, this paper will provide general guidance (guidelines) for a God-honoring marriage as well as wisdom-filled instruction on parenting teens. Starting with marriage is important because it is the foundation upon which wise parenting exists. Children are a blessing from the Lord, and parents are commanded to train and spiritually guide their offspring in the Lord, as commanded in Proverbs 22:6. However, parenting, especially parenting teens, has many challenges associated with it, including wisely guiding, disciplining, teaching, and advising, which this paper will address. Also, there might exist other challenges such as autism, academic struggles, or peer pressure, which additionally will be discussed as they pertain to parenting children in a godly manner. Fathers especially are told to bring their children up..."in the admonition and instruction of the Lord," as Ephesians 6:4 commands. Thus, fathers will be encouraged with tips and ideas on how to be involved with their children – how to pray for, support, and encourage the children God has placed in their lives. Godly guidance on marriage and parenting is more important now more than ever because evil lurks around every corner to

¹ All Biblical references taken from the ESV Version unless otherwise stated.

² John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 21.

weaken the family unit which God has created to fill His creation. May we endeavor to honor God in our words, actions, decisions, and intentions in both marriage and parenting, serving (Deuteronomy 10:12) and seeking Him first daily, always. (Matthew 6:33, Psalm 34:4)

General Guidance for Marriage

This paper will outline five general guidelines for marriage from which both new and longer-married couples may benefit. It's never too late to have a God-honoring marriage. The five guidelines discussed will be: personally, put God first in your marriage; don't let idleness rob your marriage; encourage each other; forgive as God has forgiven you; and spend time together in His Word and prayer, delighting in each other, daily.

“...When I have learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now...” CS Lewis.³ This indeed is the first guideline, out of the five this paper will highlight, for a godly, wise marriage. Each spouse personally must put God first – read the Word daily, pray, walk, meditate on and memorize, God's spirit-filled Word. Jesus tells us in Matthew 4:4, “Man does not live on bread alone but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God,” and in Matthew 22:37-38, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” People are created to honor, love, and respect God in all they do, and this means personally prioritizing God first thing every day. “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). “If we are to bear fruit, including that of a God-honoring marriage, we must cling to Christ with a sense of humble dependence on him.”⁴

³ “Live at the Well,” liveathewell.org. Accessed 3/26/2026. <https://www.liveathewell.org/quotes-from-c-s-lewis.html>

⁴ Jim Newheiser, “Six Keys to Protecting and Strengthening Marriages.” *Unio Cum Christo* 9 (1) (2023): 102. [Six Keys to Protecting and Strengthening Marriages - EBSCO.](#)

For each spouse, they must submit their desires first to God – anger, angst, sadness, and forgiveness, to name many emotions one feels in marriage towards the other person. One's strength must be derived from God, not the other person!

The next guideline for marriage is avoiding idleness or laziness. Often, marriage becomes akin to an auto-driving car. Work, appointments, youngsters at home, and church obligations all take over, and the married couple starts entering an autopilot phase as each day rolls into another. In "Six Keys to Protecting and Strengthening Marriages," Jim Newheiser compares an idle marriage to the sluggard's field in Proverbs 24:30-34. He says, "The owner of the ruined field did not set out to destroy his property. He just did nothing and allowed the second law of thermodynamics to take over. Little by little, his formerly beautiful field was overgrown. Many marriages resemble the sluggard's field."⁵ To keep the marriage vibrant and churning, the couple needs to have date night, spend time together in prayer, have a "debrief" time at the end of each day, and be each other's closest confidant and friend.

The third guideline for marriage is to encourage or affirm each other. Not once a week or month but daily. Hebrews 3:13 says, "*But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*" However, often, as time goes on in a marriage, criticism seems to rear its ugly head. To defeat this, married couples should daily share something (or more) that they appreciate about the other person. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, "*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*"

⁵ Jim Newheiser, "Six Keys to Protecting and Strengthening Marriages." *Unio Cum Christo* 9 (1): 103. [Six Keys to Protecting and Strengthening Marriages - EBSCO.](#)

The fourth guideline this paper will address is forgiveness because without forgiveness and grace in marriage, tall walls will gather around each spouse. Instead of living in the Genesis Garden of Perfection, “couples endure seasons of winter and drought. We sin against and hurt one another. We are selfish and pursue our own interests. We are not easy to live with.”⁶ One small word said in anger or years of betrayal exist within marriages, and layers of defensiveness build up over time. Forgiveness is hard. There must be a better way, and there is, of experiencing reconciliation between spouses. The Bible instructs believers not to let the sun go down on anger (Ephesians 4:26-27) because letting just one foothold of the devil in brings destruction. Conflict can grow over time if not addressed promptly. Ken Sande, in his book, “The Peacemaker,”⁷ highlights points, that are important for forgiveness: glorify God first; confess to God and seek His guidance on the situation because putting the issue at God’s feet first is the best start to forgiving the other person. Next, Jesus says in Matthew 7: 3-5 to get the log out of one’s own eye first before trying to accuse the other person. In marriage, it’s honoring to God to obey His Words – before accusing one’s spouse, survey your own heart first and perhaps approach the other person and apologize first. Next, gently restore the other person (Galatians 6:1-2). And finally, go and be reconciled to one’s spouse, which includes forgiving them (Ephesians 4:31-32)⁸ Forgiving each other is not easy, but this is why we must give our anger, desires, and pains to God, who binds up and heals all wounds (Psalm 147: 3), and restores the soul (Psalm 23: 3), a balm each person needs in marriage to forgive the other person for eventual restoration of the marriage union.

⁶ Aaron Sironi, "Song of Songs: A Very Good Marriage." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 37 (1): 56. [Song of Songs: A Very Good Marriage. - EBSCO.](#)

⁷ Jim Newheiser, "Six Keys to Protecting and Strengthening Marriages." *Unio Cum Christo* 9 (1): 103. [EBSCO-FullText-03_26_2026 \(1\).pdf.](#)

⁸ Newheiser, "Six Keys to Protecting," 103.

The final marriage guideline entails spending time together in God's Word with prayer and delighting in each other daily. Aaron Sironi in, "Song of Songs: A Very Good Marriage," says, "it's supremely important that counselors and couples alike embrace God's wisdom for love and marriage from the Song (of Solomon). It will determine how we help couples who are struggling and serve as a roadmap as we cultivate renewed unity, passion, and commitment in marriage...He says the following are important in marriage: "delight and praise (rejoicing in one another), mutual commitment to each other, and building a life-long, intimate relationship."⁹ Couples should appreciate, delight in, and praise each other; they should encourage and appreciate the unique qualities of the other person. Sironi goes on to say, "In marriage, praise should be spoken frequently, and delighting in one another should be the highest priority."¹⁰

General Guidance for Parents of Teens

With some marriage guidelines presented, this paper now moves to how parents might guide teens. The adolescent years are ones of elation or extreme challenges. Today's teen (even Christians) faces a myriad of issues: depression, anxiety, social media bullying, eating disorders, and doubts about faith, just to name a few. And, hopefully, by the pre-adolescent years the groundwork has been laid that the child must respect their parents; boundaries and expectations of what behavior is expected are taught; willful (or type of) defiance has been addressed; confrontation has been followed by teaching with love; love has guided the foundational training before the adolescence years; and the child understands¹¹ Teenagers want to be taken seriously

⁹ Aaron Sironi, "Song of Songs: A Very Good Marriage." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 37 (1): 57. EBSCOhost. [Song of Songs: A Very Good Marriage. - EBSCO.](#)

¹⁰ Sironi, "Song of Songs," 59.

¹¹ Dr. James Dobson, *Parenting Connection* (Carol Springs, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978, 2004), 265-274, 329.

and respected, especially with the various emotional and physical changes occurring. Thus, the following guidelines for parents of teens will be discussed: provide your teenager with immovable faith and a relationship with Jesus Christ; know your teenager; respect and encourage them; and trusting God, try and grant them the independence they need to grow and thrive into a mature person.

“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12. As parents, we should be praying for and encouraging our teens to follow God daily, be in His Word, and then be an example to others in how they speak, listen, love, and demonstrate purity. Prayer time together as a family is also important in helping one’s teen continue to follow God.

Next, parents should know their teenagers. This guideline entails spending time with them, knowing who their friends are, knowing their schedules each day, connecting with them through texting or phone calls, and making sure to encourage them in their goals and aspirations. How can you know your teenager? By talking with them. Dr. James Dobson outlines some ideas of communicating with teenagers- “if rebellious, invite them out to talk and discuss ground rules and expectations; read the Bible together, gaining God’s valuable wisdom in communication and loving each other; and parents must emphasize that they love their teenagers by encouraging a shared goal of working together instead of fighting.”¹²

Third, parents need to respect and encourage their adolescent children. The Bible says, *“Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.”* Colossians 3:21. This

¹² Dr. James Dobson, *Parenting Connection* (Carol Springs, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978, 2004), 386-390.

means no constant criticism or harsh or anger-filled words because all of this leads to emotionally distant, shame-filled teenagers that will seek to run away instead of towards their parents when they really need help. During the early teen years, adolescents start feeling inferior because they are trying to discover their group of friends or even understand who they are. What a wonderful opportunity to bring teenagers up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), providing an environment of love, connection, and security. Dr. Dobson says, "If you can communicate kindness to your oppressed and harassed teenagers, even to those who are sullen and difficult, then many of the usual disciplinary problems of adolescence can be circumvented."¹³ It's about treating teenagers (as we should all people) with kindness and respect. Also, don't forget encouragement - *"Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. "Proverbs 16:24 and Ephesians 4:29, "Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs."* These years for teenagers are full of unknowns of how to act, what to say, or who to be. May parents encourage their children to rely on He who knows all that lies ahead- and directing them on the right and true path and as Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "God does not give us everything we want, but He does fulfill His promises, leading us along the best and straightest path to Himself."¹⁴

The final guideline (and there are many) for parents of teens is to "hold on with an open hand."¹⁵ The goal of parenting is, "to raise children who were once totally dependent on us to be

¹³ Dr. James Dobson, *Parenting Collection* (Carol Springs, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978, 2004), 392.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Berry, "29 Powerful Christian Quotes to Inspire you on Good Days and Bad," July 21, 2022, "Womans' Day," <https://www.womansday.com/life/g31373092/christian-inspirational-quotes/>

¹⁵ Dobson, *Parenting Collection*, 395.

independent, mature people who...are able to stand on their own two feet.”¹⁶ These years between about 15-19 are years when the teenager wants to stretch, spread their wings, and test the parent's words over them. Not all teens are like this, but many are. It is not wise as parents to continue to make all decisions during this timeframe. This is a time to encourage independent thought (while respecting authority). Such a delicate balance! And yet, God created teenagers and knows all that they need. *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you... “Jeremiah 1:5 and” For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb Psalm 139:13.* Parents need to pray for their children, encourage them to continually follow God, and trust that He who knows their teenagers will be ever leading them to His plans.

Age-Appropriate Discipline and Teaching for Teenagers With Behavior Problems

In this section, age-appropriate discipline and teaching teenagers with behavioral problems will be covered. Discipline and teaching guidance will include: identifying the source of the behavior; mentoring discipleship; parental support with boundaries; and identifying idols will be addressed.

Today’s teen cavorts in a sea of peer pressure and approval. Looking at statistics, “There are currently unprecedented rates of reported anxiety and depression in adolescents. While reports of depression have been on the rise since the early 2000s, it now has become the fourth leading cause of illness globally among adolescents aged 15–19... Suicide rates in the United States have increased 47.5% since 2000, making it the second leading cause of death in U.S. adolescents prior to 2020 and the leading cause of death in U.S. adolescents during and after the

¹⁶ Andrae J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd Ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2004, 2010), 151.

COVID-19 pandemic.”¹⁷ Add to this social media pressure, and the teen finds their approval in/from the secular world, sadly. Biblical counseling seeks for the teen to find their source in Christ. Secular friends and counseling cannot help the teenager so desperately seeking answers. Teenagers need faith-integrated counseling/teaching to address behavior issues because the person God created them to be are mind, body, and spirit – faith-integrated counseling addresses healing from the inside out.

Mentoring discipleship looks like this: a spiritually wise person walks with the teen as they are going through tough, behavioral issues like disobeying parents, making bad decisions, or being suspended from school. This mentor meets the teen weekly for accountability, reading the Word, and guiding the teen to the right path.

The third guideline is for the parents to lend support, providing boundaries. Teens are too old for spanking, so different tools are needed. “Lost privileges, financial deprivation, and related forms of non-physical retribution are some ideas.”¹⁸ Incentives such as using the family car or an allowance is another idea. Teens are seeking independence while wishing to have control over their choices.

The fourth guideline looks at idols. This is the “heart” of where behavior originates for the teenager. Spending time talking about heart idols such as fear, envy, food, peer pressure, or social media status (to name a few) and replacing with what God’s Word says about them will help heal the idolatrous heart.

¹⁷ K Burgess,” The Decline in Adolescents’ Mental Health with the Rise of Social Media: A Narrative Review.” *Creative Nursing*. 2025;31(2):119. doi:[10.1177/10784535251328925](https://doi.org/10.1177/10784535251328925).

¹⁸ Dr. James Dobson, Parenting Collection (Carol Spring, IL: Tyndal House Publishers, 1978, 2004), 54.

Guidance for Parents Dealing with a Child with Academic Problems and Needing Referrals for ADHD, Autism, or Tutoring

If teens are having academic or behavioral issues in school, it's usually been going on for a long time by the time parents find out. The key is to address it, work with the teen, and find tools to set down rules and expectations. If there are academic problems, there might be a legitimate reason they are floundering and if a tutor is needed, this can be set up. Or the parents can tutor the child. (an option might be to homeschool the student, ensuring the one-on-one, daily guidance, which is super important for tracking academic progress). It is suggested that the following guidelines be implemented by parents with teens who are willfully neglecting academics or demonstrating behavioral issues: setting down rules and expectations; keeping the student active in sports- (Lower levels of engagement in both sports and nonsupport activities were associated with diagnoses of ADHD (38.4%) and LDs (50.5%) compared with peers without disabilities (53.8%),¹⁹ assigning jobs and responsibilities at home, and ensuring decisive reprimand (privileges revoked) if rules are disobeyed.²⁰ The parent should follow this up by saying that rules are imposed because it is out of love that such tactics are being used. Love and consistent discipline are key!

When referring for ADHD or Autism-suspected issues, if they are suspected, it is important to seek trained counselors in this area. First, the parent should consult with a school counselor or local representative and query local Autism and/or ADHD specialists in the area. Most likely, there will be a follow-on of behavioral, speech, educational, and family referrals, if

¹⁹ Ng, Kwok, William Pickett, Valerie Michaelson, and John Freeman. 2019. "Activity Involvement and Spiritual Health in Children with ADHD and Learning Disabilities." *Journal of Disability & Religion* 23 (1): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2018.1467294>.

²⁰ Dr. James Dobson, Parenting Collection (Carol Spring, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, 1978, 2004), 291.

necessary. It's really a strong collaboration between parents, teachers, medical specialists and autism agencies, which provide direct autism care to families because, "Providing comprehensive care and education services to children and adolescents with autism is a complex process. Typically, the parent is working in collaboration with the educational system, the medical system, and a specialist in neurodevelopment (developmental pediatrician, neurologist, child psychiatrist, or psychologist)."²¹

The final part of this paper focuses on why it's so important that fathers are involved in their teenage lives. Fathers play a key role in adolescent's lives in behavioral, psychological, functional, and relational capacities. According to an article published in "Attachment and Human Development," "Fathers play a critical yet underappreciated role in adolescent development...In adolescence, fathers' presence in their teens' lives is associated with reduced risk for behavioral problems and delinquency, and with positive social and relational functioning in adulthood...Moreover, some research suggests that high-quality father-adolescent relationships may be even more important than mother-adolescent relationships for teens' social competence...and reduced depressive symptoms."²² Fathers are also role models in their teens' lives. Fathers are the predominant male influence in a child's life, from toddlerhood to adolescence. In fact, "between 1960 and 1990—the percentage of children living apart from their

²¹ Brittan Dunn, Sue Constable, Trish Martins, and Karen Cammuso. 2016. "Educating Children with Autism: Collaboration between Parents, Teachers, and Medical Specialists." *Brown University Child & Adolescent Behavior Letter* 32 (7): 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cbl.30135>.

²² Jessica A. Stern, Natasha A. Bailey, Meghan A. Costello, Olivia A. Hazelwood, and Joseph P. Allen. 2024. "Fathers' Contributions to Attachment in Adolescence and Adulthood: The Moderating Role of Race, Gender, Income, and Residential Status." *Attachment & Human Development* 26 (4): 325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2024.2366391>.

biological fathers increased dramatically from 17 to 36 percent. Along with this statistic, came a sharp increase in poverty, crime, abortion, teen pregnancy, high school dropouts, teenage suicide, child abuse, .and child molestation.²³ Absent fathers also mean children have a warped view of God - "Fatherlessness has helped usher in the pervasive popularity of a feminist hermeneutic in reading God's word. Those precious children who have been on the receiving end of the pain of fatherlessness...often have a negative outlook toward the God who calls himself "Father."²⁴ As shown, fathers play a huge role in their adolescents' lives of being an encourager, provider, gentle and in-tune role-model for their sons and daughters and providing loving discipline to keep their children out of crime and violence. Some tips for fathers' involvement in their children's lives include: spend time daily reading God's Word together, encourage your teenage son or daughter to seek God's guidance for a fulfilling vocation that honors Him, be present in their sports activities (cheering them on), spend time knowing what they are studying in classes, and be a good role model as a husband to their mom, showing them how to treat her with respect and love.

Conclusion

This paper has showcased general guidance for marriage, parental care with teenagers, addressing adolescent behavioral and academic issues, referring for ADHD or Autism care, and the importance of fathers in teenagers' lives. As a biblical counselor, all guidance should be under the authority of Scripture - *2 Timothy 3:16-17, which states that all Scripture is "God-breathed" and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.* The

²³ Gregory Lamb, "Fatherlessness: Implications for God's Word, Church, and World." *Christian Education Journal* 14 (1): 99-108. [FATHERLESSNESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR GOD'S WORD, CHURCH, AND WORLD - EBSCO](#) EBSCOhost.

²⁴ Lamb, "Fatherlessness: Implications for God's Word, Church, and World," 103.

integration of Scripture and sometimes, techniques like Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) to memorize Scripture and replace unwanted thoughts with God's Word, is also useful, both in marriage and for teenagers. Guidance for married couples and teenagers should always first, be submitted to God's Word. Job 22:21-25 says, "Agree with God and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. Receive instruction from His mouth and lay up His words in your heart" ...put all bad things aside, all temptations of the world and the flesh (my translation) ..." then the Almighty will be your gold and precious silver."

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²⁵Freeman, Marcia. *What Is Science?* Vero Beach, FL: Rourke Educational Media, 2004. EBSCOhost.

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