

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

CHRISTIAN YOUTH AND CHALLENGES

[AN ARTICLE PARENTS TO READ]

BY BREIDI CAPARATTA

One of the most challenging times in the life of a Christian child is the preteen and teenage years. From around the age of ten until about eighteen or even a little older, Christian children are constantly challenged by their peers. Pressure to go against their faith, their parents and their beliefs are constant struggles Christian youth often have to face. As Christian parents, this is the time for us to step up to the plate and show our children all the love and support we can offer. This is also the time for us to have heart to heart conversations and let our children know some of the mistakes we have made so they understand no one is perfect. We can provide our youth with the tools needed to stand strong in their faith so they don't go against God or their personal belief systems.

The peer pressures Christian children may encounter range from other children questioning their faith, pressures to engage in premarital sexual activities, doing drugs, stealing and many more. Christian youth may also have to deal with ridicule due to their beliefs. This crucial time is one in which the biological family and the church family can make a difference. By encouraging our Christian youth to ask questions about concerns and hold fast to their faith, we as parents are providing them with an even stronger foundation. All foundations are susceptible to becoming cracked, but the more reinforcements there are, the less likely this will happen. Encouraging children to branch out and seek advice through members of the church community will only provide their foundation with more armor. Other Christian church members may be able to offer advice and suggestions from an insight of love that will be more helpful to the child.

Encourage Christian children to become part of an independent bible study including children of like ages may also be a way to help them make it through these challenging years. Constantly staying in and around God's word is an excellent way to avoid pitfalls. Daily Bible devotionals can also provide children with positive reinforcements in dealing with peer

pressures. God has a way of putting needed Bible verses in places where they can do the most good. Children may find Bible verses they need to hear in a daily devotional. This is just another way to arm our Christian children with the necessary tools needed to get through another day with less struggle.

We can also offer parental support for our Christian youth when they share Christ with their non Christian friends. This can be a time of great joy or frustration depending on how the friends accept the testimony. By providing our youth with a shoulder to lean on, open arms for a warm embrace or simply an extra resource to come to when a question arises they may not know the answer to, we show our support. Support is a crucial element in providing the tools necessary for leading a Christian life.

Though our Christian youth may have challenging times, by being a Christian adult role model they can look up to, we can prepare them and lead them on the their way to be a Christian adult they can be proud of.

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