

Like Minded Musings.com Presents:

30 DAYS OF TWEEN PARENTING *Encouragement*

30 Christian Bloggers, Moms + Ministries
Share Help for Parenting
Your Tweens Today!

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Disclaimers

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Thank you for your time!

Lee Felix



Like Minded
MUSINGS

A Dialogue of an Imperfect Faith, Family and Homeschool

Introduction

Welcome!

Are you a parent of a child between 8-12 years old?

If that's a yes, then you likely already know *the pre-teens can be tough to navigate alone!*

Parenting tweens today can be tricky to maneuver, **but it's crucial we fight the battle for their hearts!**

Research shows that these are *critical years in regards to their future.*

These years before the age of 13 can leave a lasting impact on their faith and their life as an adult.

But what can we do? How do we get started? How do we know if we are headed in the right direction?

We often find ourselves **lacking resources or direction in Parenting Tweens today.** Much of the help out there seems just a bit out of reach - *more geared towards the teen years.*

Well, I am beyond excited to share with you some support!

30 Christian Bloggers, Moms and Ministries Share Their Favorite Advice, Tips and Encouragement for Parenting Tweens Today!

We have some amazing like-minded people that came together for this book. They can't wait to share a balance of learned **wisdom and personal experience to help encourage and equip you in your journey!**

Thanks for inviting us into your parenting walk. I'm praying that God uses this resource to meet you right where you are at!

Talk to you soon,

Lee

A Special Thank You to all of the amazing contributors and additional sponsors of this Tween Parenting Event turned ebook!



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3 Things About Eve
A Devotional Study



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Finding Hope and Joy in Christ
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Memory Making Mommy



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Coray Tales



The Musings of Mum

LEARNING, LOVING, LIVING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

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About The Author

Lee Felix of [Like Minded Musings](#)



Lee Felix
Like Minded Musings

Hi there! I'm so glad you're here!

A few years ago God ignited a passion deep in my heart. One to learn and grow in *how to parent our children's hearts*. I began to read and study all that I could. I quickly learned the importance of these formative years we call the 'twens'. I also discovered that the 8-12-year-old age group is often underreached.

As a Mom of 5 kiddos this hit home hard.

Now that I have entered my own 'tween' journey with 3 of my 5 children, I have seen first hand why this tender age is so critical. And I believe it's a message that needs to be shared as we raise up this next generation.

My prayer is to help others connect with parents and ministries around the world. My heart is to encourage and build them up and provide resources and tools in parenting tweens today!

God has given us a great responsibility to cultivate these hearts for His glory. The amazing thing is, His grace also offers us many sweet blessings along with it!

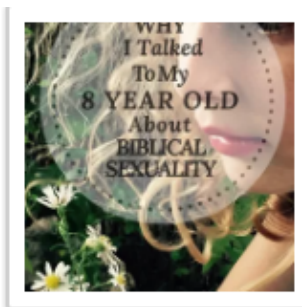
I am so thankful that you are here to read all of the wisdom and experience shared during this Tween Parenting Encouragement Blog Party. These contributors offer us invaluable insight into how to parent tweens today!

I would love to spend some more time getting to know you! Come on over to [Like Minded Musings](#) and check out these other [Tween Resources](#) we have below!

Talk to you soon!

Lee

O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life.
Lamentations 3:56



The Best Tween Parenting Advice I've Received



Lee Felix
Like Minded Musings

by Lee Felix from [Like Minded Musings](#)

This post first appeared on [Like Minded Musings](#).

Can I be real with you?

Parenting tweens is hard. And this is before we even hit the teens!

Too often I find myself looking for it...

A quick fix.

One piece of advice or a tip that will change everything.

- How to stop the complaining right now.
- Squash the sibling battles - immediately.
- Please give me "trick" to bring my kiddos to perfect obedience (Yes, the first time I ask).

Friend, I want you to know something. If you are looking for a solution to a tween parenting struggle- that is a good thing, and **I'm so glad you're here!**

But as you've likely experienced in this parenting journey - **a temporary solution is often no solution at all.**

We are so excited to share tips, advice and encouragement with you over this next month. But we also know that there is no such thing as a quick fix when it comes to parenting tweens.

Parenting the heart is for the long haul. It's many intentional steps, repeated over time.

That is how we encourage our children to grow fruit.

Sounds exhausting? Already tired? I know friend, but hang in there... **as we have a God who is GREATER!**

That is why we are coming together for this book - to draw near to Him and build each other up!

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:1

So you may be asking yourself - if we've taken the quick fix out of parenting our tweens, what should our focus be?

What is the best thing we can do to navigate the tweens in a way that honors God?

We need to pay attention to our starting point.

Before teaching, correcting, training and caring for our children let's ask.

Are we being intentional in [caring for our relationship with God?](#)

Believe me, I don't say this to bring on the guilt or because I have this nailed down - **I don't!**

I am simply sharing from my experience.

When I am spiritually struggling, the difference in my parenting is night and day. Any good advice, tips or direction I receive, quickly falls to the ground.

As our kids grow, this doesn't seem to change.

I have seen evidence of this truth clearly. **Both in the hills and the valley's of parenting so far.**

In navigating parenting and life, I am nothing without Him!

He will strengthen us.

He will give us wisdom.

He will give us patience.

He will guide us.

He will protect our children.

As much as we want God's best for our kids, He does too. He also loves US immensely and *He wants His best for us in parenting our tweens and beyond!*

We can't compromise our starting point in tween parenting. We must take intentional steps in His direction daily.

So before we explore the incredible wisdom and encouragement these ladies have to offer this month (and I do mean incredible - seriously, you will be blessed !)

Let's take a step back and prepare our hearts to hear it.

Can we commit to digging deeper? **Go deeper in our relationship with the Lord FIRST**, then step out to parent our tweens. Let's pay attention daily, to our starting point.

YOUR God and YOU!

Can I pray for you?

Lord thank you for bringing this event together! Thank you that *you truly give us all*

that we need in parenting these tweens even when it's hard to see.

I pray you draw these parents hearts towards you. Would you speak clearly to them? Please give them a fresh view of their relationship with their tweens - *your* view.

Would you help them to be willing to fight to keep their relationship with you as their starting point? Please help them to see what that looks like in their individual lives. Guide them, lead them and protect them I pray. Amen.

Alright parents, here we go! Are you ready?

Let's Take Action!

First, come over to the [Like Minded Musings FREEBIES Hub](#) and grab your worksheet!



1. When you hear that our starting point in parenting should be OUR relationship with God, what comes to mind? Prov 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence; For out of it spring the issues of life.

2. Do you feel you have steps in place to encourage that continual re-focus on Him?

If no, write down ONE (just one) step that you will commit to that will direct you towards God and putting Him first.

If yes, re-evaluate. Is there anything that isn't working or that you could do differently that will direct you towards God and putting Him first?

3. What is your current heart struggle or sin battle when it comes to parenting your tween? What verse can you find that speaks directly into that? [More? Handling Anger. Click to read more.](#)

4. Let's pray (again and continually.) And ask God for help in this:

Father, thank you that we can bring all things to you as you know of our struggles yesterday, today and tomorrow. Please help weed out the roots of this battle I have in my heart. Please help me submit it to you. Help me to see your way to overcome this so that I can focus on parenting with your heart. Thank you for your forgiveness and thank you for your love. Amen!

5. Lastly, what single issue in your child (or in each child) would you like to focus on and pray for each day this week? Let's break it down to a one-thing-focus. Write it down. Find a verse that speaks to that issue.

Pray each day over it. Ask God to show you ways to speak directly into that area this week. Share at the end of the week. What has God shown about it? What worked and what didn't? Keep praying and stepping forward.

Then take some of these **first steps** to help you get the most out of this ebook! **Sign up below** to receive the posts daily.

1. [Join](#) our private Facebook group where we will dig in more.
2. [Grab your copy](#) of this reflection worksheet from the FREEBIES HUB to walk

1. you thru what your heard today.
2. **Please Share, Share, Share!** Invite others to sign up for the ebook, the Facebook group and more! I pray that God uses these resources to reach tween parents around the world!

3 Ways to be the Constant in Tween Parenting

by Amy Michaels of [Thrive Homeschooling](#)



Amy Michaels
Thrive Homeschooling

This post first appeared on [Like Minded Musings](#).

Tween Parenting is a something else, isn't it?

I knew that raising teenagers would be different than raising little kids, but that is exactly what tween parenting is – a transition. It is a transition for us parents, but it is a bigger transition for the kids.

As parents, we have been through this transition ourselves when we were tweens. We already know what is on the other side. For our tween kids, they are just starting to experience that their world is shifting little kids to becoming a young adult.

When we are parenting tweens, we can see how some days they want to be

little. They will still crawl in our laps, hold our hands, and ask us to hang out with them. Then, there are other days, they want to do *real* things that adults do – like cook a meal from scratch, be trusted to babysit, call their friends, or just have some alone time.

The Constant in Tween Parenting is....

During this time of transition, **the constant in tween parenting is the change itself**. If we as parents struggle with that change, imagine how much our tweens are struggling.

The change is sometimes hard for tweens to understand. They start to notice their bodies changing which often makes them self-conscious. They are losing interest in hobbies or play that used to delight them.

We also start to expect more out of our tweens. They can handle more responsibility, more focus, more awareness of what is around them. Naturally, we start to raise our expectations of their capabilities.

Now, we know we can't stop the change from happening, and we wouldn't want to. It is all part of the process.

What can be a more powerful than change?

However, with all of these changes in our tween, they need someone to be the constant in their lives. Someone they know has their best interest at heart. Someone who loves them enough to be present and invest what it takes to support them.

Who is that someone? **That someone is you!**

I want to share **3 essential things** we can do in tween parenting that allows you to **be the constant in their lives**.

1. Validate their feelings.

No matter what your tween is feeling, it is essential that they feel heard. You don't have to agree with them. You don't have to understand, and you certainly don't have to like how they are feeling.

However, you can be the constant in their lives to say, "I hear you. How you feel is important to me."

Now, what if they are having a meltdown and yelling down the hallway in frustration? You can still say, "I hear you. I know you are upset. I love you enough to not argue with you. We can talk about this when you have had time to calm down."

Sometimes, kids need time to process how they feel because they don't understand it themselves. By validating that you hear them, you are reaching their heart. When you show you care – even if you don't agree – your tweens' defenses calm down so they can focus on dealing with their own emotions.

No matter what their perception is, it is their reality. By consistently validating their feelings, we prove that constant security they crave when so many things are changing.

2. Show respect as if they were an adult.

The days may be long, but the years are short. Your tween will be a young adult very soon. We can role model for our tween how to respect each other's feelings with our example.

It is so much easier to just say, "If you don't clean your room, you can't have any screens today." Tweens hear the threat, and they comply to get the reward.

Yes, that is how real life works. Adults comply to go to work because we want the reward of a paycheck.

However, if you are respected by your boss, you will do the work with a better attitude. You and your co-workers are a lot more likely to be a team player if your boss treats you with respect.

Let's say your boss is rude, demanding, and threatens to take away certain privileges you like (Casual wear Fridays, for example). How is your attitude then? Are you going to want to pitch in for the sake of the team?

Nope. Some of us (*totally guilty*) might even think of ways to rebel just try to demand some respect.

Our tweens will react the same way. As little kids, they were happy to comply because they needed our guidance so much. However, with tween parenting, it is vital that we show respect.

Showing respect to your tween creates harmony in your home. When tweens feel respected, they are less rebellious and want to pitch in for the team. This also role models how adults can show respect in marriages, friendships, and in their careers.

3. **Show your weaknesses.**

Ok, I know this is a tough one, but hang with me for a moment. We, adults, are really good at hiding our flaws. We avoid situations where we struggle. Adult life can look pretty easy from the eyes of a tween.

When your tween starts to struggle, please validate them and let them know that you have struggles, too. Now, of course, I am not saying to dump your family's dirty laundry on your tween! What I am saying is to let them know that you aren't perfect. Empathize that you struggle sometimes as well and that you really do understand what they are feeling.

This is a great time for you to share stories of how you tried something scary, stood up to a bully, or made a mistake. Tell them how you overcame it. Maybe it still bothers you, and you have to pray for patience when it comes up again.

How about we put all of the Validate-Respect-Show Strategy together?

For example, let's say our tween has hurt feelings over a friend's rude behavior.

We can listen. Just let them talk. Keep **validating that you hear how they are feeling**. That you understand they are upset.

Next, **show them respect**. Let them know that you respect they have to choose how to deal with this. Offer to give them suggestions, but tell them you respect it is their choice of what to do next. You might even need to respect that they need some time to think about the options.

Then, **show them your weakness**. Tell them you have struggled with someone (maybe a friend) being unkind. Offer to share how you dealt with it.

Finally, **invite them to pray with you.** Part of showing my weakness is that I pray aloud for guidance, strength, and wisdom when I struggle. I want my tweens to observe that I turn to God to listen, to understand, and to guide me when I struggle.

Tween parenting is a time of change, but **you can be the loving constant in their lives** – very similar to how God is our constant in our lives as well. **After all, he is the ultimate parenting role model, right?**

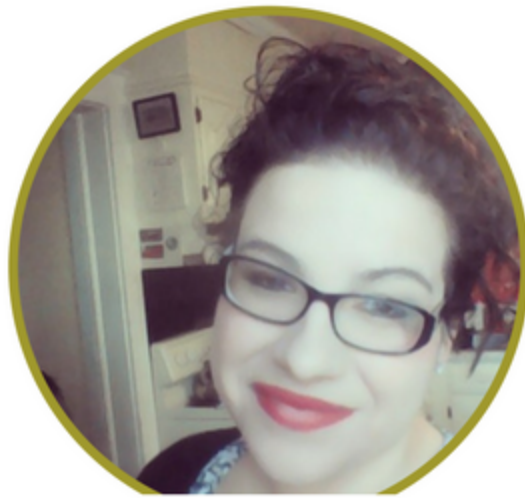
What do you think of the Validate-Respect-Show strategy for tween parenting?
We would love to hear your thoughts!

You can get more helpful tips, tools and resources from Amy Michaels over at [Thrive Homeschooling](#) by clicking the link below! Don't hesitate to sign up to have them delivered to you by email!

THRIVE
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Parenting With Purpose: Developing An Action Plan For The Tween Years And Beyond

by Krystal McFalls of [Memory Making Mommy](#)



Krystal McFalls
Memory Making Mommy

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

I'll never forget the first time they laid her in my arms. She was 9lbs 11oz of pure amazing, and I would move heaven and earth to make her happy!

Everyone told me the years are short but the days are long. I never really believed them.

Until this past year when someone reminded me my sweet angel's birthday candles would be entering the double digits.

Almost ten years have come and gone.

"Ohhh, that's what they meant.... I get it now."

Now, my days are full of answering questions I don't know if I am prepared to answer, arguing about schoolwork, handling friendship drama, lecturing about the importance of not being "boy crazy" and being humbled (and offended) by the baby that is now on the brink of young adulthood and can break me down with an eye roll and a snappy response.

Navigating A New Season: Take Action

To be completely honest, most days I feel totally ill-equipped. The only way I am going to come out on top is with the Lord in charge! My toolbox for this new season is:

1. Prayer and reading my bible.
2. Goal backward
3. Talk about the hard stuff.
4. Seek Titus 2 women that have adult children I admire.
5. READ READ READ

Take good counsel and accept correction— that's the way to live wisely and well. Proverbs 19:20

Pray

The foundation of everything I do is prayer and digging into God's word! Prayer is our very first and most important tool in tween parenting.

- **Pay for your child:** Pray specifically and daily for your tweens needs. When I am at a loss for behavior problems, I ask for the Holy Spirit to work within my child and help convict her in the struggle that she is having.
- **Pray for yourself:** Ask the Lord to guide you in the areas you fail and help you to be the parent that this child needs.
- **Pray WITH your child:** I want to teach my children that prayer is the first line

- of defense in ANYTHING they do. Seek the Lord with you children in the small and the big things. He wants to know our heart, even in the tiniest matters!
- **Pray with your spouse:** I struggle in this area, I usually am a "private prayer warrior, " but I want to add this to my toolbox. I want to pray more with my husband for our children.

Read Your Bible: You will only be transformed if you are renewing your mind daily and feasting on the word of God.

Teach your children through your daily habits the importance of seeking Him daily. Letting them see you read your Bible is much more powerful than telling them to read the Bible.

Goal Backward

Look ahead to when your sweet girl is 18, what do I want 18 to look like? What character qualities, morals, and values do I want her to embody? Break this down into goals and start NOW. Thriving amazing children does not just happen by chance. Behind every amazing teenager and adult was a mom that put in tireless hours of mentoring, correcting, encouraging and quality time.

Talk about the hard stuff

Face the hard stuff intentionally and with purpose!

I was a good Christian girl that fell prey to a suddenly broken home very young and was left to raise myself at age 15 with far too much freedom.

I wish my parents would have laid down the foundation and the law that would have saved me all the heartache of my mistakes made. I would rather have a child that is angry and annoyed with me at a young age than a new bride that is heartbroken because she gave all she had to someone that was not her husband and has deep regret.

You must decide EARLY what the plan of action is in YOUR family. Every family is different!

Talk with your husband and decide

- What are your rules on dress?
- [Purity and the sex talk?](#)
- Dating?

The Brick Wall

Get on the same page, set guidelines and ages you are going to address them. Stand as a united front with clear rules.

My daughter has a nickname for my husband "**The Brick Wall**," when it comes to clothing, being boy crazy and all the questions that come with being a tween. He is a firm but loving "force to be reckoned with."

She can give him a sweet smile, but she is not going to sway him because he knows what's best!

Why?

Because we have been talking about what we want to be firm on since she was a toddler!

Be a united front, have the hard convo as a couple early. Stick to your guns.

Seek Titus 2 Women

A God-Filled Life

Your job is to speak out on the things that make for solid doctrine. Guide older men into lives of temperance, dignity, and wisdom, into healthy faith, love, and endurance. Guide older women into lives of reverence, so they end up as neither gossips nor drunks, but models of goodness. By looking at them, the younger women will know how to love their husbands and children, be virtuous and pure, keep a good house, be good wives. We don't want anyone looking down on God's Message because of their behavior. Also, guide the young men to live disciplined lives. Titus 2:3-6

Find a few core WISE women. The key is wise!

There are some women that you can just FEEL Jesus radiating through their words and demeanor. These are the women I want to follow. I have picked three wise women that I want to emulate. I feel that they will not lead me astray on this parenting journey but only enrich it and make me a better mother, wife, and mentor to other mamas!

These women are:

1. [Bonni Greiner](#)
2. [Sally Clarkson](#)
3. [Lisa Jacobson](#)

Find your core wise women and pick their brains, find out what made them who they are today and ask them to help you grow into a wise woman!

Read Read Read

Books transform your mind! A good book can give me incite that can change me for a lifetime. As my mom would say "garbage in garbage out." Teach your tween to focus on the good and lovely.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble,

whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Philippians 4:8

Plan your reading strategically.

You need a reading plan:

1. Books for you to read
2. Books to read with your tween
3. Books to assign your tween

Below I am going to list the books that have formed my tween journey and that I hope to form the rest of the journey. For links to the books listed please visit the original post [here](#).

Books For Mom:

- Heartfelt Discipline: Following God's Path of Life to the Heart of Your Child
- Six Ways to Keep the "Little" in Your Girl: Guiding Your Daughter from Her Tweens to Her Teens
- Raising a Daughter After God's Own Heart
- Five Conversations You Must Have with Your Daughter (This is on my read next list!)

- Read for the Heart: Whole Books for WholeHearted Families by Sarah Clarkson
- Honey for a Child's Heart

Books To Read Together:

A Girl After God's Own Heart: A Tween Adventure with Jesus

A Girl's Guide to Making Really Good Choices

The One Year Mother-Daughter Devo

Before I Was Born (God's Design for Sex)

Beautiful Girlhood

Books for Her:

- A Girl's Guide to Best Friends and Mean Girls
- A Girl's Guide to Discovering Her Bible
- You Always Have a Friend in Jesus for Girls: A Tween's Guide to Knowing and Loving Him
- The Body Book (The Lily Series)

Put this plan into action

Now it's your turn to do the work! I created a **FREE** printable action pack so you can design your own plan of action for walking faithfully with your tween into her teens.

This pack will:

- *Break your goals down into bite size chunks*
- *Give you clear vision to work through your plan.*
- *A record for keeping track of books you want to read.*
- *A page to design a mom and daughter "bucket list."*

Krystal McFalls of [Memory Making Mommy](#) has shared some incredible wisdom for parenting tween girls and the **toolbox application provides practical tools for both tween girl or tween boy parents!** Click to get your [Tween Goal Backward action plan!](#) And start working towards your mama goals today!



Pray Intentionally - My Tween Parenting Strategy

by Tiffany Montgomery of [Hope Joy in Christ](#)



Tiffany Montgomery
Hope Joy in Christ

by Tiffany Montgomery of
[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Hi! I'm **Tiffany** but you can call me Mommo -like my family does.

Would you mind taking a stroll down memory lane with me? Do you remember - as a child - they way adults would ask *"What do you want to be when you grew up"*?

I wanted to be a mom and a teacher. I remember spending hours everyday playing house with my friends. It's funny when I look back because we only ever imagined babies. Cute little chubby faces, sweet coos, helpless little things we could dote over and cuddle and love on.

Do you ever wonder why?

What stopped us from imaging those precious little bundles of joy growing up? We never daydreamed about slamming doors, angry voices yelling "I hate you" or "You're ruining my life" as those little darlings entered the Tween years.

I can say I never did.

It never crossed my mind that one day a switch would flip and this precious child would resent everything I say and spend every waking hour reaching for independence.

Yet here I am at the beginning of that season -Tween Parenting -and struggling in it.

God is continually reminding me that ***these children are not mine***. They are God's children on loan to B and me. God is allowing us to be stewards of *His* children. We are to raise them well then release them back to Him to be used for His purposes.

God has a plan for their precious lives. God loves them far more than we ever could.

Our journey to parenthood was full of twists & turns... loss and pain. When the doctors finally diagnosed the cause of our miscarriages I remember hope blooming inside of me. We were actually going to have children. It came coupled with an overwhelming sense of inadequacy.

I knew nothing about parenting! I am thankful I am the daughter of a Good Father!

From that moment on I have had a passion to pray. I cannot raise these children on my own. But, God promised to help me and give wisdom when I ask... so I ask – intentionally!

My advice: Be Intentional about Prayer.

God already sees who these sweet Tweens will grow into. He already has a plan for their lives.

He also has a plan for us – the Parents of Tweens – who are discouraged and struggling.

So why not take our hopes, dreams, needs and struggles to Him?

That sounds so cliché. How do we actually do it?

I am a list maker. I know that does not appeal to everyone, but my life is too busy and I don't want to forget to pray over this vital part of my life.

My strategy:

Schedule prayer time.

- I literally set a reminder in my phone to pray
 - I use *The Power of a Praying Parent* by Stormie Omartian. This book is an amazing parenting resource. It contains 30 simple prayers (I need simple in my life ;-)
 - I just copy them into my phone's reminders.
 - I schedule it to repeat monthly on that day and time.

Sounds mechanical I know, but how often do we look at our phone everyday?

It only takes 2-3 minutes to read through the prayer and people around me just think I am checking Facebook.

Consequently, it is so easy and convenient and has taken away all the excuses that kept me from the Spiritual Discipline of praying for my children... **Plus I love when technology can be used to glorify God!**

Pray Scripture

I am a big fan of praying scripture because I can be sure that "if it's in God's Word, it's in God's Will". (Check out *Battle Plan for Prayer* by Alex Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick -and amazing resource to learn how to pray effectively!)

- As a heart issue comes up that is not covered in the Stormie Omartian book, I search Google to find verses that apply (dorky I know - but I Google everything).
- I write the verses on note cards and post around the house.
- When I was in the workforce I would tape them on my desk, keep them in my car, in my purse anywhere I spent a lot of time.
- That way I don't have to feel *guilty* that I can't memorize the verse, I can just read it as a prayer.
- As I read them, I change the nouns to fill in the name I am praying over

Seems like a hands-off approach, but it works because God cares for us... and all those things that cause us anxiety.

I believe in the power of prayer. It can change everything in the way you approach your Tween Parenting and in the way your Tween responds!

I pray this was helpful.

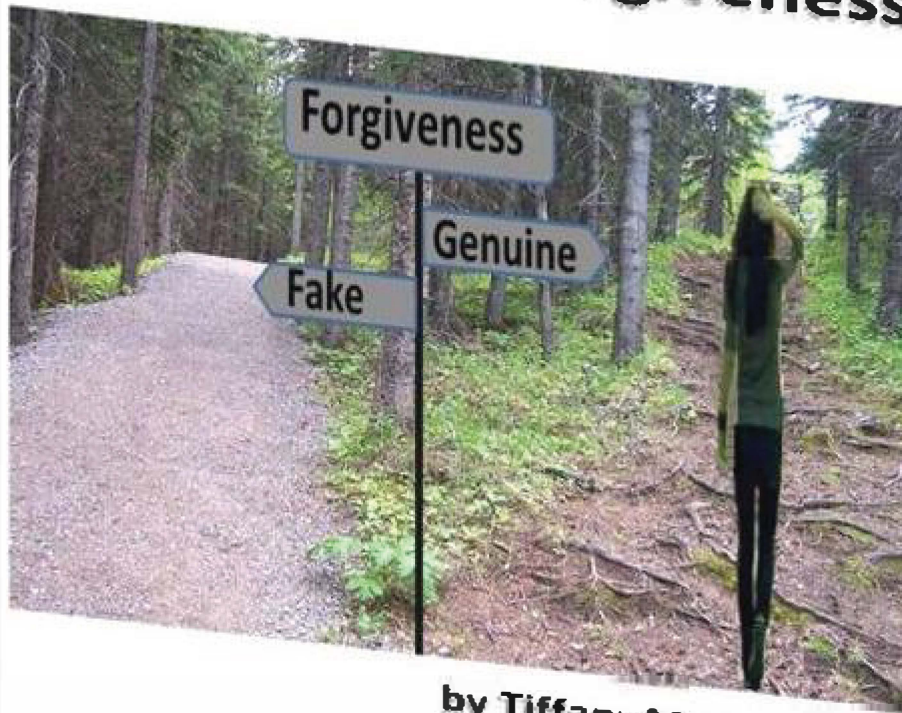
In HIM,

Tiffany

What an incredible encouragement to take it all to prayer. Fantastic tips for us to be intentional with our tweens as busy parents!

You can find more from Tiffany on [Hope Joy in Christ](#) and grab her Free E-book "A Pathway To Forgiveness" [here](#).

A Pathway to Forgiveness



by Tiffany Montgomery

Tween Parenting: 3 Tips to Give Structure Without Being Too Strict

By Sara Borgstede of [The Holy Mess](#)



Sara Borgstede
The Holy Mess

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

When you held your child a little baby in your arms, did you ever have someone say to you, “Oh, she is sweet now, but just wait until the teen years!” When people said that to me as a young mom, I cringed a little. Parenting a baby and then a toddler was hard enough. I didn’t want to wait in dread for the teen years!

As a mom of teens and pre-teens, allow me to reassure you. The teenage years are challenging, but they are not to be dreaded. [My husband and I have 5 children through birth and special needs adoption, and we were foster parents to 35 foster children.](#) I’ve done plenty of parenting.

I love parenting tweens and teenagers for so many reasons.

One of your greatest joys will be watching your hard work come to fruition as your children mature into amazing young adults with whom you enjoy spending time.

These [pre-teen years are an important bridge to the teen years](#). **Here are 3 tips to give structure without being too strict.**

Whether you find these ideas overwhelming or a relief, don't lose heart. **Parenting is not about perfection.** These 3 tips will help you define a relationship with your child that will carry you through some of the [more challenging aspects of the teen years](#) and into a lasting relationship to come.

Tween Parenting: 3 Tips to Give Structure But Not Be Too Strict

1. Build your relationship with Christ as the center.

With God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the center of your relationship with your tween, your relationship will have a solid foundation. Pre-teens are beginning the important process of claiming their own relationship with Christ, outside of their parents' decisions. Help them nurture their faith life by showing how you grow your faith. Talk openly about how Jesus influences your daily decisions.

If there are ways you want to incorporate faith activities into your family's life, it's not too late to start now. Family devotions at the dinner table and nightly prayers together are important for pre-teens. Try sharing prayer requests or memorizing Bible verses while you drive to activities.

2. Continue to offer firm structure.

Your pre-teen will begin to rebel from some of your rules during these years, but continue with the expectations your family has established. Don't assume that because your tween is balking at your rules that means you are doing something wrong. On the contrary, it means you are probably doing something right.

Kids need boundaries now more than ever before. They will complain, but a loving, nurturing home is one with structure and accountability.

Expect your tween to contribute to family chores and respond to adults respectfully. Rooms are kept neat. Homework is completed. Days are structured with a regular wake up and bedtime routine.

3. Widen pre-teen's boundaries.

The tween years are such an interesting age of *not-this and not-that*. I remember my mom talking about my 5th grade birthday when I asked for a doll and make-up. This so accurately describes the push-pull of the pre-teen. They are not young adults and they are not little kids.

Sometimes it's tough to know how to parent a child during these in-between years.

Consider this: instead of letting go of freedoms or relaxing your grip, think of it as widening the boundaries.

As your child gets older and shows appropriate maturity, widen your pre-teen's boundaries with a later bedtime, more mature television viewing, and more freedom in the neighborhood. If your child shows appropriate behavior, she can continue to enjoy freedom within this new boundary. If this area proves too much for her to handle, bring the boundary back in closer to you again.

By using these 3 tips to give structure but not be too strict - keeping Christ as the center of your parent-child relationship, offering firm structure, and widening boundaries as your kids are ready, you will have a meaningful relationship through the tween years, teen years and beyond.

Which of these will you focus on starting today?

Sara's site [The Holy Mess](#) is packed with wisdom and resources from all of her personal experience!

Definitely hop over and dig in and you can sign up for her [FREE Bible Journaling Printables Here!](#)

Or grab here done for you [Trust in the Lord Bible Journaling Kit](#) below! We use this kit with our tweens and they loved it! You can read more about why we started [Bible Journaling With Kids here](#) (and learn [how to get supplies for under](#)

\$10!) And find out more about the [Trust in the Lord Bible Journaling Kit](#) here!

www.theholymess.com

Trust in the Lord

BIBLE JOURNALING KIT

Calligraphy Practice

a
b
c
d
e
f
g
h

Bible Verse Coloring Cards

In God, whose word I praise,
IT IS BETTER TO TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD THAN TO TRUST IN MAN. PSALM 118:8
May the God of hope

daily journaling date: _____
Daily Bible Reading: _____ I'm thankful for: _____

30 Bible Verses About Trusting in the Lord

1. Psalm 56:4	16. Isaiah 25:9
2. Genesis 15:6-10	17. Psalm 118:8
3. Galatians 3:6-9	18. Romans 15:13
4. 2 Kings 5:13-15	19. Psalm 18:2
5. Luke 12:8-10	20. Nahum 1:7
6. Psalm 37:5	21. Job 13:15
7. Proverbs 3:5-6	22. Psalm 91:2
8. 2 Corinthians 3:4-6	23. Psalm 7:1
9. Jeremiah 17:7-8	24. 2 Peter 2:1-5
10. 2 Samuel 22:31	25. Psalm 25:1-2
11. Isaiah 26:3	26. Proverbs 30:5
12. Psalm 9:10	27. Psalm 22:4
13. John 12:37-43	28. Zechariah 4:6-7
14. Romans 1:18-20	29. Nehemiah 8:10
15. Psalm 33:4-6	30. 1 Chronicles 16:11

Trust
BLESSED IS THE LORD WHO TRUSTS
I TRUST IN YOUR UNFAILING LOVE.
SAVE ME LORD
You are courage
Be strong, fear not, for the Lord is with you.
Commit your way to the Lord
When I am afraid, I will trust.

The Importance of Connecting With Your Tween

By *Amanda Taylor* from [Teaching Little Hearts](#)



Amanda Taylor
Teaching Little Hearts

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

As a mom who is just beginning the tween parenting years, one of my biggest concerns is losing the ability to connect with my daughter.

And I don't think that my concern is unreasonable.

When you really think about it, the sad truth is that our culture has so many potential barriers to maintaining solid parent-tween connections.

I know that not all families face these particular parent-tween barriers, but these are the ones that I see as the most problematic in our culture today:

Physical separation for most of the day. Children go to school; parents go to work.

Busyness. Children have extracurricular activities after school; parents have responsibilities at home after work.

Personal electronics. The amount of time spent engaged with a tablet or smartphone is becoming an issue for both tweens and parents (yikes!).

Take the above barriers and combine them with the negative influence that our tweens can receive from peers and the media, and you have a huge recipe for unconnected disaster!

My goal in pointing out these obstacles to connecting isn't to dishearten you; I want to encourage you! But I truly think that we need to be aware of the fact that we face many obstacles in connecting with our tweens.

Because of all the potential barriers that can infringe on our parent-tween relationships, it is so important that we as tween parents make a deliberate effort to connect with our tweens!

Why is connecting with your tween important?

There are 3 big reasons that come to mind:

So that you can know your tween's true feelings. When you truly connect with someone, it means that you feel comfortable enough around that person to be your true, genuine self. You can express your thoughts and feelings without fear of rejection. It is so important for tweens to be able to do this with their parents! This allows you, as a parent, to better serve your tween.

So that you can be your tween's primary influence. When tweens feel connected to parents, they have no reason to look elsewhere for acceptance and connection.

So that your tween will hear and value your wisdom. You can have the best advice in the world for your tween, but if it falls on deaf ears, what good is it? And if you don't have a strong connection, your tween isn't going to value the

wisdom you have to offer.

Connected tweens trust their parents' wisdom and have a positive view of their parents' instruction.

Connected tweens can see the truth of Proverbs 1:8-9:

*"Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and forsake not your mother's teaching,
for they are a graceful garland for your head
and pendants for your neck."*

How do you connect with your tween?

Here is what I believe to be the key:

Connecting with tweens is about showing that you really, truly care about them. It's about truly being interested in their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

When a tween feels this type of love from you, they will feel connected to you.

In our day to day routines, it's easy for tweens to feel (and be) neglected. They are at a stage of complete (or almost complete) physical independence. This makes it easy for our time as parents to be spent more with younger siblings who require more attention and help.

If you have multiple children, it can be difficult to find time to spend with each child individually. But if possible, make special time for just you and your tween. (Even it is just a few minutes each day!)

The purpose of this special time is to truly focus on your tween without distraction. This often brings about a feeling of closeness and leads to many beautiful conversations.

Here are some ideas for activities that can help form and strengthen parent-tween connections:

Special reading time. After my 4 year old goes to bed, my daughter and I have special reading time that I know she treasures more than just about anything.

Spend time together outdoors. Take a walk together. Or just get outside in the sunshine and enjoy observing the nature around you. Exploring nature together is one of my tween's favorite things to do outside! (You can read more about our nature study [here](#).)

Get in the kitchen. Allow your tween to help with dinner or baking. Depending on your tween's interest in cooking, they may even want to make something with minimal assistance from you. My tween daughter loves to spend time in the kitchen!

Special outing together. This can be something fun, or something as simple as allowing your tween to come along on errands or to the grocery store with you.

Special activity together. This can be something as simple as playing a board game or working a crossword puzzle together.

Pray and read the Bible together. This is a wonderful way to connect and help your tween's faith grow!

And if it isn't possible in this season of your life for you to have one on one time with your tween, there are still ways that you can strengthen your connection!

You can:

- Make an effort to pay attention to your tween in everyday conversation, and show that you care about their thoughts and ideas by the way you respond to them.
- Compliment your tween when you see good actions!
- And last of all (but in no way least!) pray for your relationship with your tween.

- This is something we can all do and probably the most powerful action of all.

What ways have you found to strengthen your connection with your tween?

What are your biggest barriers to connecting with your tween?

Make sure to let us know!

[Teaching Little Hearts](#) is a place for you to find inspiration and encouragement as you teach the little hearts that God has given to you!

You can find more from Amanda on this Tween Parenting topic below!

[How Reading Together Connects Our Family](#)

She enjoys reading and highly recommends the book: ***Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*** to tween parents.

Teaching
Little Hearts 

Raising Mission Minded Tweens - A Two-Step Approach

by Emmie Manor of [Childbirth Conversations](#)



Emmie Manor
Childbirth Conversations

This post first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." Matthew 28:19a

Before ascending into Heaven, Jesus gave this mandate to His people. As we raise our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, **we are to pass along this mindset to them.**

So how do we do this? How do we teach our children to think beyond themselves to the world that God has made and loves?

First, we need to teach our tweens how big God is!! admit I struggle so much with this. *I know how big He*

is but forget to teach this vastness to my kids.

Psalm 24:1 says "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (ESV). God is over all and He owns it all! We must teach this to our tweens!

Next, as we teach our tweens the vastness of God, we teach them about the world God created.

- **Talk about geography.** *As you read Bible and other books learn about where the stories take place. Compare ancient geography to modern geography. Find out about the people who live there.*
- **Read stories about missionaries both current and past.** There are **so many** out there! Discuss what God is doing everywhere, including right around you. *Find out about missionaries from your church and learn what God is doing there.* It is amazing to see God moving in your backyard, as well as on the other side of the world. Talk about seeing the vastness of God!
- **Talk about current events around the world.** They can then see some of the different things others are dealing with- especially kids their age. **Give them as complete of a view of the world as you can, while you teach them God loves the world.**

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16 (ESV).

The world is also right around us. Because of travel, we now have the nations in our hometowns. **What are other nationalities prevalent around you?** Learn about their culture.

A tip to try: One really fun way to do this is finding national restaurants in your area. *I'm talking the hole in the wall, looks sketchy kind of restaurants, and get to know the people who work there. Learn from them what life was like in their country and why they decided to come here.* Have them compare the cultures *from their perspective.*

Always be a learner.

Another great thing to do is to study a new language. If you have a restaurant

near you, try learning their language and ask them to help teach you. If you're in a more rural area, without many internationals around you, *study a foreign language together as a family!*

In our home, we dabble in Russian, French, Romanian and Spanish regularly. If we read a story about a place *we see if we can find something in their language.* Trust me, it's so much fun!

I really could go on and on about ways to **raise mission minded tweens**, but now, I would love to hear your ideas.

How do you teach your tweens how big God is, about the world and about God's love for them? We would love to hear from you!

Emmie shares her personal - and past professional - experience as a labor and delivery nurse over on [Childbirth Conversations Blog](#) (re-launching in a new online space soon). She is also an [Independent Norwex Consultant](#) and blogs about the family's happenings on [The Manor Manor](#).

With a heart for missions, she is often learning about other languages and cultures which she passes on to her children. When she's not spending time with people, you can find her writing, reading and learning to appreciate wrestling with who God has created her to be.

You can find out more about Emmie [here!](#)



Helping Your Tween Deal With Pressure

by Claire Musters of ClaireMusters.com



Claire Musters
ClaireMusters.com

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Today my tween daughter, along with thousands of other 10 and 11-year-olds across the United Kingdom, is starting a week-long set of tests. Whether I agree with the system or not, UK schools use SATs (standard attainment tests) to check a pupil's progress at the end of their time in their first (primary) school, before they leave to start secondary school (for ages 11–16/18) in September. *So this is, in effect, the culmination of seven years of schooling.*

No pressure then!

We actually live in an area that has a particular type of secondary school that I have never been fond of – grammar schools. Entry to these single-sex schools (something else I'm not that keen on) is by exam.

There are usually over 3,000 applicants for a few hundred places. It's high pressure!

My daughter has always excelled academically, *but I wasn't sure she would cope well **emotionally** with such a rigorous and demanding entrance criteria.*

I didn't push her into taking the tests; **she decided for herself that she would like to try** and reach the required standard for grammar school and so studied hard for well over a year.

So, this week's set of tests has come after she has completed and passed, not only the grammar school tests but also excelled at music scholarship entry tests at other schools too. She is going to be going to her own first choice of grammar school in the autumn. *I am proud of her for not being swayed by her peers, as she is the only one from her school who chose it.*

The long journey to get to this point has taught us both so much.

For example, we learned to look around each of the secondary schools in our area **with spiritual eyes as well as physical**, and I was astounded at her **spiritual awareness.**

I also learned to let go and entrust my daughter to God – over and over again!

This week may be a week of intense pressure, but I feel she has already achieved what her end goal was and so I am trying to alleviate the pressure as much as possible. As well, of course, as utilising some of those vital lessons learned, **which I believe can be applied to all sorts of tween parenting situations (not just exams).** Here are some of them – I hope you find them as usual as I have:

Pray!

Together and separately...**Our tweens will experience an ever-increasing amount of pressure.** My daughter may have got into the school she desperately wanted, but, come September, the hard work will start as her new teachers will expect the high standard to continue!

It is so important that we teach our children, from as early an age as possible, to involve God in their everyday lives. To make Him our first port of call when we are beginning to sense we are feeling overwhelmed. *Communication with God is one of our most vital and basic tools for facing pressure.*

I continue to encourage my daughter to talk to God while at school – and I make sure I remind her to do so as she walks into high-pressure situations such as examination halls.

I've talked to her about how she has something so many others haven't – **a God that literally comes into the exam with her and will flood her with His peace as she connects with Him in her heart.**

We also need to pray for our tweens regularly – bringing them before God and asking for His will to be done in their lives. It isn't about our ideas and dreams being fulfilled through them; they are gifts from Him and He has plans for their futures.

Take your own pressures to God

I have to say I lived every moment of my daughter's intense period of study and examinations. Because I had invested so much time and effort myself in working

with her to prepare, on the first exam day I found I couldn't work. The waiting time was almost unbearable! *I felt it would have been easier if I had been sitting the exam myself!*

When my daughter came out of that first round of tests and told me she had run out of time my heart just sank. I was also slightly annoyed, as we'd worked so hard on thinking about pace and ensuring every question was attempted (as that section was multiple choice). I was shocked by my response. While I hid it from her, I had to talk and pray it through with my husband. **I had to own my feelings but take them to God and ask Him to help me let go of them.**

The last thing my daughter needed was to feel any extra pressure from me. **As our heavenly Father unconditionally loves us, we need to shower that same unconditional love on our tweens.**

But we do need to ask for His help in order to do so, as we are not perfect. Thank God that He is!

Encourage but also instruct

When our tweens are trying to achieve a certain goal, sometimes we do need to encourage them to work hard. I certainly reminded my daughter that it would be a good idea to go through practise papers regularly. *However, I was also very careful to explain that doing her best was the goal – not perfection.*

How vital this message is was drummed into me when she came home at the beginning of this school year and said that there was a girl last year that got 100% in all her SATs tests. She then added 'I HAVE to beat her!'

I looked at her, aghast. As I said, she's intelligent. But then I realised she actually meant it. Having always been top of her class, she was caught up in a cycle of having to be the best; this was simply her knee-jerk reaction.

I had to gently point out that there is no beating 100% - and getting less than that is not a failure. **I also talked to her about consciously choosing not to compare ourselves to others, and not setting ourselves up for failure by giving ourselves unrealistic goals.**

Both my husband and I have perfectionist tendencies – our tweens can really hold a window up to our souls in the way they reflect our characteristics, can't they?

I have talked to my daughter about the fact that all three of us seem to be perfectionists, *and how we need God's help to guard against that.* We have discussed how wanting to do our best is fine, but piling on extra pressure to ourselves is of no help and simply overwhelms us. It isn't God's best for how He wants us to live. **He wants us to look to Him for our security and self-worth – not exam results.**

Remind them of who they are

As a tween parent, one of the most important things we can do is instruct our children in the ways of God. Once they have decided to follow Him for

themselves, the next responsibility we have is to help them grab hold of their identity in Him as firmly as possible, **because everything out there – all the pressures they will face – will try to erode that.**

I am so thankful to a friend who gave my daughter a present from God last Christmas. He instructed her to create a little booklet with a verse on each day for the 52 weeks of the year (she actually used a set of playing cards to do this – very creative J). These, my daughter was told, are God's messages to her for each week. *We are now into May and she has loved turning over the page each new week and has faithfully meditated on what the new verses say to her.*

Finding different ways to help our tweens engage with the Word of God is vital, as it is the one place they will find out the truth of who they are.

Learning to cling to its treasures will help them throughout their lives.

Be their comfort

There have been times when my daughter has crumbled under the pressures she has faced: when everything has got too much and she has either erupted into anger or collapsed into sobs. When this first happened, I tried to deal with the anger I was being faced with. But God, and my (much calmer than me) husband, showed me that I needed to reach the person underneath with love.

Now when she's feeling too much pressure in any area she comes to me for a hug. That's it. A simple hug. It tells me she's feeling overwhelmed (as at times she doesn't know how to express that in words) and gives her space just to rest in my arms.

There are quite a lot of hugs around piano practice times each week!

Allow them to still be kids

I like the fact that my daughter's teacher didn't set homework for the weekend before this week's tests. She said she wanted each of them to relax and enjoy time with their families.

We need to ensure that we give our tweens space to let off steam and also have fun. **They are in that in between stage – striving towards teenagehood and the desire to be grown up but also wanting to have fun.**

My daughter has crazy times of (very loud) playing with her 8-year-old brother and it is lovely to see her still enjoying her childhood.

There is enough pressure in the world; our tweens need to know their home is a safe place to relax and be themselves in.



Claire is a freelance writer, speaker and editor, mum to two gorgeous young children, pastor's wife, worship leader and school governor. Claire's desire is to help others draw closer to God through her writing, which focuses on authenticity, marriage, parenting, worship, discipleship, issues facing women today and more.

Her books include:

Taking your Spiritual Pulse, CWR's *Insight Into Managing Conflict* and *Insight Into Self-acceptance*, *Cover to Cover: David A man after God's own heart* and BRF Foundations21 study guides on *Prayer* and *Jesus*.

She also writes Bible study notes regularly, and her latest co-written book, *Insight Into Burnout*, was published in February.

Her next book, *Taking off the mask: learning to live authentically*, is due for publication in November 2017 by Authentic Media. To find out more about her, please visit www.clairemusters.com and @CMusters on Twitter.

Parenting Tweens to Teens - Social Media Responsibility

by Makisha Reed of [Greater Girls](#)



Makisha Reed
Greater Girls

Hey, girl! *Omgoodness*, I have sooo much to tell you.

Let's talk...better yet, hit me up on [Insta](#) or *Snap Chat*?

Do you have a *YouTube Channel*?

You do! That's dope.

Hold up, I need to [tweet](#) this...

If you're busy we can *Kik* it if you still use that.

What?! **Don't you use any of those?**

I guess I can message you on *Facebook* but isn't that for *old people*?

Chances are if you have a young person in your care you have heard some form of the conversation above. Alexander Graham Bell had no idea what he started when he invented the telephone. Who knew that it would lead to all this?

Oxford Dictionary defines social media as *websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking*. In short, social media is using various kinds of virtual avenues to meet and interact with other people at will.

In theory, this is a great concept for adults or businesses – for kids – not so much. Social media is like an open door to EVERYWHERE. Most parents simply don't allow their children to go everywhere. Parents place boundaries, and rules for their children to follow for their own safety at school and at home. The same goes for Social Media. Kids are kids and they do not know how to police themselves.

There are 3 basic questions that I give for tweens and teens when we discuss Social Media Responsibility:

Who? What? Why?

Who are you communicating with?

REALLY, do you know this person or group IRL (in real life)? *Let me be clear, some young people have a really broad definition of "know" and a skewed definition of real life.* I often ask, have you met this person **face to face**. This helps them to put perspective on if they are communicating with a friend or communicating with a stranger. The second part to this is that many youths consider virtual interactions real life. **It is important to express to our young people that although conversations occur via video, instant message or text it is not real life.** A virtual interaction can be a complete fantasy for some people.

Your tween or teen needs to understand that just because they are being honest and have no evil agenda *there are predators in the world who use social media to build familiarity*. They then use the familiarity to prey on young people. **Again, emphasize do you know this person - have you met face to face?**

What are you talking about?

Get details, be specific and persistent when you ask your young person what are you talking about when you are on social media. Social media is a very public forum and many tweens/teens do not fully understand how far they are reaching when they are virtually “talking” to people.

Because they don’t understand the range they will freely talk about personal facts and issues that should only be shared with family and close friends. Don’t stop asking what they are talking about. Let them know that there should be limits to what they text, say or chat on social media.

They should never disclose their location, age, real name or school to anyone they don’t know directly. They should never bully, threaten or intimidate someone on social media either individually or in a group – and yes your little Suzy or Johnny would say something mean and hurtful.

Why are you communicating with this person?

Tweens and teens need to be taught to ask themselves why am I interacting with this person? Did this person seek you out? Teen speak: follow you, friend you, tweet, dm, inbox, message or snapchat you? The origin of the encounter is important because our youth need to know that everyone who reaches out to them does not always have a good heart and does not necessarily have good intentions toward them.

The most critical part of social media responsibility is making sure the parent or caregiver is monitoring their young person’s activity.

Here are 3 action steps for parents/caregivers:

1. **Instruct** them on which sites and apps you allow or do not allow.
2. **Enforce** your guidelines with a consequence if you see activity that is not permitted.
3. **Inspect** their phones, computers, emails, apps, social media profiles, and picture galleries.

Social Media isn't going away anytime soon. Start building a solid foundation in Social Media Responsibility for your Tween growing into a Teen - now!

Let us know. **What are your guidelines for social media responsibility? Are they working?** We want to know!

Greater Girls offers: Social Media Responsibility, Sexual Safety, Empowerment, Counseling and Etiquette sessions. You can find Greater Girls on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) or email her GreaterGirls1@gmail.com.



3 Ways To Equip Your Tween with a Biblical Worldview

by Marisa Boonstra of [Called to Mothering](#)



Marisa Boonstra
Called to Mothering

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

My eight-year-old son asks a lot of questions. I mean, A LOT. He didn't even ask this many when he was four.

Only, he's not just asking questions so much for the sake of knowledge anymore.

They're more like *challenges*.

8-12-year-olds no longer accept what their parents say at face value like they did when they were younger. They may push back, argue, or directly question our reasoning and commands.

While it can be exhausting at times, it's actually a positive part of their faith development. It means they've grown past blind acceptance and are ready for deeper understanding.

Our kids are seeking answers and unfortunately if we don't have them, **the world will be all too willing to provide those responses.** You should be your tween's primary source of information, rather than their teachers, peers, social media, and television.

Several years ago, I heard *More Than A Carpenter* author Josh McDowell give this startling statistic: nearly half of all Americans who come to Christ do so before reaching the age of thirteen (43%). And the probability of a person accepting Jesus as their savior after thirteen? **Just 4 percent.**

We'd assume that 14-year-olds still have plenty of time to come to Christ. **But by that age, they have already formed a lifelong worldview.** The real work has already been done – at a much younger age.

That's why we need to equip our kids with a biblical worldview while they're still tweens. These years are crucial for establishing an unshakable foundation of faith in them. Our tweens don't only need to know what they believe, but also *why* they believe it. Here are some tips to help you do this:

Saturate your home with God's Word.

In Deuteronomy 6:5-7, we find this commandment given to parents:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Verse 7 implies that we should be instructing our children biblically throughout the day. **Don't abdicate your responsibility for your child's training in Scripture to their Sunday School teacher or Jr. High Youth Group Leader.**

Instead of making the Bible something we read together once a day, it needs to become something we *live*. **We should be integrating biblical truths into each of our children's daily activities, struggles, and school subjects, and providing biblical reasons for why we do what we do.**

Get your tween to hide the Scriptures in their heart by having them copy, memorize, and sing them. Use the Proverbs to converse with them during moments of correction. Involve your kids in service opportunities and find a fitting verse for each project.

Most of all, help your child establish his or her own morning devotional time. It's not good enough to rely exclusively on devotionals, though. Our tweens need the meat of the Word, and a lot of devotionals on the market today are just fluff.

Have them read a chapter per day of the Bible and then write a summary of what they've just read. It also helps if they jot down one or two sentences about how they can personally apply what they learned to their own lives. **Both of these things will get your tween in the habit of meditating on and digesting God's Word.**

While they're still developing this routine, offer to get on the same reading plan with them. It's vital that our kids understand how all those books of the Bible fit together in the larger context of God's design, so I would recommend a read through the Bible in one year plan to start out with. Set aside a specific time of day to share and discuss what each of you has learned and pray about it. You'll

be amazed after a while at your child's insight!

Without thoroughly knowing what God's Word says and how to read it on their own, your tween's spiritual development will be significantly compromised. They'll learn to depend on what *other people* tell them about Christianity, whether it's true or not.

Expose them to secular views.

Wait, didn't I say our kids need a *biblical* worldview? Just bear with me a moment. In order to defend their faith, tweens need to investigate the various

worldviews that are going to challenge that faith.

They need a strong knowledge of beliefs like Marxism, Nihilism, Islam, and the one that dominates our culture- **and their schools**- Secular Humanism. It is essential that they know how all of these different worldviews stack up against the claims of Christianity.

By exposing them to secular views, without any presuppositions they may learn from school and entertainment sources, you'll be inoculating them against these viewpoints. You will be preparing them to make a defense, or apologetic, to everyone who asks for an account of the hope that is within them (1 Peter 3:15).

Laying the foundation for a biblical worldview involves training our tweens to "examine everything carefully". They should be able to think critically without simply buying into the commonly accepted beliefs of our day. Help them evaluate the types of media they watch, read, and listen to by asking questions like:

- are they full of sexual content, immodesty, violence, language, or disrespect?
- do they portray elements of the occult that includes fortune telling, magic, casting spells, vampires, or witches that are cast as "good"?
- which spiritual slant do they show- New Age, Eastern Meditation, etc.?ld
- are they historically and scientifically accurate, or do they present an evolutionary view and a revisionist telling of history?

Create a culture in your home that leaves room for asking questions about the authenticity of Christianity. Don't be afraid of saying, "I don't know," but don't

leave it there! Seek out the answers together with your children. Both Apologia and Answers For Kids have great resources on apologetics that are tailored specifically for the tween age group.

Make Jesus the center of your family.

He has to come first in everything. Your tweens might resist it, but they will know whether Christ is merely a spoke of your family's wheel instead of the hub.

Your home cannot revolve around work, sports, school, or extracurricular activities to the exclusion of God and church. It needs to hinge on God and His

plan for your family. Growing up in that kind of an environment will have a profound effect on the shaping of your tween's actions, behavior, and choices.

When they're used to basing every decision on God's will, those things that "all the other kids" are doing won't seem as important. Lying about who they're hanging out with or keeping secrets from you won't be as tempting.

The most surefire way to help our tweens become kingdom-minded and Christ-centered is for *us* to overflow with those qualities.

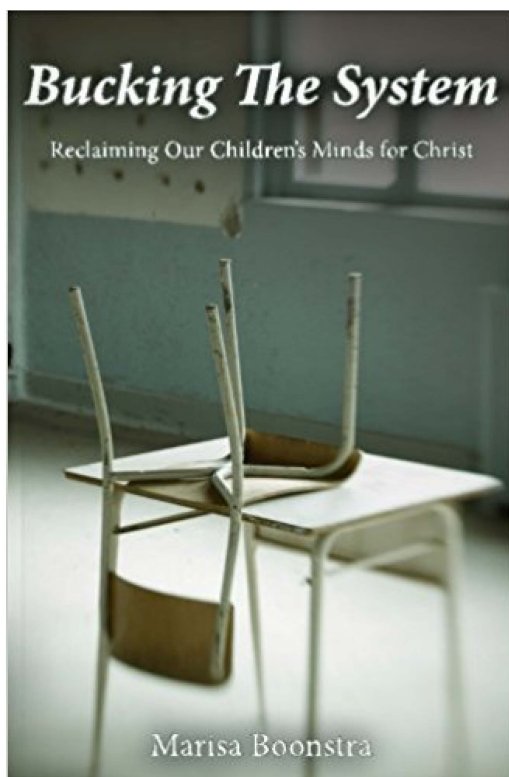
What ways do you equip your children with a biblical worldview?

You can visit Marisa over on [Called to Mothering](#) where she has a passion for **Equipping Moms To Fulfil The Great Commission At Home!**

She has a wealth of encouragement, resources and information on *Motherhood, Parenting, Homeschooling, Homemaking and Biblical Worldview.*

You can also find her book available for purchase there as well.

[Bucking The System: Reclaiming Our Children's Minds For Christ](#)



Help for Handling Tween Daughter Emotions

by Dr Melanie Wilson of [Psycho With 6](#)



Dr Melanie Wilson
Psycho With 6

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

I asked her to clean the bathroom like I had a hundred times before. But this time she screamed, "Why do I have to clean the bathroom? I hate having to clean the bathroom when I have so many disgusting brothers!"

She does indeed have so many brothers -- five of them to be exact. But in that moment she also had so many emotions. *Her emotions were surprising and confusing for us both.*

Now that my daughter is a teen, I see some things I did well to handle her tween emotions and some things I wish I had done differently. Here is how we can handle our tween daughter's emotions.

#1 Prepare your daughter for puberty early

My only experience with puberty was with boys who all started at 14. I was shocked to see the physical evidence of puberty in my daughter much, much earlier. My daughter's friend started menstruating at age 9. Today's girls begin changing before we have taken the time to educate them about the physical and emotional changes they can expect. In my case, that was because I wasn't willing to believe that my little girl wouldn't be a little girl much longer.

I love the book **How You are Changing** by Jane Graver as a good way to start the discussion about puberty with your daughter. A couple of things I add for all my tweens is:

- Sex is beautiful when sex is private and within the context of marriage
- Only parents should teach their kids about sex. You are not permitted to teach your friends or younger siblings.
- If you have questions about sex, you can always ask us without embarrassment. You can't be sure of getting accurate information from friends or the Internet.

Be sure to discuss shaving, use of tampons or pads, and how to manage breakouts. The more prepared your daughter feels, the less frightened she will be.

#2 Explain the emotional fluctuations that are part of puberty

Often we are more concerned with our daughters starting their periods than we are with talking about the emotions that can accompany it. That reluctance may be because of our own lack of understanding. As a mother who has experienced the complicated emotions of perimenopause, I know to tell my daughter what to expect.

We have to be specific: a young woman's hormonal changes can make her feel angry, weepy, or giddy, seemingly for no reason. Psychological research has shown us that people often try to explain the physical experience of emotion, but make incorrect assumptions in doing so.

When I was a teen I had a CT-scan done to determine the cause of frequent headaches. While I was in the machine, I had trouble breathing.

Even though I didn't feel nervous, I interpreted my trouble breathing as a sign of anxiety. So I tried to relax. Turns out I was having a severe allergic reaction to the contrast dye.

Explain to your daughter that feelings of anger or sadness do not necessarily mean that anything is seriously wrong. Our emotions can fool us when our hormones are changing at various stages of life. Explain that puberty is one season of change, while pregnancy and menopause are other seasons that can leave us feeling more emotional.

#3 Give your daughter tips for managing the emotions of puberty

The first and most critical thing for your daughter to do to manage her emotions is to get enough rest. Explain that like a newborn baby needs lots of sleep because of all the growing she does, so your daughter needs extra sleep as her body does the big job of growing into womanhood. Many tweens resist going to bed early because of their desire for more independence. If you homeschool as I do, consider allowing your tween daughter to rise later in the morning to make sure she is getting enough sleep.

The second thing I would have your daughter do is record her emotions. There are apps like this [Period Tracker](#) for this purpose, but any calendar will do. It's a huge help to know that your life isn't miserable; it's just that you're premenstrual. This can be helpful even for tween girls who haven't started their periods. I recommend recording the amount of sleep your daughter gets and other significant events to see if there's a relationship with the emotions she experiences.

The third thing your daughter can do is learn positive ways of handling negative emotions. Share the strategies that work for you -- exercise, chatting with a friend, playing music, doing crafts, journaling, quiet time alone, magnesium and a multivitamin, or chocolate!

You should also discuss things that don't make you feel better: food binges, hours playing online games, ranting on social media, or Netflix binges. Encourage her to experiment with various approaches to see what works best for her.

Fourth, encourage your daughter that she is a part of a sisterhood of women who understand what it's like. Encourage your daughter to tell you when she is having one of those days. Tell her you'll agree to give her more latitude on these days, but that you will still require her to treat you and others with respect. My daughter and I ended up laughing about the "disgusting brothers" fit she had. She knew her hormones were involved.

Finally, pray with your daughter regularly. Ask God to give you both the ability to honor Him and others despite the hormonal highs and lows. Encourage her in the knowledge that God will be faithful to work all things together for good -- even the emotions she has at this stage of her life.

How do you help your tween daughter handle emotions?

Christian psychologist, author, and homeschooling mom of six, [Dr Melanie Wilson's](#) life can be a little crazy, so she looks for sanity-saving ideas to use and share on [psychowith6.com](#).

Melanie is the author of [The Organized Homeschool Life](#) and [Grammar Galaxy language arts curriculum](#). She is also the podcaster behind [The Homeschool Sanity Show](#).

She also has a [wonderful episode](#) to share for parents of boys and girls about **Homeschooling through the Hormones** that will encourage you and remind you aren't alone in this!

Stop over to check out her resources and get the practical, encouraging help you need!

PSYCHOWITH6

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Winning The Heart of Your Tween

by Kathie Morrissey of [The Character Corner](#)

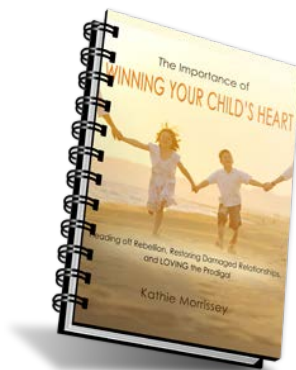


Kathie Morrissey
The Character Corner

This post first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

My husband and I have noticed that something happens to many kids between sixth and seventh grade.

We have seen some really "good" kids suddenly seem to develop a bad attitude, and start to show some disrespect. Other kids that age seem to just keep going in the right direction, growing in their love for the Lord, and then go on to become young adults who are faithful to the Lord.



When we saw that happening, we decided that those tween years were very important and that we needed to be vigilant about winning our kid's hearts and keeping it during those turbulent times when they are dealing with changing hormones, and self-confidence.

As parents, it is **VITAL** that we stay purposeful and intentional about winning and keeping the hearts of our kids, and **ESPECIALLY** during the tween years when they may begin to be more concerned with what their peers may think, or what their peers are doing.

We wanted to be sure our kids knew not only that we liked them, but *we loved them for who they were*. We wanted them to know that home was a safe place to share their thoughts, struggles, and even their dreams, without fear of being criticized or corrected.

The three main reasons we want and need to win the hearts of our tweens are;

1. **So they will be open to our teaching.** We want to be able to pour into them wisdom from God's Word.
2. **So we can have a significant influence on them.** We want to be the ones who are influencing their values and teaching them how to live Biblically.
3. **To keep them from rebellion.** Sometimes when kids rebel it is because we have made one of the 5 parenting mistakes that lead our kids to rebellion. It often goes back to a time when we did something that caused us to lose their heart.

How do we go about winning and keeping the hearts of our tweens?

Remember that a strong relationship leads to compliance. There is a big difference between intimidating our children into obedience by threats or fear of consequence, and WINNING their hearts into subjection.

Intimidating will bring outward compliance, but no heart change. Nurture the relationship so they desire to please you and comply.

1. **Let them know you love them for who they are, not because of what they do.** If we as parents don't accept them for who they are, they will feel they can never win our approval. As a result, they will quit trying, and give their heart to someone who likes them and accepts them.
2. **Affirm them regularly.** Write them notes, tell them what you like about them, occasionally get them their favorite treat, have special one on one outings, and brag on them to others when they can hear you.
3. **Be fair.** When you need to give correction or discipline, be sure and discern if the cause of the problem is innocence, ignorance, or rebellion. Have you taught and trained them, or did you just expect them to know what you wanted? When you use common sense and are slow to react, you will be fair and win their heart.
4. **Show honor to them.** Don't get in drill sergeant mode and yell out orders. Treat them with the respect you would like. Say "*please*" and "*thank you*" to them, etc.
5. **Show affection.** Give lots of hugs, pats, tickles, etc. They still need that even though they aren't as young.
6. **Tell them you love them, and tell them often.** More than likely your kids know you love them, but just like we enjoy hearing our spouse tell us they love us, our kids enjoy hearing us tell them that we love them.
7. **Listen to them when they want to talk.** Stop what you are doing, put your phone away, and look them in the eye. That speaks volumes to your kids

about how much you care about what they have to say. Get excited with them about their interests, and find out what is important to them. Listen to their heart and emotions, as well as their words.

7. Apologize when you need to. Just admit it -- sometimes as parents, we are wrong! We can over-react, jump to conclusions, or get easily frustrated. Don't be too proud to say, "*I blew it. I'm sorry.*" Kids are forgiving and willing to accept our apologies.

8. Pray for them and with them. Praying together creates a bond, and **praying for your children** is one of the best gifts you can give them. It's also vital that you help them develop a daily habit of reading God's Word, as His Word will guide them. If you aren't sure how to get your tweens started in Bible reading, check out these **Bible Reading Plans Your Children Will Enjoy**.

In conclusion, realize that daily a spiritual battle is raging for your kids' hearts.

Determine to do all you can to purposefully pursue and win their hearts.

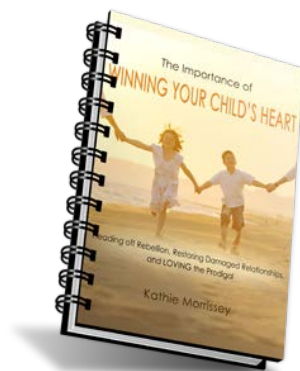
What is your next step in winning your child's heart today? Share with us in the comments on the post!

What a blessing to have Kathie from [The Character Corner](#) sharing her wisdom with us! With her focus on character, purity and homeschooling, her passion for [winning our children's hearts](#) is evident in all that she creates!

Here is a little bit more about Kathie and just a bit of [the resources](#) she has available for us.

Visit [The Character Corner Shop](#) [here](#)

Kathie's book on this topic [The Importance of Winning Your Child's Heart](#) can be found on her site as well.



2 Must Read Character Building Fiction Books for Tweens

by April of [Stories of Our Boys](#)



April
Stories of Our Boys

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Normally, I let my children choose what they read. No biggie. *I want to encourage a love for reading.*

But at bedtime, if I'm the one reading to them, Mom gets to choose the book. No, they don't technically need me to read to them anymore. The thing is, there are some books that NEED to be read. Besides, *I like reading out loud so that we can also discuss the lessons and the things they may not have heard of before.*

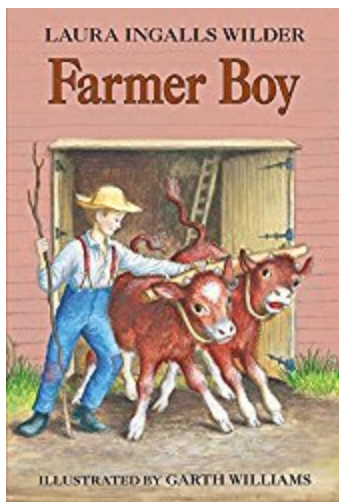
Why does it matter what they read?

Like everyone else, I want all of my children to turn out to be well-adjusted, caring, compassionate people. I want them to be comfortable with who they are and to know the value of hard work and wise decisions. I want them to know they can take their

troubles to God in prayer any time they want, anywhere they want, and regardless of whether or not they feel deserving of that.

These two books are a powerful companion to help teach these values. They are both based off of real life people and real life events, and neither of these books would have ever found their way into my boys' hands without my guiding them there.

#1. *Farmer Boy*



Farmer Boy is part of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series, and we loved all the books in this series. This particular book is unique in that it tells the story of Almanzo's childhood. It can be read completely apart from the other books in the *Little House* series.

What made this book so outstanding and useful for character development?

Almanzo grew up on a highly successful farm in upstate New York with his parents, a brother, and several sisters.

This family farm was **not** successful because of luck. It was because of the hard work that the entire family poured into their home and their farm.

This book has story after story that shows the reader the power of hard work, the pleasure of working with your hands, and the benefits of honesty and obeying your parents. This is what made the book a home run to me.

What made it a win for my boys

They loved the stories about dealing with mean older boys at school, stories of sledding adventures, and stories of Almanzo dealing with his brother Frank. There's also an exciting chapter where the parents leave town, leaving their children home alone for a few days.

The book is packed so full of adventures and lessons, it's hard to pick just a couple of quotes to share, but here are 2 to try to help me convey how awesome this book is:

I love this quote because it shows a little window into just how much the life of children has changed:

"Down a long road through the woods a little boy trudged to school, with his big brother Royal and his two sisters, Eliza Jane and Alice. Royal was thirteen years old, Eliza Jane was twelve, and Alice was ten. Almanzo was the youngest of all, and this was his first going-to-school, because he was not quite nine years old."

— [Laura Ingalls Wilder, Farmer Boy](#)

Almanzo was only just beginning school, at 8 years old, but he had been working harder than any of our children on his family farm.

This one is just firm, good sense:

"It's work, son," Father said. "That's what money is; it's hard work."

— [Laura Ingalls Wilder, Farmer Boy](#)

There are stories of them shearing the sheep, harvesting their grain, milk-feeding a pumpkin to win a county fair prize, and Almanzo's favorite, training horses. This book is an excellent reminder of how much children are capable of with gentle instruction and the right opportunities.

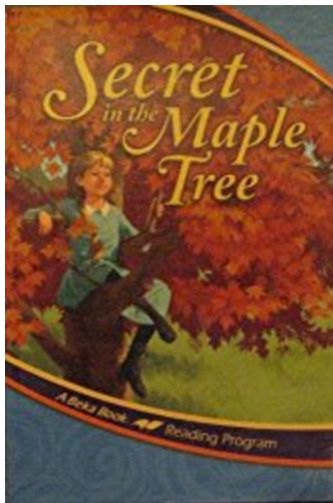
These days we spend so much time going to kids' sports games, which yes, promotes exercise, but also promotes a life of fun, which is not what adulthood is like. Almanzo learned to enjoy many jobs, which he could carry with him to adulthood. I found this particularly inspiring.

And some things never change...

"Mothers always fuss about the way you eat. You can hardly eat any way that pleases them."

— [Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Farmer Boy*](#)

#2. *Secret in the Maple Tree*



Farmer Boy was an easy sell for my boys. (I don't have any girls.) They were definitely not excited about this next one, *Secret in the Maple Tree*, by Matilda Nordtvedt.

They protested at first, but then they grew to love it.

Yes, in this book, the main character is a girl. Her name is Hilda, and she is one of the most real, relatable characters you will ever read. Almanzo in *Farmer Boy* was naturally a very well behaved boy. Hilda has to work much harder at it. This character is based on the author's mother-in-law, Mrs Ebertina Erickson Nordtvedt, the daughter of Norwegian immigrants, who migrated in the late 1800s.

Also, I have more good news. There's a sequel called *Song of the Brook*. I even just learned there's a THIRD book, *Message of the Mountain*, which I will be ordering right away!

Why this book is a must-read:

In this short novel, 141 pages, Nordtvedt covers healthy ways to handle getting a new mother, dealing with a bully, and unwanted changes. There are also stories of forgiveness, obedience, honesty, and dealing with sketchy strangers (in the form of a hobo).

My favorite thing about this book is that Hilda is again, so real, but she has learned to deal with her hardships by seeking refuge in the maple tree. In the maple tree, she has a place where she can climb onto a low branch and pray. **She pours her heart out to God, and that's the biggest lesson I want my boys to take away from this book.**

The bully story is a close 2nd. They struggle with Pete, who is violent and a thief through this whole book, and at the end, Hilda finds a way to make peace with him that will surprise you.

This book is a delight.

We always have a hard time putting it down each night. Here are a few quotes from the book.

"The new Mama laughed. "Nonsense," she said. "Of course we're not angry with you. We forgave you before you even said you were sorry." I love that. Children need this love and security so badly.

"Papa bragged about the dinner after he had eaten, and patted Hilda's head, but even that didn't make Hilda happy. She looked at the dirty dishes on the table and felt sorry for herself. She hated washing dishes all by herself."

Hilda struggles with pity parties, as we all do, but she is constantly learning and becoming better and better and more mature. I'm telling you, she's the realest character ever to appear in a Christian fiction book, much like Laura from the *Little House* series, but sadder because she has experienced great loss.

"When Hilda climbed the tree, she told God about the pretty card, the birthday song, and about helping Miss Dahlen at school. She told

Him about the cow's tail, too, but somehow she couldn't ask God to help her get even with Pete. She just couldn't."

And the story of how Hilda turns things around with Pete, the school bully who had ridiculed and stolen from her is b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l. But you'll have to read the book to find out!

What books do you recommend to help with character development? We'd love to have more good ones like these to read! Be sure to share your favorites in the comments on the post.

Happy reading!

You can find out so much more about April over on [Stories of Our Boys](#) where she shares a journal of her parenting journey: raising four little boys and aiming for sanity! She covers Faith, Being a Military Family, Parenting, Hilarity, Traveling and Blogging and more!

April is a mom of 4 boys and military spouse of 15 years. When she's not driving around town in her swagger wagon, you can find her blogging at [Stories of Our Boys](#) and [Monterey Premier](#).



Praying For Your Tweens Salvation



Melissa Wood
Mom Makes Art

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Today's post is quite personal. This Mother's Day, we have an amazing Mom sharing with you on the *most important topic to a Mother's heart*. **Praying for Your Tweens Salvation.**

She gives you a transparent view into what this has looked like in her parenting journey of 24 years. **She is the real deal.** One who shares *both God's victories and her struggles* and she is a true prayer warrior. I have seen her heart for praying for her tweens salvation. **I have learned so much from her diligence as she battles in prayer for her children and others.** *I am blessed to call her friend.*

Raising our children, particularly when they are getting older and venturing into tweenhood, is by far the toughest. *At least it seems that way when it starts.*

I have been there twice with two boys, on the tail end of it with my first daughter and in the midst of it with my second. We have survived. Through some things better than others.

The one thing that has made it possible is prayer...LOTS of it.

When God told us through Paul's words in *1 Thessalonians 5* to "Pray constantly", I have no doubt He knew that we parents, nearly 2000 years later, *would need this particular direction*. It should also be no surprise that prayer is part of the armor God so explicitly describes in *Ephesians 6*, where He tells us to "Pray at all times." **It is the significant part of being equipped for battle. The REAL battle.**

Not the one with our tweens about clothing choices or remembering deodorant. Not the one over screen time or social media or how clean their rooms need to be. I mean the **battle for our children's salvation**, which is the fight against the real enemy's desire for them not to have it. Satan not only studies us but also lurks around studying our children. Creepy thought. **But he knows as well as we do this stage of their lives is pivotal in how they will make their choices for living in the future.** It is such a time of critical battle. One for which we need to be appropriately armed.

That armor comes from eternal resources. And, in the words of Richard A. Burr, founder of Pray-Think-Act Ministries, "*Prayer Releases All Your Eternal Resources*".

Ok.....so, the battle is on.

So many things to pray about; good resources are necessary.

First, I use a prayer calendar ([Focus on the Family](#) magazine, Feb.2000) I have had for years. **It reminds me of 31 key things with scripture to daily pray about for my children.** I love Stormie Omaritan's books, particularly *Power of a Praying Parent*. It is another strong resource with a lot of scripture references to guide my prayers. I read and reference it frequently.

I also now stop at any time and pray with my children, particularly when issues of poor character need to be addressed or we need reminders of thanksgiving. And my family now gathers at the center of our home at the end of the day, and we pray.

All of this is good application. But above all, my utmost, deepest desire for them is to receive and embrace salvation.

I want "*salvation to spring up within them*" (Isaiah 45:8), and I want them to "*obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory*" (2 Timothy 2:10). It is my ultimate victory. *I have learned that my preparation, perseverance, and determination to never surrender are the keys to my hope for that victory.*

When my oldest was 9, I was a single parent at the time he was baptized. A few years later, I remarried and it was *during their tween years* that our middle two children also expressed interest in committing their lives to Christ. As we questioned them, it was clear that they were ready. My heart was full. My cup definitely ran over. *Salvation accomplished.*

However, I am more and more convicted that it's never going to be a secure victory if I get distracted and stop fighting as soon as they gain salvation. You see, we are in a battle for their souls. Our real enemy is wanting to blind them

just as much as we want them to see. He will stop at nothing, *we must trust in God and continually renew our strength (Isaiah 40:31)* to continue praying through the battle for our children.

My conviction that the fight for their salvation never ends comes from experience.

My oldest is our prodigal. *Not only is he momentarily lost to Christ, but he's currently fighting a literal battle for his life as an addict.* As an older teen, he left us to live with his father. My prayers for him didn't stop, but they certainly weren't intentional or specific. Sometime during those years, he lost his way. *Satan was paying more attention than I was.* In the past year, his struggles have increased and God revealed to me how terribly neglectful I had been. **But because the Lord is who He is, it's NEVER too late.** I humbly began asking Him how and where to begin. *God, in all his goodness, honored my request.*

I was unpacking a box and found another little book of prayers by Stormie Omartian to pray specifically for your adult children and **those became daily petitions**, specifically at 5:19, the time of his birth. God provided some dear sisters and **I continually enlist them to pray with me**. When I get weary in the fight, **I ask them to stand with me**, holding up my arms as the battle rages, just as Aaron and Hur did for Moses until the Israelites completely defeated the Amalekites (*Exodus 17*).

Although a return to his salvation for my prodigal is yet to come, there are small, and certainly not insignificant victories. *Prayer is being answered!* I put my armor on daily and pray for all my children, tweens and beyond, "in the Spirit", so I can "be on alert with all perseverance". *Ephesians 6:18*.

Melissa Wood is a teaching artist and Christian mom of 4 children, ages 24, 14, 12, and 10. She has a bachelor's degree in art and a masters degree in teaching. Along with homeschooling her youngest 3 children for 8 years, she's been teaching art for people of all ages for the past 22 years. She's currently teaching at 2 homeschool co-ops and at the Louisville Creative Arts Academy, a program for homeschoolers gifted in the creative arts.

You can find Melissa on **Mom Makes Art** [Facebook Page](#) as well as [Instagram!](#)



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I have learned that my preparation, perseverance, and determination to never surrender are the keys to my hope for that victory.

Melissa Wood of Mom Makes Art

www.LikeMindedMusings.com

3 Steps To Loving Your Tween On Purpose

by Joanna Chee of [Mums Kids Jesus](#)



Joanna Chee
Mums Kids Jesus

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

I got the word 'tween' all wrong when I first heard it a few months ago! I thought it referred to young adults in their late teens and early twenties! There is a 'tw' and an 'een' in there, after all!

And when I mentioned the term 'tween' to my kids the other days, they looked at me blankly and said, 'What? You mean the Tweenies?' (A TV show my kids watched when they were little - VERY little - better make that clear in case they read this!!)

So, anyway, for anyone who is as confused, or as ignorant, as we were (maybe 'tween' is not a British thing), **the official definition of 'tween' is a child BETWEEN the years of 8 and 12,**

beTWEEN the years of childhood and adolescence.

If you've been following along with this wonderful [30-Day Tween Parenting Encouragement Blog Party](#) (of which this post is Day 15), you'll know that anyway!

Needless to say, I didn't know I was parenting tweens until just a few weeks ago (when I looked up what it meant)!

I've actually completely 'missed' my boys' tween years – they are now teens! And I only have four months of tweendom left with my daughter, who is 12. I want to make the most of it (not that the teens aren't wonderful years too).

One of the things I most want to do for my beautiful tween daughter, (and my three teen sons), is love them with intention.

I love them. Of course, I do. A lot!

I pour myself out for them each day – picking up dirty clothes, cooking for them, chatting with them after school, listening, encouraging...

But I want to do more than that. I want to love my kids on purpose, not just the everyday-default-kind-of-loving (though that is a wonderful and necessary love).

I want to look at my tween daughter and think, 'How can I love my daughter in a way that uniquely touches her heart today?'

I'd love to share how I'm learning to do this:

3 Steps To Loving Your Tween On Purpose

1. Discover your child's love language

Your child is unique! The way they best receive love is probably different from how you best receive love!

There are five love languages: words of affirmation, physical touch, quality time, gifts and acts of service (helping others).

Which of these most touches your tween? Do you know?

Have you ever intentionally loved your child according to their specific love language? (They may have more than one top love language.)

The best way to discover your tween's love language is through observation.

Does your tween often come to you for hugs? Their primary love language may be physical touch. Does he or she 'glow' after you praise them for a job well done? Their primary love language is probably words of affirmation.

Conversely, if they're not too bothered by you sitting down to do something special with them, but would rather be off doing their own thing, then maybe quality time is not so important to them.

Watching how your tween gives love is also a clue. Is your tween super generous, always giving, or sharing with others? A primary love language is probably gifts. Does your tween often offer to help out? Their primary love language could be acts of service.

Still not sure? Then head on over to the [5 Love Languages website](#) and play the free online [Love Language Mystery Game](#) with them. This is a fun way to discover your child's love language! (You might want to take your own [love language quiz](#) whilst you're at it!)

2. Make a plan!

Now that you know your tween's primary love language, be intentional in using it!

Your child needs to be loved in each of the 5 love languages, but the times you focus on their specific #1 love language will be extra special to them. **This loving-on-purpose will touch their heart and create warm and wonderful memories.**

Your plan can be as simple as getting a piece of paper and writing one thing you will do for your tween this week, in their love language, and when you're going to do it.

If you're stuck for ideas, I highly recommend the book 'The 5 Love Languages Of Children' by Gary Chapman. This book explains the premise of love languages, what each one is, and gives numerous examples and stories of ways to use each

love language. (If your tween is almost a teen, I would use 'The 5 Love Languages Of Teenagers' **instead**. **Ideas we've used with our kids include:**

- **Parent Date** (quality time/gifts) - take your child out either one-on-one, or two-on-one (both parents) for a meal, shopping spree, or movie.
- **Pillow Gifts** (gifts) - leave a surprise snack or small gift on your child's pillow.
- **Card Talk** (words of affirmation) - choose a card your child will love, and write them a special note. Either post it to them or leave it as a surprise for them to find.
- **Room Tidy** (acts of service) - tidy your child's mess so they don't have to do it (on the day before their normal chore day).
- **Back Rub** (physical touch) - offer a special back massage or tickle!

(I list lots more ideas in my FREE resource [The Cultivate Love Challenge](#). More about that at the end of the post!)

3. Put it into action!

Probably the hardest part of intentional loving: actually doing it!

What more can I say? This is so often where I fall down. *I have great ideas and great intentions, then life overtakes, time slips by, and another week is gone.*

Isn't it wonderful that there is no condemnation in motherhood in Christ!

There's always another day!

The best advice I can give in being intentional in love is to ask the Holy Spirit's help. Ask his help in making time to intentionally love your tween. Ask his help to remember. And ask him to be alongside you as you love your child.

So there you go:

Discover your tween's love language. Make a plan. Put it into action! (Ask the Holy Spirit's help.) And be ready for some special moments!

**Intentional loving is, of course, not just for tweens. All our kids, whatever age, need to be loved on purpose. (Check out my post [3 Reasons Why Your Child Really Needs To Know YOUR Love.](#))

However, I feel the tween years are wonderful years to forge deep loving relationships with your kids, years when they are still receptive to hugs and cuddles, silly play, and hanging out with mum and dad. The teen years are also special, but you may have to be more inventive in loving your teen on purpose. Your teen may hang out with his friends

more than with you. They may disappear into their bedroom for hours on end!
Invest in loving your tween on purpose; that can then carry on over into a wonderful on-going relationship with your teen.**

For any parent finding the tween/teen years difficult, I share some of my own struggles in this post: [I Can't Carry My Children Anymore: All About Coming To An End Of Myself, Letting Go and Letting God](#) (with FREE printable: 12 Practical Ideas to Help You, As You Support Your Child Through Difficult Times)

I'd also love to give you a FREE copy of my eBook:

[The Cultivate Love Challenge: 50+ Ideas and Resources to Help Your Family Grow in Love.](#)

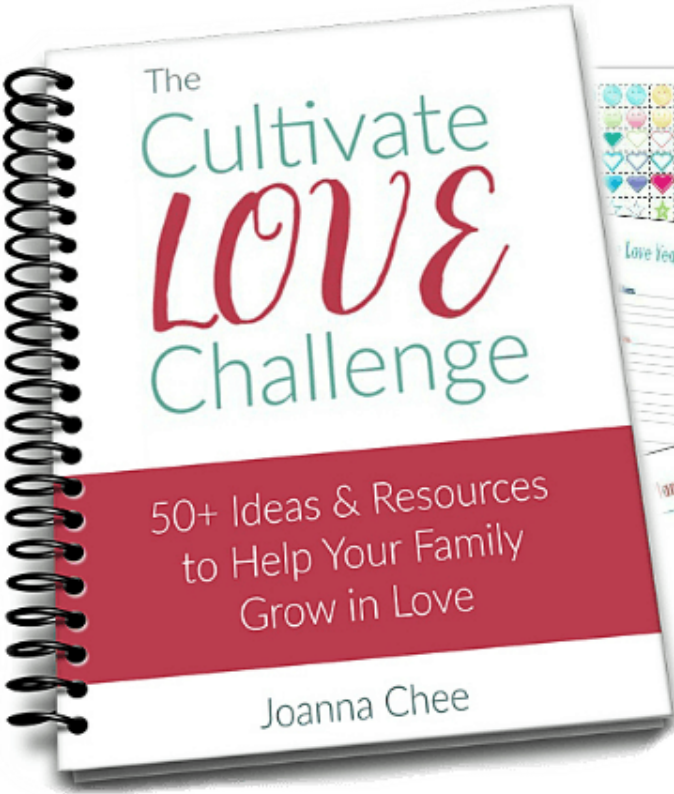
The Cultivate Love Challenge is 30 pages of ideas (and the planners and printables you need to put them into action) to strengthen your marriage, deepen your relationship with your kids, and help your children grow in friendship, all put together in a printable pdf.

It includes plenty of 5 love language ideas and resources to help you love your kids on purpose!

[You can find out more and get it for FREE by clicking here!](#)

Enjoy your tweens!

Joanna, her wonderful husband, and four lovely kids have travelled the world, lived in Malaysia, Bosnia and Turkey, and are now slowly settling back into the UK. Joanna has a heart to encourage and equip mums and moms to love their families and meet with God. She blogs at [MumsKidsJesus.com](#) and also hangs out (or tries to) on [Facebook](#) and [Pinterest](#). She'd love to see you there!



How I'll Show Love to My Children This Month

Month	Day	Year

The Cultivate Love Ideas

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Introduction: Why Do I Need This?

There are many ways to show love to your children. Some are simple and some are more complex. Some are more expensive than others. Some are more time-consuming than others. Some are more fun than others. Some are more practical than others. Some are more creative than others. Some are more traditional than others. Some are more modern than others. Some are more spiritual than others. Some are more secular than others. Some are more religious than others. Some are more non-religious than others. Some are more inclusive than others. Some are more exclusive than others. Some are more loving than others. Some are more caring than others. Some are more compassionate than others. Some are more empathetic than others. Some are more understanding than others. Some are more patient than others. Some are more kind than others. Some are more gentle than others. Some are more tender than others. Some are more affectionate than others. Some are more affectionate than others. Some are more affectionate than others.

Love Yearly Planner

5 Love Languages Ideas (for Kids)

Physical Touch:

Give a thumbs up, high five, hug, kiss, pat on the back, hold hands, snuggle, sit on the floor and read a book together, tickle, play with clay, paint, dance, sing, etc.

Cultivate Love Bible Study

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4 Corinthians 13:1-3 (3-year-olds)

And I will give to each of you a sign or wonder. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. If you do not love me, you will not keep my commandments. If you do not keep my commandments, you will not see the Father and remain in his love. This is why you will not be able to do the things you want to do. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. If you do not love me, you will not keep my commandments. If you do not keep my commandments, you will not see the Father and remain in his love. This is why you will not be able to do the things you want to do.

How I'll Show Love

How I'll Show Love	How I'll Show Love	How I'll Show Love



Navigating Sibling Relationships in the Tween Years

by Christia Colquitt of [Faith Filled Parenting](#)



Christia Colquitt
Faith Filled Parenting

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

I remember the moment well when each one of my children met their new sibling. It honestly felt like time stood still.

As a mom of five children, I cherished this moment when the first connection would be made. A sibling connection that would last a lifetime.

I would daydream about the days ahead of them playing together for hours, sharing (remember this is a daydream), sharing a room, and spending their childhood days together.

Well, I soon learned quickly that those early years with siblings, I played the role of referee. Trying to navigate their sibling relationships and make sure that everything was "fair."

It did not take me long to realize that this was an impossible task because "fair" is just not always possible. In fact, it is a good thing that everything is not fair because it is important to learn how to put other people first, to wait, and to be patient. *These are all characteristics that can be learned through sibling relationships.*

I have found tips and tricks that work along the way, and many of these ideas I have been able to tweak and use even with my now 10-year-old and his four younger siblings.

My Day, Your Day

One of the favorite things I use with my kids is our **My Day, Your Day System**.

It is so simple. Every child has one day of the week. It rotates through the week.

For example, if Brinkley is Monday, then Colston is Tuesday, Hartley is Wednesday, Kinsler is Thursday, and Cannon is Friday. Then, the rotation starts over - Brinkley is Saturday, Colston is Sunday, etc.

I not only keep a paper calendar printed out in our kitchen, I also put the days on my calendar each month. This really helps when we are out and about.

Why does this work?

It has completely eliminated the need to fight over who gets to choose the movie or the game or who gets to go first in the shower or who gets to run into Target with mom while dad stays in the car.

All I have to do is say "Whose day is it?" and everyone immediately knows whose turn it is.

This is a great teaching tool to remind tweens that it is not all about them.

There are other family members to consider. I know this is a life skill that all of my children will need as they get older.

For a complete idea of how this system works, feel free to find it [HERE](#). (There is also a free printable there to get you started right away!)

Three Simple Words

Another trick that I learned about a year ago was the magic of three simple words. I know that I stumbled upon this on Pinterest one day, but it has been some time and cannot find the source.

When my children are arguing about where they are sitting to eat their snack or whose turn it is to play with a toy, I ask "**How can you make it better?**"

Sometimes my preschoolers can figure this out, but my tween son definitely knows the answer.

Once I give him the gentle reminder that it takes two to cause a conflict, then he can usually figure out a good way to make it better.

Again, this tactic is helping my tween learn an important skill about conflict and making sure he owns up to his piece of the puzzle.

Keep Tweens Involved

Possibly one of the most important things to keep sibling relationships a priority is to keep tweens involved in family activities.

Sometimes tweens want space of their own, and that is ok to a certain extent.

But it is crucial that tweens know the non-negotiables.

In our home, we eat our meals together (with no electronics). We do not allow closed

doors in bedrooms unless they are sleeping. There are no electronics allowed upstairs or in a bedroom. They must always be in full sight of the family.

And they are still required to help out with smaller siblings. *I have found that by giving my tween responsibility in helping me with the little ones and managing our home, he takes more ownership.*

While it is easy to not make them come to their sister's gymnastics performance or let them play down the street with neighborhood kids all afternoon, it is important that tweens feel involved with their sibling's activities.

In our home, we try to attend all sporting events together as a family. We want to each support one another and be each other's biggest fans. As kids grow, it is important that this stays a part of their life. If you need help coming up with your non-negotiables, grab this [FREE Parenting Goals Worksheet](#). [CLICK HERE](#).

So now we want to hear from you! What ways do you keep sibling relationships a priority during the tween years?

Keep up the good work parenting your tween!!

Christia blogs over on [Faith Filled Parenting](#) where she provides encouragement and resources on [PARENTING, HOME MANAGEMENT, HOMESCHOOLING, CHRISTIAN LIVING](#) and their [FAMILY VLOG](#) !



Tackling the Hard Issues with Your Tween

by Tatiana Adurias of [The Musings of Mum](#)



Tatiana Adurias
The Musings of Mum

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

At my 24 week check up of child number 2, the ultrasound technician happily informed me that the precious bundle of joy I was carrying was a boy. I cried. No, I wept, maybe wailed is more like it. I did NOT want a boy.

I already had a boy and in order to complete the perfect little family I'd envisioned, I NEEDED a girl. Our son would grow up to be an athlete, possibly an Olympian, and our daughter would grow up to be a world renown doctor or scientist.

As I got home that afternoon, I had another panic attack.

God Answers Prayer

I prayed hard that night. Actually, I prayed for MONTHS after the doctor's visit, asking for a girl.

Seriously, present-day me would have dumped past day me in a tub full of ice. I needed to chill.

If you've been a believer for any length of time, you KNOW God is in the business of answering prayer. He will clearly respond with "No", "Go", or "Wait". The sonogram was wrong, child number 2 was a girl. And so were the next 4.

I have 5 daughters and one son. Yes, FIVE girls.

God also has a sense of humor. This is something I know.

Do You Lack Wisdom?

"God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called" is what my Pastor constantly reminds us of, before an evangelistic event.

One thing I should mention is that I'm not what you would call "girly". I don't like pink (unless it's fluorescent), I absolutely hate shopping (unless it involves office supplies). I have a pixie cut because I never learned how to style hair. I'm clueless when it comes to make-up, and I will always fall on my face if and when I attempt to wear heels.

My lack of '*knowing how to girl*' as my 16-year-old would put it, was no problem of course when my son was entering the tween years. Communication between us was great. We loved reading, we loved movies, we loved comic books and building things. We 'got' each other.

However, when my oldest daughter began to transition from an athletic tomboy to a girly girl, I had another panic attack. I was completely out of my comfort zone. Suddenly she wanted me to do her hair, paint her nails, buy her dresses and stockings. She wanted glitter and scented lotion. All.Things. Foreign.To.Me.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all

liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:5

Wisdom in parenting has always been my number one prayer request. One particular aspect I've tried to apply the wisdom I've been given is in parenting tween girls.

Did I mention God gave me 5 girls? I've had a tween for the last 12 years.

You know what comes after the tween years right? YUP. It's the highly anticipated teen years. I've been parked there for 8 years with 9 to go. Lord give me wisdom!

Sex Sells

For years my worst parenting fear was seeing my kids move away to college. After raising so many girls, my new worst fear is seeing them struggle with self-esteem and insecurity, something I struggled with as a young teen.

Suddenly my eyes were opened to the **magazine ads, billboards, TV shows, and even cartoons.**

Sex is in. The women in commercials are getting younger and wearing less. Even young girls are touched-up and air-brushed in the magazines.

All of this junk is enough to make almost 40-year-old me **scream**. How much more can the images affect our girls, who are going through the 'awkward' changes of puberty. Our girls who are still carrying a little more weight, than the girls on the teen magazines. Our girls who are wearing retainers and glasses and look gorgeous just the same.

Society has placed too much importance on appearance, and though it does affect boys; low-self esteem caused by one's appearance is very common among girls of all ages.

Social media fans the flame, by giving our tweens full access to the comparison train.

*Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last;
but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised.
Proverbs 31:30*

In all 21 verses describing the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, the only time *beauty* is mentioned is as a reminder that it will not last. The emphasis throughout is upon her strength, wisdom, and fear of the Lord. Let us raise young women who strive to please the Lord, not men.

Bullying & Suicide

For homeschoolers, bullying is not as big a concern as it would be in the public school system. Yes it happens there too, I have seen it, and it's ugly.

According to girlshealth.org, some reasons girls might be bullied are: being different in some way, being overweight or skinny, going through puberty earlier or later than others, having an illness or disability and having low self-esteem. Ultimately bullying can lead to self-harm and even suicide.

These are real issues, our tweens are facing today. According to the CDC "suicide is the third-leading cause of death for 15-to 24-year-olds, and it is the sixth leading cause of death for 5-to-14-year-olds".

This is a depressing statistic. My heart breaks at hearing this, and this not something I would normally want to discuss with my super optimistic 11-year-old. However it is a subject that has come up, and one we've discussed in the light of God's word.

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.
Psalm 139:14*

Seize The Opportunity

Sometimes we (and yes I also mean me) miss the signs our tweens are sending and we miss opportunities to address future problems. Recently my teen girls started watching a show I loved as a teenager. I walked in and out of the room several times and never once did I stop to watch/listen. Days later my 10 and 11-year-old sat down to watch the same show. I listened in this time and was appalled at the content. Instead of addressing the topic immediately, I raised my voice, turned the TV off and sent them to their rooms.

Though my aim is to raise girls who want to please the Lord and who can discern right from wrong, this was not entirely their fault. They had seen their siblings watch it, they had seen me allowing them to watch it, and they trusted my judgement. What's worse is that it took me 4 days to go back, apologize and discuss.

Sex is not something I particularly want to discuss with my tweens. BUT, how much better is it that they hear about it from me, than from a TV show, another child at the playground, or catch a glimpse on an internet ad.

Tackle The Hard Issues With Your Tween In Light of God's Word

Low self-esteem, depression, body image, bullying, sex.

I challenge you to discuss the awkward, uncomfortable, hard topics with your tweens as the opportunities present themselves. Most importantly discuss these things from a Biblical perspective. What does the word of God say about it?

If we start there, we will not go wrong.

*For this command is a lamp,
this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction
are the way to life Proverbs 6:23*

*As I kiss my kids goodnight, I look them in the eyes and remind them they are fearfully and wonderfully made. **I remind them God created them just as they are, He made them in His image and for His glory.***

Tatiana blogs over on [The Musings of Mum](#) where she shares **Encouragement & Tools to Reach the Next Generation of Believers**. She covers topics such as YOUTH MINISTRY, APOLOGETICS, MARRIAGE and SO MUCH MORE!

[Stop by to visit](#) and sign up for her email to keep up to date with all she has to offer - **I know you'll be blessed!**

The Musings of Mum

LEARNING, LOVING, LIVING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

Remember You Are Fighting FOR Not Against Your Tween

by Teri Lynne Underwood of [Prayers for Girls](#)



Teri Lynne Underwood
Prayers for Girls

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

A few years ago we had what I call, with no exaggeration or hyperbole, The Worst. Summer. Ever.

My daughter was 12. *And she was very good at it.* Nothing anyone suggested or offered was right. No matter what our plans were, her life was terrible. She was hormonal, hypersensitive, and sometimes even hateful.

It was whatever is the opposite of fun.

I tried every parenting technique in my arsenal. Nothing worked. Nothing.

All the bribing and begging, cajoling and commanding, fell on (selectively) deaf ears. I'm pretty sure at one point I asked my husband if we could go on vacation without her.

Be sure I am not proud of that. But, it's important to me that you understand how miserable that summer was and how much I felt like a failure as a mom. In fact, it was during one of those long summer days when a wise mom mentor/friend spoke these words,

"Remember, you are fighting FOR her not against her."

Her words were just the shock I needed to get back on track as a mom. I'd gotten so consumed with the daily mess, I'd forgotten the big picture. I'd been fighting against my child and, as a result was losing a battle I never wanted to lose.

So, I changed course. And I did it in two big ways.

Fighting FOR the future not against the past

It's easy to get caught up in all she's done and forget all she will do. When we fight for

our kids, we are investing in their futures. This means we parent with forward vision. We invest and discipline in ways that reveal the potential and promise in

our kids.

Fighting FOR the best not against the worst

It's so easy, especially during the difficult parenting seasons, to focus on all those attributes and attitudes that represent the worst parts of our kids. And while we definitely need to address those things, we must never let them become the centerpiece of our parenting. Remember to identify the areas where you see growth or the characteristics you most admire. Be intentional about recognizing the best parts of your tween ... not just dealing with the worst.

Who is our battle against?

Paul reminds us that our children are not the enemy:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. Ephesians 6:12 CSB

So often as parents we get into an us vs. them mentality regarding our children. But the truest truth is this: our enemy is far more insidious than anything our children will do and our enemy's great desire is to keep us from raising children who will be sold out for the kingdom of God.

This enemy wants us to be so busy trying to manage behaviors and appearances, focusing on expectations rather than truth. Let's not give him that win! Let's declare here and now that we will no longer fight against our children ... that we know this battle isn't fought over clean rooms and cheerful attitudes. This battle is for the hearts of children and we will be vigilant and focused as we fight FOR them!

How do we fight for our children?

Pray

It always starts with prayer. Praying Scripture over and for our children is one of our most powerful ways to fight for them. When we stand firm in the Word of God, claiming His truth over our kids' lives, we will have greater confidence as we raise them to seek His face for their whole lives.

Pursue

As our children get older, the days of them seeking us out fade. But that doesn't mean they don't need us. Our job becomes to pursue them. Be intentional and

diligent to pursue your tween. Open the door for conversations. Invite your child to spend time with you. Take interest in the things that interest your child.

Parenting a tween isn't for the weak at heart.

But it's a challenge worth taking! So, dig in and fight hard. Just remember to fight hard FOR your tween ... and then watch the ways God will work in your tween and in you!

xoxo,

Teri Lynne

P.S.

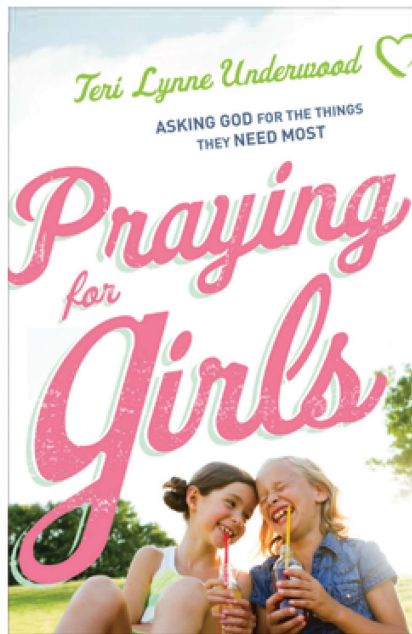
The Worst. Summer. Ever. ended without any major change in my girl's attitude but with a definite difference in my heart. Now, five years later, I'm still fighting for her and finding that with every passing day she's becoming a person I deeply admire. In other words, don't give up!!

TERI LYNNE IS A WORD LOVER AND AN IDEA SLINGER. SHE WRITES, SPEAKS AND TEACHES BECAUSE SHE BELIEVES BUSY WOMEN CAN LIVE WELL AND SHE WANTS TO HELP US ALL FIGURE OUT HOW. SO, GRAB A CUP OF COFFEE OR TEA OR DIET COKE AND JOIN HER!

www.terilynneunderwood.com || www.prayersforgirls.com

Teri Lynne has *lots of resources* available on both of her sites including her monthly prayer calendars on [Prayers for Girls](#) as well as her [Full Life Club](#) a Place of Encouragement for Living Abundantly in This Busy World!

And if you are a girl mom, you **do not want to miss her new book** *Praying for Girls* coming July 2017! Yes, you can [pre-order now!](#)



Do you feel uncertain about what or how to pray for your daughter?
You're not alone! Praying for our daughters can seem overwhelming

but it doesn't have to be!

This easy-to-use book features 200 Scripture-based prayers that cover key areas of every girl's life:

Her Identity

Her Heart

Her Mind

Her Relationships

Her Purpose

With simple ideas to nurture your daughter's faith from toddler through teen,
this encouraging book will equip you to

pray with confidence & power!

The One Thing Your Tween Needs to Hear Everyday

by Le Shepard of [Mom With An Asterisk](#)



Le Shepard
Mom With An Asterisk

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

If you ask me, my 11-year-old son Noah is one of the coolest kids on the planet. He is off-the-charts intelligent, quirky and, I think, absolutely hilarious. *If his self-concept was based on his mama's view, there would be no limit to his confidence.*

Unfortunately, that's not how it works. Our kids are surrounded by voices telling them who they should be and criticizing them when they don't fall in line. That's why it is so important that parents are intentional in the messages we send our children, particularly in the tween years.

From their first breath, our kids are on a mission to discover who they are and what their place is in this world.

As infants, they learn whether they are worthy of the love of their families. In toddlerhood, they begin discovering whether they are good and competent. When they head off to school, kids start to define themselves in relationship or comparison to others.

Suddenly their sense of value is influenced by their grades, sports abilities and friendships. When typical elementary age kids have healthy homes and supportive school environments, they are usually able to develop a healthy self-confidence but even the most well-adjusted kids can struggle as they transition from kids to tweens.

The chaos of the tween years (8 – 12 years old) often takes both kids and parents by surprise. Strong family bonds begin to feel forced. The pressure mounts to perform in school, on standardized tests, on the ballfield and on social media.

The roller coaster of hormones mixed with a rapidly changing social landscape can leave kids feeling unstable. They often begin to question who they are and struggle with their beliefs about the world.

As the world becomes a more confusing place for tweens, it is critical that home remains a safe space.

We parents must purposefully remind our kids of their value on a regular basis. They need to know that even when they are moody or make mistakes, we are still in their corner. There will be heartbreaks and lost friends along the way but your tween needs to understand your love won't waver. It may seem like they should just know your love is unconditional because you've been there all along.

You stayed through the horrors of potty training, why would you leave now? That isn't how the tween brain works though. Everything in their world is changing and they doubt themselves; it's easy for them to believe that you don't care if you aren't saying it on a regular basis.

Every day tweens make devastating decisions when they face rejection or fear they will. **Depression and anxiety are prevalent in this age group**, especially for kids who break the mold. In fact, the rate of suicides among tweens has tripled in the past 15 years and continues to rise. (To learn more about suicide among children and adolescents, click [here](#).)

When your tween comes home from a day of feeling like they don't matter, they need to hear you say you're still on their side. *Even on the good days, they need to be reminded of how much you love them.* I look for opportunities to connect with Noah and build him up but I also have one statement I make sure he hears everyday: **There is nothing you could ever do or say or be that would make me love you any less.**

There is nothing you could ever do or say or be that would make me love you any less.

I know that my son will make mistakes, even big ones, but they won't make me love him any less. I need him to know that too. There will be moments when he says things that wound my heart but I want him to understand he is worth hurting for. I'll keep loving through the pain.

As he finds himself in the coming years, I know there will be times when our ideas of who he is and who he should be will contradict each other. I will do my best to guide him as he grows into manhood while giving him the space to learn who he really is because, above all else, he is my child whom I adore. There is nothing he could ever do or say or be that would make me love him any less.

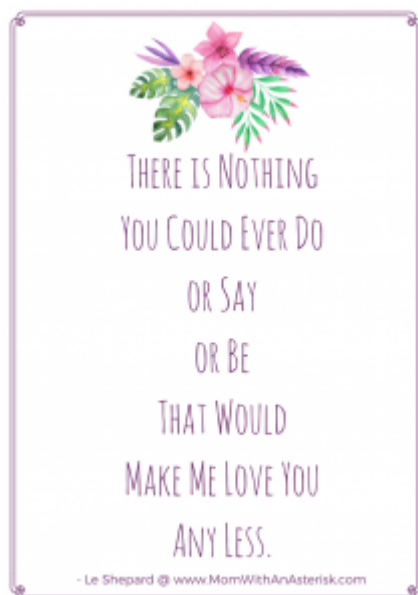
Parents, I invite you to join me in explicitly reminding our tweens today that they are valuable and our love is unconditional. Even if they roll their eyes and act like they aren't listening, pull them close and say "there is nothing you could ever do or say or be that would make me love you any less."

Le Shepard is a counselor, adjunct psychology professor, and writer. She's also a mama by birth and adoption to kids with superpowers and special needs. Le lives outside a one-stoplight town in Texas with her husband, three kids, three dogs, a lizard, and some cows. Le writes about epilepsy, orphan care, faith, and pure exhaustion at [Mom*](#) and would be pleased as punch if you followed her on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

Please stop by and visit Le at [Mom*](#) for more encouragement and resources on EPILEPSY, ADOPTION, RELATIONSHIPS and MORE!

What a beautiful example of how important it is to remember to express our unconditional love to our tweens. It is my heart's desire to create that safe and special place for them and yet I know how everything else can get us distracted from our good intentions! **Because of this, I wanted to create a FREE printable reminder for us to hang in our homes so we can see it and be reminded of the tween hearts in our lives who are waiting to hear it.**

You can access *this printable and all other printables, worksheets, scripture cards, stickers and more* by joining our **Encourage Community FREEBIES Hub** [HERE!](#)



6 Ways to Love Your Tween Well

by Durenda Wilson of DurendaWilson.com



Durenda Wilson
DurendaWilson.com

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Our youngest is now a tween. He has had 7 other siblings who “tweened” before him and none of them was exactly the same.

Having been a mom for 26 years, I feel my knees buckling at the thought of starting out as a mom in this age of - WAAAY too much information. I can tell you from where I am sitting that although raising kids is no small task, it is NOT nearly as complicated as it’s often made out to be.

Moms have been raising kids (and tweens) for thousands and thousands of years and though cultures have changed, children have not. They are still essentially wired with the same needs and stages of development that they have been for centuries.

The most important thing a parent can do is to **SLOW DOWN**, walk this journey **WITH** your child and love them well.

Sometimes we forget what it was like to be our kids' ages.

The tween years are the beginning of massive amounts change in the development of body and soul. And don't forget about HORMONES. It's sometimes hard for them to know what to do with their regular emotions, not to mention the NEW feelings that can sometimes be rather shocking!

As parents, we can help make their journey a beautiful time of growth and maturing **by loving them well.**

Here are some ways to do that:

1.) Keep communication open. Ask questions without expecting certain right or wrong answers. Kids need to know they can be honest with us and as parents, we cannot really guide our children accurately if we don't know the truth. *The truth is a great jumping off point for very defining conversations.*

2.) Let them know that you are on their side. Whether they need encouragement, a hug, direction, or correction try to make sure that they know your motive is love and wanting what is best for them without smothering them.

3.) Don't let them disrespect authority (that includes you). Although this age is notorious for starting to pull away from parental authority, you are still the parent **ALWAYS**. *That slow move toward independence can happen in healthy, respectful ways.* Work with your kids to find out what that looks like in your family. Make them part of the process.

4.) Remember that children don't typically have the ability to reason something through to a logical conclusion until approximately ages 13-15. That means that even though it seems like your child should be able to wrap his/her head around common sense, they may not be entirely ready yet. Certainly, encourage it and explain what it looks like, but be ok if the dots aren't quite connecting yet.

5.) Keep slowly increasing responsibility. Often at this age, our kids begin to experience more privileges, but don't let them get away without having more responsibilities to balance things out.

They are far more capable than we give them credit for! *We always tell our kids that with privilege comes responsibility...if they aren't responsible, they lose their privileges.* Teach them to work hard and give them the opportunity to learn the satisfaction of a job well done!

6.) Remind them of who they are. Kids this age sometimes start to feel self-conscious and unsure of themselves. Sometimes they can be really hard on themselves. *Remind them of who they are. Name off the positive strong character traits that you can see are growing.* These same kids can sometimes be prideful and self-important. Again, remind them of who they are... the positive traits that you see in them. By doing this you are calling them to a higher standard and that will help them grow in genuine confidence.

Lastly, ENJOY them and have fun with them! When we enjoy our kids, they feel valued. When they feel valued, they make better life choices.

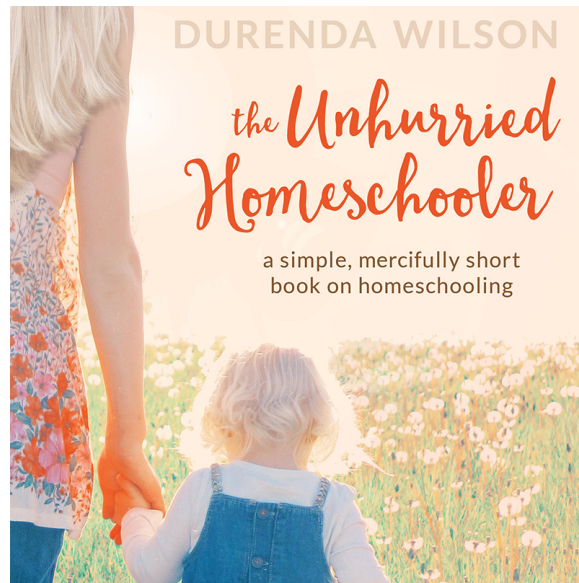
Let's love our tweens well and watch them flourish!

Durenda is the author of *The Unhurried Homeschooler: A Simple, Mercifully Short Book on Homeschooling* [available on on her site](#) or Amazon.

She has been a wife to "one hunk of a man" for 27 years. She's also a mom to eight, ages 12-26 and a nana to four sweet grand babies.

She shares: I had visions of what a great mom I would be, but after 26 years of mothering, I have come to the conclusion that I will NEVER be that mom. I have found myself more broken along the way than put together. I am learning to embrace that because it really isn't about me. I share often about my weaknesses and failures, but also about how God has miraculously used those to make our family what HE wants it to be. God is SO faithful to work through us AND sometimes in spite of us! You can find out more [about Durenda](#) along with all of

her writing and encouragement on her site durendawilson.com on Facebook [Durenda Wilson](#) and on [Instagram](#).



Use The Tweens To Prepare For The Teens - To Date or Not To Date?

by Josette Hall of [Home Sweet Halls](#)



Josette Hall
Home Sweet Halls

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

It might seem as though the tween-age years is too young to think about our children and dating, but it isn't. While they are tweens is the perfect time to put a plan in place for the future. **In fact, if you don't want your child to date during the early and mid-teen years, your time is well spent coming up with a plan now to win their hearts over to that idea.**

You could *enforce* whatever you decide is best. It's so much better to *help them see for themselves* that dating at a young age isn't a good idea. We didn't want our child to have a rebellious heart toward us because they think we're keeping from something.

A "right" of the teenage years that everyone else, even those with good, Christian parents seems to have.

How can we avoid that rebellion, the heartache and angst that so often comes with teenage dating?

I think it is possible to avoid it. My two oldest children (my third has Down syndrome and is 15) didn't date in the typical sense as teenagers. It wasn't something we forced on them. There was no rebellion. **It can be done :) I've witnessed it in other families too and it really is possible!**

*If you have a tween-aged child, it really is the perfect time to begin thinking about this issue. Pray about it. Talk with your spouse and then begin talking with your tween. **Slowly.** This isn't something that has to be covered in a day. But you're laying a foundation for the teen years. By the time mine hit the typical dating age, they weren't even thinking about it much. *It was mostly settled in their hearts and minds.**

You might be thinking, why wouldn't I want my kids to date at 16?

I started dating at 16 and maybe you did too. And with the dating came situations I would prefer my daughter not have to navigate at that age.

I went to a Christian school at 16 and the guys I went out with were "good, Christian boys". I was taken off guard on a first date with one such good, Christian boy. When we were in the car alone I wasn't prepared for him to be so forward, pushing for us to kiss and make out.

This was a truly nice guy who had never been anything but nice to me at school. We had gone to a movie and then were parked somewhere. I remember feeling a little nervous when he was going somewhere to park. I clearly remember trying to figure out how to get out of this situation. All without offending this boy, losing his friendship AND without his continuing to slobber all over my face. Again, this was a genuinely nice guy. **I wasn't prepared.**

Maybe my lack of preparation had something to do with my [less than stable home life](#).

But that wasn't it entirely. I did manage to get out of the situation somewhat gracefully, but not without anxiety. This kind of situation wasn't the **only** reason I came to feel that it was best to wait until a little older to date, but it was one factor.

It wasn't that night, but there were other times in my teen years that I made choices I later regretted. **In youthful ignorance and without a strong foundation of faith, emotion ruled my choices.** Dating has a tendency to form emotional ties. You are likely to form emotional attachments.

Dating has a tendency to form emotional ties. You are likely to form emotional attachments **before** you know if this person is really a good person for you to marry. But then you're already attached to them. **Then you're just a conflicted, emotional mess less likely to make wise decisions about the rest of your life.**

Dating in the early to mid-teen years, whether the experience is good or bad, brings emotional turbulence. I came to decide that it was totally unnecessary. There are just better ways for teens to spend their time and emotional energy. Dating might not turn out to be terrible, but I decided that it just wasn't *the best choice*.

Once I arrived at this conclusion, I thought about how I would have *totally not gone along with it if my dad told me I couldn't date.* You start dating at 16, it's just what you do. That's what I thought at the time, anyway.

What really started this whole process of thinking for me was when our home school administrator spoke at one of our meetings. It was about choosing courtship rather than dating. *At that time, the whole idea was a brand new one for me.*

The Duggar family has now made that a word more people know, but it was new to me at that time. And don't let me lose you here. **Although we homeschooled, we were your pretty average family.** We wear pants. We own and watch tv and my son played video games that some of them I wished he didn't, but we didn't forbid them.

At the age he was at the time, that was a battle we decided not to take on. *What choosing your battles wisely looks like will be different in each family.*

My wheels were turning that there was possibly a better way. I began to research online and read books on the list that had been handed out at the homeschool meeting.

Even if you think dating is a just fine thing for your teens, I encourage you to read at least one book considering that there could be a *better way*.

Once we decided dating at a young age wasn't a good idea I wasn't sure how to go about making that happen. *There was never an exact plan of "they can't date until such and such age."* There was never a, "They will not ever date, they will choose courtship." Our thoughts were more along the lines of, "Young dating isn't a good idea. As adults, we know that, let's try to help the kids see the wisdom in that. If they can't, we'll deal with that when it comes."

To be honest, my husband felt less sure of it than me.

He didn't read any of the books, but he listened to what I said. He agreed that it all sounded good, but he never really could see it working out the way I wanted it to.

From the night of that homeschooling meeting going forward, I became more and more convinced this was the right direction to pursue.

I'm a big reader and I don't mind research. I read a lot of books over several years that helped form my opinions on courtship and dating. It helped to take different things away from each one.

Here are some options and I *will point out my favorites for those that just want to read a couple of books.* It's been a while (years) since I read some of them, so I don't remember everything about all of them.

This is a list of resources for YOU, not your tween.

I think it's a great idea for them to read some of the books later if they're interested. My daughter, who likes to read, as a teen read a couple of them. There may have been others, I read a lot. But these are the ones that stand out in my memory. *The list is in alphabetical order.*

- **And the Bride Wore White: Seven Secrets to Sexual Purity** by Dannah Gresh. I don't remember a ton about this book. What stands out in my memory as I re-read the description is that sexual sin doesn't "just happen". There are decisions you make that put you in a vulnerable position.
- **I Kissed Dating Goodbye** by Joshua Harris. It wasn't my favorite of the books I read, but I took some good things away from it. The version sold today is expanded and updated.
- **Boy Meets Girl: Say Hello to Courtship** by Joshua Harris, written after he met and married his wife. I really liked this book. He's very open and real about some difficult aspects of his courtship relationship. If you are only going to read a couple of books, this was a good one.
- **When God Writes Your Love Story (Expanded Edition): by Eric and Leslie Ludy.** I read this book before it was the "expanded edition". This is one of my favorites! Loved this book. Both of the books by the Ludy's are written with alternating chapters by Eric and Leslie. I loved getting the male and female perspective. This is one my daughter read and she really liked it too. We have given it as a gift. I wanted my son to read it and gave it to him but he never
- finished it. I would have had to put it in our homeschool curriculum to get him to do so and there just wasn't room. But he greatly benefitted from all the resources I read without him having read them.
- **When Dreams Come True: A Love Story Only God Could Write** by Eric and Leslie Ludy this came after the book listed just above. (There has been an addition to the book since the edition I read.) Jordan, my daughter read this one too. I think she might have said this one was her favorite of the two. Honestly, I like them both a lot and can't remember which was my favorite.

Tips on how to put it into action!

One great benefit of homeschooling is the amount of time you get to spend with your kids. Over the course of time, there were *natural openings to conversations*. We began letting the kids know that dad and I thought to wait until later for

courtship or dating was the best choice.

It was just woven in with everyday life experiences as there was an opportunity.

Once they were teenagers, there were some late night talks. Usually, they were brought about by them or some situation that lead to us talking about it. *I leapt at every opportunity, but it was never formal or forced.*

Thankfully, our kids did see the wisdom in waiting until they were older for romantic relationships. There were momentary crushes, there were opposite-sex friendships, but no romantic relationships. As teenagers, any time one of their friends had a painful relationship, you can bet I was quick to say, "Aren't you glad you're avoiding that pain?" :)

Also from a really young age, we did not encourage the whole "boyfriend/girlfriend" thing. **So many today joke about their kids in elementary school having a boyfriend or girlfriend.** We chose not to encourage that line of thinking. To discourage something, sometimes all that is required is just not to give it any attention.

We are part of a large homeschool group. **Our teens got together with other teens in groups and participated in activities but didn't "date".** Our

homeschool group has an annual "formal" for high school students with dinner and dancing. The adults called it the Formal, the teens called it Prom.

This prom did not resemble those you've seen on tv:) It was extremely well done. Both my teens enjoyed attending multiple times with dates that were their friends that they were not in a romantic relationship with. My son also went to a homecoming dance with a friend that attended a Christian school that invited him. *These were all great experiences!*

The conversations started slowly in the older tween years and were steady through the teen years.

Even though the teen years can be turbulent at times, I was able to maintain a [friendship](#) with both my teens. It may not be possible with every teen, but it

certainly makes them more receptive to what you think and say.

Both teens agreed that dating and romantic relationships weren't a good idea until they were older.

My oldest started to date some at 18. *She knew clearly then what it was that she was looking for in a husband. We had been talking about it for years.* She got married this past September just after turning 22 to a young man we already dearly love. We say often that he is a lot like her dad :) My son is 21 and has yet to date and be in a romantic relationship. I'm kinda ready for him to find a super sweet girl now!

What if they hadn't gone along with our thinking? What if they were dead set determined that they wanted to date?

Depending on their maturity level at the time, we probably would have let them, with lots of coaching. *It wouldn't have been our first choice.* I wouldn't have liked it. **But we might have gone along with it if they were respectful of us. We would have done all we could to keep the conversation open and their hearts and ears open to us.**

While there is still some peer pressure when homeschooling, it isn't nearly so strong as when going to school. Teens spend more time with their parents instead of with their peers (who are also immature) all day every day. I think it made it much easier for my kids to make the decision not to date because they weren't surrounded constantly by others feeling differently.

Not all homeschooling families feel the same about dating, of course, but the pressure to conform was certainly less.

Tween parents, there are hard moments in tween parenting and hard moments in teen parenting, but also much joy!

I enjoyed the teen years with my now adult children so much. We truly were and are [friends](#). You have much to look forward to.

Thanks for reading all my many words. *I hope you find encouragement here, whatever you decide about dating!*

Josette

What an incredible post packed with real life wisdom, resources and tips! I am so thankful to have Josette share her personal experience! Josette blogs over on [Home Sweet Halls](#). She shares about DOWN SYNDROME, FAITH, FAMILY And HOME/DIY. Here's a little more [about Josette](#) and don't forget to stop by to visit and sign up for updates!

"I'm Josette Hall. I love being a homeMAKER. As wives and moms , we have the ability to set the tone in our home. I want the atmosphere of our home to be one of warmth, love, fun, and thankfulness. I choose to see and ponder on the beauty and joys of the ordinary, everyday."



10 Verses to Pray for Your Tweens

by Candace Crabtree of [Mercy is New](#)



Candace Crabtree
Mercy is New

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

We will never be perfect parents, but we can always be praying parents.

I don't know about you, but this idea of being a faithful praying parent gives me hope. I struggle with my failures as a mom and need the reminder that I will never be perfect but I can keep praying. *I will never be a perfect parent to my tweens or teens, but giving my children the gift of a praying mom is a treasure beyond what words can express.* I must remind myself that I need not be perfect anyway because my children do have a Perfect Heavenly Father who loves them more than I ever possibly could. It is my desire that in my failings as a mom, **I can point them to Jesus who will never let them down!**

Sometimes, though, prayer doesn't come easy. We are all out of words. **Our hearts are burdened and it's hard to even formulate sentences.** This is where praying God's Word has been transformative in my own life. [Through a dark season in my own life](#), God taught me to pray the very words that He has given us. [Praying the Scriptures](#) is for all of us because God's Word is for all of us. *The weak, the broken, the weary mamas with no words left...we can pick up God's Word and pray.*

10 Verses to Pray for Your Tweens

I want to share with you a few of my favorite verses to pray over my children!

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:4.

So often our children, especially when they begin entering the teen years, wonder what God's will is for their lives. God's will for each of us is spelled out so perfectly here in this passage. *No matter where you end up in life, no matter your career, no matter your relationships, we are called to love God with all our hearts, all our souls, all our strength.* **Lord, may our children love You with all of their hearts, souls, and strength.**

"Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9.

Lord, may our children be strong and courageous for You, God. Lord God, You are with us, You are with me. You are in the midst of our home and we can't thank You enough for Your presence. *God, on our own, we fail at this being strong and unafraid thing. By your might and grace alone, help us to trust You more with each passing day.* I ask you to help us, as parents, to live lives of

absolute trust and surrender that all they know to do is trust You.

When our children are afraid – when we are afraid – remind us of Joshua’s story. Remind us of your presence. Remind us of your goodness. You are Emmanuel...God with us.

“Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel answered, ‘Speak, for Your servant hears.” 1 Samuel 3:10.

Lord, we want to recognize Your voice. Teach us, through Your Word, what Your voice sounds like so that we can know truth from a lie. *Help us to know You more, to recognize Your voice, and in turn, to hear You. We don’t want to mistake the voice of*

the world with the voice of our Savior. We will learn your voice the more time we spend with You and in Your Word.

So, we are asking for your grace and your mercy to cover our home, grant us time and discipline to spend that time in ways that allow us to know You more. As parents, may we show our children a love for You and Your Word that draws them to Yourself. Holy Spirit, have Your way in our home. **Speak, Lord, we are listening.**

“Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4:14.

Lord, sometimes I wonder what in the world I am doing, what my purpose is, and if there isn’t some big huge thing you are calling me to do. But, the story of Esther helps us all know that You have placed us on this earth for such a time as this.

Right now. Right here. I am here for a purpose. My children are here for a purpose. Help us to point others to You, Jesus, every single day. Help us to look around us and see that You have given us relationships, circumstances and places to share You with others. May each of our children know that You created

them for a purpose; for such a time as this.

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Job 1:21.

May my children praise You in all things. I desire to praise You no matter what, Lord. May I be like Job and praise You in the storms of life. *In the desperate times, I’m desperate for You, nothing else will satisfy. Jesus, You alone are worthy of my praise.* And You are good no matter what is happening around me. You deserve my praise even when I don’t understand what is happening around me. May I be an example to my children of praising You no matter what. **You are worthy. Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the unscornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” Psalm 1:1-2.

Lord God, we desire to be Your blessed people. Grant us the wisdom and discernment to not seek counsel among the ungodly. May we show them Jesus, without seeking or listening to their counsel. Lord, the ungodly are all around us.

We desire to please You, to show the world who You are, but we desperately need to stay close to You to do so. *Our delight is You and Your Word. Thank You that when we focus on you, meditate on Your Word and fix our eyes on Jesus, you enable us to be who You created us to be.*

Your Word is powerful. Oh Lord, may our children delight in You and Your Word, that is the cry of our hearts as parents. May they not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. As they grow, bring Godly and wise and loving friends and leaders into their lives. May You and Your Word forever be the delight of our souls. We love You.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Psalm 23:1. (Read all

of Psalm 23.)

Father, You are my shepherd, I shall not want. *You make me lie down in green pastures, You lead me beside quiet waters. You restore my soul; You lead me in paths of righteousness for Your name sake!* Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in Your house forever. **Father, You are my child's shepherd, may they not want...may they be content in You and You alone.** You are our shepherd, we have all we need. You lead us, you restore us. Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives...because of You, Lord, we are grateful. For your glory.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7.

Oh Lord, may it never be said of our family that we despise wisdom and knowledge. Teach us to fear You. Teach us to love you more and more with each passing day so that we will never be foolish according to this description. Teach my children to fear Your Name, Lord. **Teach my children the beginning of**

knowledge is love and fear for You and You alone. May my children grow to love Your wisdom and Your instruction, Lord.

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all

things, hopes all things, endures all things." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Lord, You love us with a love we cannot fathom in our humanness. Yet You also call us, as Your children, to love others in that same way. By Your grace help me to show Your patience and Your kindness to all of those I encounter, but especially in our home. God, cause us not to envy, convict us when our pride begins to show its ugly head, may our response to our own sin against one another be repentance and humility.

Help me to seek after Your own heart and not my own desires, help me to fix my eyes on You and not the evil around me. May my rejoicing be in You and Your mighty works on this earth, not my own doing or anything that does not point to truth. Give me the grace and strength to show my family that I believe in them, that I hope good things for them and that my love for them will always endure. *May I be Jesus to my family.*

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."
Galatians 2:20.

Lord, in Christ we are made new. May my children learn this even at a young age. **Thank You that we can look beyond our past straight into the eyes of our loving Savior.** Thank You that You are alive in each of us and for the HOPE that gives us. Increase our faith, Lord, because sometimes, living in this world, it just gets so hard. We see destruction around us, not to mention our own sinfulness and worldliness and we struggle. But, grow our faith and grow our trust in You and remind us that You truly do work all things for Your good.

Thank You for loving me and giving Yourself for me.

You can [download your own PDF copy](#) of these 10 Verses to Pray for Your Tween courtesy of Mercy is New by joining our Freebies Hub Today!

10

Verses to Pray For Your Tween Child

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PDF Download
by Mercy is New



10 Verses to Pray for Your Tweens
by Candace Crabtree of Mercy is New

Help me to seek after your heart, Father, and your face. Help me to let my eyes rest on You and my mighty works on of earth. Give me eyes that I hope good if they do look on You.

*I have been
but Christ
think I do*

*Lord, in Christ we are
Thank You that we
Savior. Thank You I
increase our faith. I
We see destruction
and we struggle. Oh
You truly do work a
Thank You for Jesus*

You can have more of it

Praying in

*Prayer is it
and stand
unshakable.*

*Lord, God, we desire
discernment to not
without seeking or it
We desire to please
to stay close to You
when we focus on it
enable us to be who*

*Your Word is powerful
that is the cry of our
emptiness. As they go
their lives. May You a*

10 Verses to Pray for Your Tweens
by Candace Crabtree of Mercy is New

*Yet who knew
of it*

*Lord, sometimes I'm
there isn't some tag
helps us all know it*

*Slight now, slight he
helps us to point up
and see that You're
You with others, My
purpose for each a*

*What I do
include them*

*May my children go
to the "I" tag
deep as a far as
"our" do, "we" do,
even when I don't
to my children of all
name of the Lord.*

*Lord, may it be
Teach us to hear
that we will now
hear Your Name. I
hear for You and
instruction, Lord.*

*Give my
praise and
all praise,
all praise*

*Lord, You love us,
as Your child
show Your power
our hearts. God, I
ugly heart, may's
and humility.*

10 Verses to Pray for Your Tweens
by Candace Crabtree of Mercy is New

The Lord my Shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm 23.

*Father, You are
pasture. You lead
paths of righteousness,
of the shadow of
death, they cannot
harm me. You are*

*Lord, may it be
Teach us to hear
that we will now
hear Your Name. I
hear for You and
instruction, Lord.*

*Give my
praise and
all praise,
all praise*

*Lord, You love us,
as Your child
show Your power
our hearts. God, I
ugly heart, may's
and humility.*

10 Verses to Pray for Your Tweens
by Candace Crabtree of Mercy is New

*Have O Lord, the Father God the Father of our
You shall be the Father God with all your heart, with all
your soul, and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:4*

*After our children, especially when they begin entering the teen years, wonder
what God's will is for their lives, God's will for each of us is spelled out so perfectly
here in this passage. No matter where you end up in life, no matter your career, no
matter your relationships, we are called to love God with all our hearts, all our souls,
all our strength.*

Lord, may our children love You with all of their hearts, souls, and strength.

*Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid, for you
are standing for the Lord your God with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9*

*Lord, may our children be strong and courageous for You, God, Lord God. You are
with us. You are with me. You are in the middle of our home and we can't thank You
enough for Your presence. God, on our own, we fall at this being strong and
unshakable. By your might and grace alone, help us to trust You more with each
passing day. I ask you to help us, as parents, to live lives of absolute trust and
surrender that all they know to do is trust You. When our children are afraid - when
we are afraid - remind us of Jesus's story. Remind us of Your presence. Remind us
of your goodness. You are Emmanuel, God with us.*

*Now the Lord came and stood and called us at other times.
"Remember, remember! And remember, remember! Speak for Your
praise and glory." 1 Samuel 3:21*

*Lord, we want to recognize Your voice. Teach us, through Your Word, what Your
voice sounds like so that we can know truth from a lie. Help us to know You more,
to recognize Your voice, and in turn, to hear You. We don't want to mistake the
voice of the world with the voice of our Savior. We will learn your voice the more
time we spend with You and in Your Word.*

*So, we are asking for your grace and your mercy to cover our hearts, grant us time
and discipline to spend that time in ways that allow us to know You more. As
parents, may we show our children a love for You and Your Word that draws them
to Yourself. Holy Spirit, have Your way in our hearts. Speak, Lord, we are listening.*

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What a blessing for me to be able to introduce you to my friend Candace Crabtree! I so appreciate her heart for the Lord and her focus on Scripture!

I love that we can come to Him and rest in His word during our Tween Parenting journey to get the refreshment and encouragement we need!

Here's a little more information on Candace and where you can find her around the web!

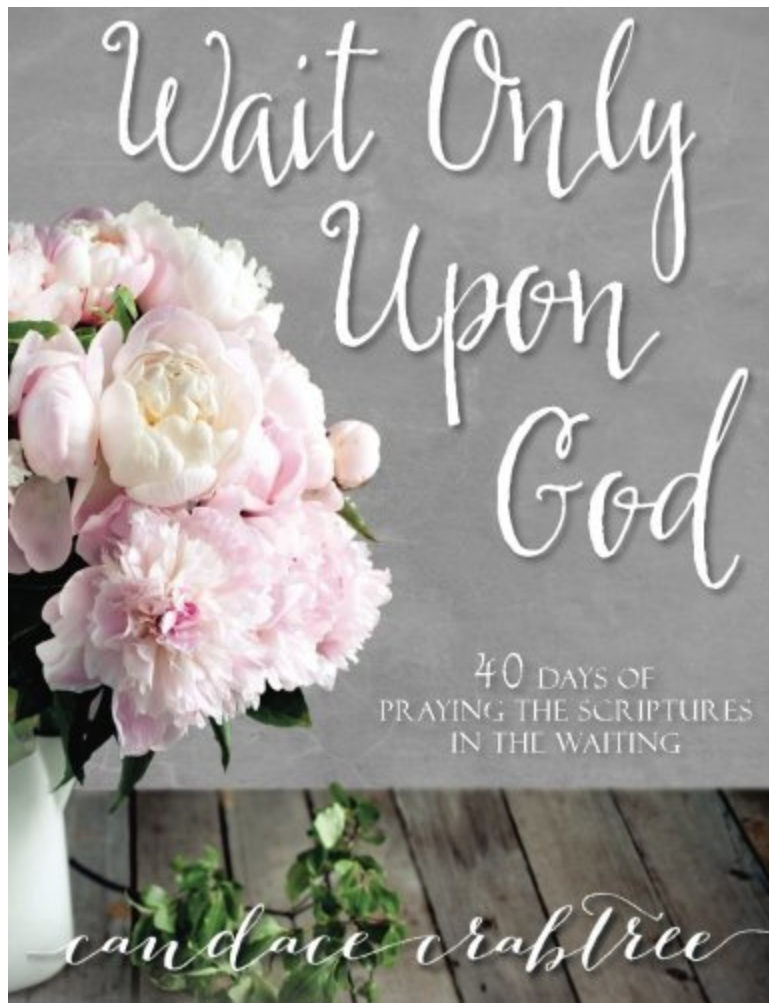
Wife, Mama, Encourager, Homeschooler, Blogger at MercylsNew.com Crazy oil lady. The older I've gotten, the more thankful I have become that His mercies truly are NEW every single morning. Every moment of every day our loving Father provides the grace we are desperate for.

Candace shares with us a transparent look into her life and God's amazing work.

She provides encouragement for those to find [Hope for Depression](#), [Praying the Scriptures](#) and her amazing [Write the Word Resources](#)!

Her ebook devotional [Wait Only Upon God: 40 Days of Praying the Scriptures In The Waiting](#) is available in her [shop](#), or in print on Amazon. She also has some beautiful mugs, note cards and printables available for purchase!

Join the conversation with Candace on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) as well, she would love to hear from you!



HIS
mercy
IS NEW



How To Connect With Your Tween Boy - 6 Tips!

by Amy Milcic of [Rock Your Homeschool](#)



Amy Milcic
Rock Your Homeschool

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Hey! I'm Amy, a homeschool soccer mom to 5 boys (3-14). I share these tips and ideas for connecting with your tween boy based on my own experiences as a boy mom. You know your son best. I encourage you to tweak these suggestions, if necessary, to best fit your relationship with your tween boy.

Has anyone ever told you, "The days are long, but the years are short"?

Yeah, great reminder but not always the advice you want to hear.

It's one thing to give that advice as 20/20 hindsight. It's another thing to have to hear it when you are deep in the trenches.

Especially when you are in the tween trenches!

EEK! Go run for your gas mask! (If you are a boy mom, you might find humor in that one;)

When you are knee deep in moods that fluctuate from sweet little boy to teenager with 'tude, you may just want to throat punch that advice.

You need solutions. You need support. And you may even need a sweet (or something stronger!).

Are you the new parent of a tween boy, ages 8-12? Have you found yourself scratching your head in wonder as fast as those birthday candles went out on your son's cake? Do you find yourself thinking, "What the heck has happened to my little boy? Why is he my best friend one minute and then gives a stare typically reserved for only an archnemesis?"

All will be well, my friend. I promise.

You have not lost your son to the terrifying tween years. He's still in there. *You might just need to use a few of these tips to scrape off the tweenage 'tude.*

What Is Happening to My Tween Boys?

Your tween son is going through a lot. Physically, boys ages 8-12 are typically dealing with a roller coaster ride of hormones. Think they are too young for that? Nope! Around ages 9 or 10, many [boys are often contending with hormones](#).

[Psychologically, tween boys](#) are becoming more aware of their external surroundings. They often want to fit in and begin to look outside of their family for ideas and support. Independent skills are quickly being mastered; there's a need to test them out.

Fortunately, all of these changes that your tween boys are going through are normal. Unfortunately, you get to deal with a young version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

How to Connect with Your Tween Boys

Connection with your tween boys is still very possible. You may feel like jumping back into bed and hiding under your comforter for a few years. Trust me. You won't want to miss this essential part of your sons' development!

1. Flexibility

Your tween boy is going to feel emotionally, physically, and mentally stretched like taffy. Or maybe a rubber band is a better example. He may feel stretched tight and have no idea where he is going when released. And the pain he can inflict upon impact.

Prepare yourself to bend with him. When you detect a change in his mood or behavior, give yourself a gentle reminder to calm yourself. Breathe in and out. It will be easier for all to ride out the storm when you have control over your reactions.

2. Communicate

During those moments of calm, sit down and chat with your son. Your talk doesn't have to be long or complicated. In fact, keeping it **simple and short** is probably best.

Many tween boys prefer conversation when you are parallel with them and have little to no eye contact. Sit side by side and work on an activity, like a puzzle or project. *A great time to chat is in the car!*

Start with small talk and keep it mild. Then, gently check in with your tween boy. Make a gentle observation like, "I noticed that you... Tell me more about that." Another helpful conversation starter is something like "Ugh! I get so angry when I forget to ... How does that make you feel?" Of course, you don't want to sound too clinical or uptight. Just be yourself and speak like you would with a friend.

Oh, and always talk to your tween boy with **respect!** They may look like little boys to you but they are growing into young adults. Respect can go such a long way!

3. Secret Code or System

During one of your conversations, come up with a secret code or system to help your tween boy **communicate their current mood**. Agree on code words or gestures to indicate how they are doing.

You could raise your eyebrows and your son could give a thumbs up for okay or thumbs down for not so good. Thoughts can get jumbled with emotions and make it hard for your tween to express himself. Providing a secret code (like "green" for feeling fine and "red" for alert!) can be a tremendous help to your son.

4. Shared Journal

Start a journal or notebook with your tween boy. Keep the writings in a secret place,

away from siblings. Writing down thoughts and feelings on paper can be therapeutic.

Your tween may **feel safer** and more willing to share by asking questions and expressing frustrations on paper. If your son doesn't like writing, consider using a voice recording app or tape recorder. Another alternative is drawing pictures and symbols to convey emotions and ideas.

5. Special One-on-One Time

If at all possible, carve out special one-on-one time with your tween boy. These times can be special dates, like going for ice cream or taking a walk. Or you can stay at home and play a game.

Your son may act like he's older and doesn't need you as much anymore. But, **he really does want special time with you**. Ask him what he'd like to do and try to follow through if appropriate (like, you may not want to go rock climbing or ride a dirt bike). If his idea is a bit over the top, work on a compromise.

6. Express Interest in their Interests

Has your tween boy become obsessed with a new series of books or video game? Maybe he loves a particular sport or hobby?

Note your curiosity for his new passion. I'm not saying go overboard and fully immerse yourself in his new thing. That might not go over so well. Take it slow. Ask a few questions (during one of those calm moments) and get a feel for his reaction. Go further if he is enthusiastic but back off for now if you detect a flare of 'tude quickly approaching.

The tween years can be challenging but also fun. Don't let hormones and attitudes get in the way of your relationship with your son. Use these suggestions to connect with your tween boy and maybe those days won't seem so long.

What tips to connect with tween boys would you add?

Amy is a homeschooling soccer mom to 5 boys. You can find her blogging on [Rock Your Homeschool](#) about **Homeschool, Help for Mom, Learning Fun and More!** Make sure to stop by her site grab your copy of the **10 SECRETS to Be a FUN Homeschool Mom TODAY!**

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3 Surprising Reasons to Say YES to Your Tween!

by Christine Drews of [Digging Deeper With God](#)



Christine Drews
Digging Deeper With God

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

I have the privilege of helping to raise two tween girls who are not my own. They are 10 and 11, and I am immensely grateful to their mom for letting me join her in rearing her children. **It sounds lovely to be a parent until you are neck-deep in sibling rivalry, the pushing of boundaries, and eye rolls to beat all eye rolls.** Tween parenting is hard!

Tween parenting is hard!

So it comes as no surprise that many articles on tween parenting involve establishing boundaries and setting firm expectations. A colleague whose boys have reached college age echoed this advice:

"Middle school is hard for *everyone*," she said. "It's a weird time. But if you **lay a good foundation** of discipline for doing homework and enforce your expectations for how they are to handle their social skills, it will only help them to be ready for high school. Trust me. You will survive!"

It is good advice from a mom who has successfully navigated tween parenting.

And yet, I long for more in these parent-tween relationships, as does just about every parent!

Maybe because I am older than your average parent of tweens, **I have found great value in saying YES to these tween girls.**

YES? Yes.

Hear me clearly: I am writing this the same week that we limited TV viewing, held firm on the rule to not have phones in bedrooms at night, and sent one of the tweens to her room, which she finds incalculably worse than being forced to eat her vegetables. At the same time, their drive for independence (but don't even *think* about taking away their stuffed animals) is crying out for us to **occasionally and cheerfully say YES.**

Saying YES to tweens' requests

- conveys trust,
- opens up dialog, and
- builds relationship.

My hope and prayer is that all of this builds a foundation for the coming teen years

when the issues will be even more challenging than what we face now. *When uncertainty about sexual relations, drugs, and social media occur, will our teens feel safe coming to us for guidance?*

By saying YES in these tween years, we convey trust in our tweens' decision-making, we make space for conversation, and we build a lasting relationship.

So this week, along with disciplining, I also said YES to bumping the volleyball in the back yard when I really wanted to keep planting my garden. I said YES to going on a bike ride before school when that wasn't exactly on my agenda. I even said YES to ordering a gallon of glue and helping to host a slime-making party. (You have to seriously love Amazon Prime for delivering a gallon of glue to your doorstep the very next day.)

You know what? We've had an absolute blast! Tween parenting can be fun! Playing back yard volleyball opened up opportunities for honest conversation. The 10-year-old who wanted to bike every morning was not aiming for a long workout. **She was looking for quality time together, just her and me.** We have loved those early morning rides together.

And the 11-year-old, who led us in slime-making, felt empowered and finally valued for her creativity and industriousness. She's been making slime for weeks, and we've been reluctantly putting up with it. Come to find out, **slime is so cool!** I actually had not made it myself, but by joining in her endeavor, I came to understand its appeal. No wonder it's all the rage!

Yes, as part of tween parenting, we must establish boundaries and set expectations. But saying YES when it is possible opens incredible opportunities to convey trust, open up dialog, and strengthen relationships for the teen years that are to come.

What can you say YES to this week?

You can find more encouragement from Christine in growing your faith over on [Digging Deeper With God](#). She has many devotions, blog articles and resources to encourage and equip you in your walk!

Here's a little about Christine.

Hi there I'm [Christine Drews](#), and I am very glad you are here. By day, I edit exercise science manuscripts. By night, I pour over God's Word, seeking God's voice and writing devotions, along with all the other stuff of life—laundry, bills, and assorted extracurricular activities. I love bicycling, vegetable gardening, and mentoring the youngsters in my life. We're currently working hard on math facts, and I'm secretly dreading the upcoming science projects.

I am an imperfect person redeemed by a holy God. I look forward to Digging Deeper with God together with you.

Subscribe to www.DiggingDeeperwithGod.com and get a free PDF on **How to Hear God's Voice in a Busy World**. If you're like me, you long to talk with God *and hear back from Him*. This free PDF explains four biblical strategies to help you connect with the Lord. It comes complete with an index card for each strategy that you can carry with you to encourage your time with God. Biblical * Practical * Life-Changing

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WITH
GOD**

C.R.E.A.T.E. - Six Ways Art Teaches Tween Girls About the Bible

by Annie Pajcic of [Thou Art Exalted](#)



Annie Pajcic
Thou Art Exalted

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

What do you do when your tween is too old for VBS and too young for the heavier issues of high school, but you still want to give them a love for Jesus?

When my daughter, Daley, was in fourth grade, she began to struggle with the issues of identity, faith, and just plain growing up. Like many moms, I wanted something more for her. *I wanted her to believe in her God-given gifts and talents.*

I also wanted her to know she was special and uniquely made with a purpose and a plan.

Most importantly, I wanted her to know Jesus.

When I searched for tween curriculum, and couldn't find the perfect blend of age appropriate

topics, I decided to write and design my own studies. Being an artist and graphic designer, I used art as a creative tool to explore and remember the Bible.

Little did I know, I was about to launch into a 10-year adventure of developing a non-profit ministry called ThouArtExalted where *our mission is to creatively equip this generation to know Christ through the study of God's Word.*

But what's the importance of art?

Using the word C.R.E.A.T.E, here are six reasons why I use art to teach God's Word to tween girls:

1. Art reflects the C-reator

Did you know the fifth word in the Bible is create? I love this! We were made by the Creator in His image and are called His masterpiece.

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (Ephesians 2:10, NLT).

Not only are we a reflection of God's image (Genesis 1:27) but God's artwork is all around us displayed in the beauty of creation.

Think about the color of the ocean, or the texture of a hedgehog, or the pattern in a simple leaf. It's amazing! I believe that when we create, we are tapping into the creative side of God Himself.

Art inspires us to discover the “good things he planned for us long ago so that we can walk into them!” Art teaches us the creative side of God and also reveals who we are as individual masterpieces.

2. Art R-eminds us of Scripture

At ThouArtExalted, every piece of art we create is a reflection of Scripture. It’s a tangible and accessible reminder of God’s promises. We study a passage of Scripture, then create a visual connection through art. **Just like Jesus used parables to teach people Biblical concepts, I believe art is a powerful memory tool for teaching and connecting with the Word of God.**

“When I study Bible Studies with Ms. Annie, it always helps me remember, pieces that I have done with art, because on each one of these pieces there are different Scriptures. For instance, this one helps me to remember that I am an individual, and I don’t have to be like anyone else.” - Caroline Grace.

(To watch Caroline Grace’s testimony, [click here](#))

3. Art is E-vangelistic

From the paintings of the Last Supper to stained glass windows, art has always been an evangelical tool and powerful form of worship. Great art can be compelling, yet also a practical form of communication.

ThouArtExalted’s art pieces are designed to be tools that share the good news of Jesus. I have walked into many girls’ bedrooms where they can explain why the art reflects Scripture and what it personally means to them.

Not only does it encourage their journey with Christ, but it can help them talk about their faith with their friends. **Art becomes an evangelistic tool that opens the door to share the true meaning of Scripture.**

4. Art is A-rtistic

Art allows us to explore our artistic side. I can hear you saying, “But, I am not artistic!”

This is simply not true.

Because we are created in the image of the Master Artist, we are all creative. Art is not limited to a canvas. It can be gardening, sewing, cooking, drawing, building, or even communicating.

There is no limit to creativity. Breaking the belief that we are not all creative is freeing! I see girls and women who cower at an art project because someone told them long ago they were not creative. Bah-humbug!

ThouArtExalted believes that while we are not all “fine” artists, we are all “fun” artists! We are all artistic.

5. Art is T-herapeutic

Art allows us to let go of the worries of this world and be still in the present moment. **When a group of girls gather together, I see the weight of the world fall off their shoulders.** And while they might be a little intimidated to get paint on their hands, once they step into the creative process, they seem to let go of all the burdens they are carrying.

There is laughter, smiles, and fellowship. New friendships are made and memories are being sowed. Art is a safe place to cast off stress and allow God's seed to be planted in their hearts.

6. Art is E-ncouraging

In today's social media-driven society, tween girls are facing a real “identity crisis” as they wrestle with feelings of intense inadequacy, distorted desires, and obsessions with appearance and performance. When they begin to focus on creating a piece of art that reflects who they are in Christ, it breaks down walls of insecurity and frees them from the pressure to perform.

Creating art encourages them to use their imagination and discover who they are as a masterpiece created by God. Art helps us to celebrate our uniqueness and not get weighed down by comparison and jealousy. Art liberates and encourages us to know that God has made each and every one of us with a special purpose and a plan.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)

I have a passion for creatively teaching the Word of God. I want to help tweens know they are loved by the Creator who is crazy about them!

And I bet, you are a mom like me, who loves her girls and longs to share the love of Christ with them.

If your daughter loves to create, but you shy away from "artsy" things because you think you're not creative, I want to encourage you!

You CAN do it. God created you to be creative. Creativity is a process. It's a journey. It's not always perfect. And sometimes, it's about the lesson of perseverance and not so much about the end result. I am your biggest cheerleader!

If you're interested in **ThouArtExalted's art-based Bible studies for tween/teen girls**, you can visit our website at www.thouartexalted.com to learn more.

*Don't forget to download **ThouArtExalted's FREE daily devotional app for tween/teen girls**. We are reading through the entire New Testament in ONE YEAR!*

[Click here to download](#)

Today, ThouArtExalted has developed [nine art-based Bible studies for girls](#), including one Mother/Daughter devotional study, as well as one [Bible Study for middle school boys](#).

Two Bible studies are written for women, **PLANTED: Sit, Stand, and Walk with Jesus** and **Riding Tandem: Leaning into the Leading of God**.

"Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in

the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.” 1 Chronicles 29:11 King James Version

Annie Pajcic of ThouArtExalted. Christian Speaker, Author & Artist. The owner of ThouArtExalted, a non-profit ministry for women and girls.

Read New Testament in One Year!

for girls

Download for FREE: ThouArtExalted Ministries in the APP store today!

Worried or Anxious Tween? How to Tell the Difference and What to Do

by Michelle Nietert of [Counselor Thoughts](#)



Michelle Nietert
Counselor Thoughts

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

As a mental health professional, I have been working with families of worriers to protect them from anxiety disorders for 20 years. *But this past year anxiety hit a little closer to home.* We lost my husband's twin sister to cancer in January. My son was three when she and her husband, now both in heaven were diagnosed. Not surprisingly, he has struggled with understanding that most parents don't die.

Around the time of my SIL's death, he developed what we thought was a stomach bug. We realized after the funeral when it was not clearing up, his morning nausea and non-verified throwing up were more than a viral illness.

His "throwing up in his mouth" as he described it to our pediatrician had to do with reflux caused by the anxiety. *He was wondering if he would ever see his parents again, every time he left them.* We even encountered some mild school refusal because of moderate separation anxiety. He did not want to go to school and leave us.

Anxiety is like a dragon, and the more the worry feeds it the faster it grows and the more difficult it is to fight.

I knew this from equipping hundreds of children for battle at our center and as a previous school counselor. I immediately took up my weapons and empowered my son with what he would need to slay the anxiety dragon attempting to overtake him.

I prayed fervently it would be a temporary battle not developing into a full-blown anxiety disorder. Gratefully for us, we do not have a large family history of severe issues such as panic disorder and OCD (as this might have tipped him over the edge.)

I. Fighting Worried Thinking

We began by helping him with his thoughts. We did this using children's books that specifically address worry. By teaching him scriptures that teach us not to fear and that God is in charge and going to take great care of us. And helping him learn to stomp out any ANTs trying to invade his brain. (Automatic Negative Thoughts from [Daniel Amen's Change Your Brain, Change Your Life.](#))

II. Fighting the Body's Reaction to Worry

Next, we improved his body chemistry. We were intentional about his sleep and his activity level (as he was using Minecraft as a way to escape). Because he had some mild sensory issues that seemed to be escalating, we enrolled him in occupational therapy (see [The Out of Sync Child by Carol Kranowitz](#)).

We also saw his pediatrician just because. Even though I'm a professional who has treated kids for 20 years, I wanted another viewpoint on how he was doing and how severe his struggles were.

A final step in addressing his body chemistry is an intervention so simple, most people are surprised at the difference it makes. [Belly breathing](#) . I used [books](#), blowing bubbles and an app to teach him a simple skill that allowed his body to relax and brain to work better.

When evaluating kids for transitional worry vs an anxiety disorder, professionals address two main symptom dynamics: frequency and intensity.

His pediatrician and I both agreed that although he was struggling, his symptoms were still most likely transitional and moderate in range. He was young and we had a very specific trigger we could identify.

She did add a prescription for an FDA-approved food supplement that is an omega-3 capsule ([Vayarin](#)) because it works a little better than most vitamins.

After doing some further research, I made sure that we were taking his probiotic once again as well.

Finally, because we believed that the anxiety was triggering reflux and the reflux was triggering anxiety we decided to give him a round of Nexium for two weeks. This seemed to stop the "throwing up in his mouth" completely. In our counseling offices, we often deal with kids that do not want to throw up at school. Especially when in a classroom and in front of a lot of others. **The fear of throwing up actually increases the anxiety so we have to attack that fear in every direction possible.**

III. Fighting with School Support

I also reached out to his teacher, the school nurse and his counselor. I let the nurse know when he came to the office we needed to make sure we ruled out the possibility that his stomach issues weren't anxiety related. This was before treating him for illness (or worse sending him home).

The school counselor was AMAZING (as most of them are)

and her interventions were right on track.

When he was feeling sick to his stomach, she did some play and art therapy with him. Then they talked about what was bothering him.

She also set up a plan because he was struggling with getting to school. He would become her "special assistant" and help her open the doors in the morning for a couple of days. These interventions were almost magical.

It's very important if you have a tween struggling with getting to school that you involve help as soon as possible. If you allow your child to stay home and give into their anxiety dragon you will feed it. It will then become harder and harder to get them where they need to go.

When they argue back, we use a phrase that doesn't invalidate their feelings - "I think that's your anxiety talking not your wise mind." When a child stays home and avoids everyday activities it can be a sign of a clinical diagnosis called agoraphobia.

III. A Parent's Battle

Next came Mom. I personally engaged in one of my biggest battles as a parent to date. It's very common when your child struggles with anxiety for you to have your own struggles with worry as well.

I myself was dealing with a heavy load. I was supporting my mental health clients and our center staff. I was dealing with grief, some family issues, and my own bouts with that stomach virus. I ended up having a severe episode where I was transported to the hospital by ambulance in the middle of the night in front of my children. The paramedics could not prevent my dehydration even with an IV already in place.

I since have also diagnosed with reflux (I had had this silent cough for months). I then engaged in reducing my own stress levels with the help of my senior staff to allow my own body heal better. *Ask any medical professional how much stress impacts our ability to heal physically.*

Finally, I began a spiritual battle both for myself and my son.

I begin to dwell on and teach him scriptures that specifically focus on fear and emotions. *Psalms is a great place to start.*

Also, I prayed for, with and over him often using scripture and asking God to fight this battle for, in and through us.

You can join my email subscriber list where I have special offers of printable scriptures and more. [Join in by clicking here.](#)

In summary, if your child struggles with worry, I would definitely begin working on any negative or catastrophic (predicting bad things in the future) thinking. [Here is a list of resources of books for children that should help you get started.](#) **If the worry continues, I encourage you to get help to evaluate if it has morphed into an anxiety disorder.** Neuroscience research supports the sooner we treat children and teens for anxiety and depression, the less likely it will reoccur in adulthood. This is because our body learns patterns no different than us waking up at a certain time each morning.

There is a national grant that offers free counseling but is distributed differently in each state. In Texas, each county has a different way of accessing it. You might begin to ask around about a free counseling service that provides 4 to 6 free sessions for kids. Especially since it's summertime and school counselors are not available.

I would love to know what questions you have about anxiety. While *I cannot enter into a counseling relationship with my readers,* I'm happy to point you in the right direction in getting help.

Feel free to comment or send me an email. Please also be patient as posts such as this often flood my inbox. If you are interested in gaining more information from a mental health professional, I'd love to be your Facebook friend.

If you are interested in gaining more information from a mental health professional, I'd love to be your Facebook friend. You can also follow the [Counselor Thoughts Facebook page](#), [subscribe to the blog](#) or [join my intentional summer Facebook group](#).

Michelle Nietert is Licensed Professional Counselor and Clinical Director of Community Counseling Associates with 3 locations in the Dallas, TX area. She has been equipping audiences in the community, church, school and private practice office setting for over twenty years.

Michelle has published parenting articles in both *Lifeway's ParentLife magazine* and on the *MOPS Hello Dearest Blog*. She is currently working with a Christian publishing agent on a book possibly titled *Uncomfortable Conversations* that will equip parents to introduce topics such as anxiety and depression, abuse, sexuality, and other mental health issues to their children before the culture does.

A happily married mom of two children age 6 and 9 with a husband who travels for work, Michelle loves inspiring readers and audiences alike to discover **Solutions for Life with Practical Teaching and Biblical Wisdom.**

Michelle's favorite fun times include lazy days by the pool, trips to the beach, girls nights out with close friends and date nights with her husband. Her professional counselor bio is available [here](#).

*Counselor
Thoughts*

with

MICHELLE NIETERT



Dear Tween Child, Guard Your Heart



Ana Willis
They Call Me Blessed

by Ana Willis of They Call Me Blessed

[This Post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Guard your heart, my child!

As a Christian mother, I lay awake, night after night, asking God for wisdom to guide me in leading my tween child as he grows.

I thought a mother could only wish and pray her child was going to turn out good, but I was wrong. A mother's job is to love, to nourish, to guide her child and to teach her child to guard his/her heart. Not in her own strength or wisdom but in the wisdom of the Lord and by His Spirit.

Growing up in a non-Christian home, I was lucky to have wonderful parents who did what they could to guide us but the fear of the Lord wasn't there. But I am saved. By God's mercy and grace, I can rely on Him and on His Holy Spirit to raise my children in a godly home.

As a lay awake praying for my sweet 9-year-old child and his soon-to-be tween sister, I ask God to protect them and to keep them from the evil of this world, I pray they will not grow up in sin like I did. My prayers and my tears alone won't guard their hearts but God's Word will.

So in my prayer and agony, which only a mother knows the fears that come to our hearts regarding our children as we lay at night in bed, the Word of the Lord in Proverbs 4 came to my heart.

Proverbs 4:1-27 NIV

"1 Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding.

2 I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching.

3 When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother,

4 he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.

5 Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.

6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.

7 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

8 Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you.

9 She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor."

10 Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many.

11 I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.

12 When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.

13 Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life

14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.

15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

16 For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall.

17 They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

18 The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

19 But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

20 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.

21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;

22 for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

24 Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.

26 Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.

27 Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil."

As I meditated in this Word, I wrote this letter in my heart to my sweet tween child.

Dear Tween Child,

I love you too much not to share what I am about to with you. So please listen to my words carefully because they will save you from many mistakes and much suffering in life.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

My child, The only way to guard your heart is by knowing and obeying God's Word.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your word." Psalms 119:9 TLV

I wish I had known this when I was your age. My life of sin started very early because I didn't have Godly parents who knew the Word to guide me. My heart wasn't pure and many times I stumbled on the way. I allowed the evil of this world to penetrate my heart and my mind.

Dear Tween Child, keep your heart pure!

Guard your eyes not to see evil things that will penetrate and corrupt your eyes. It is my duty as your mother to warn you to guard your heart and guard your eyes.

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." Deuteronomy 4:9 NIV

Dear Tween Child, guard your eyes!

What your eyes see will get into your mind and eventually it will make its way into your heart. Let what you see be good and praiseworthy. Let it be pleasing to your Heavenly Father. Keep your eyes open to God's wonders and shut to the evil of this world.

My greatest accomplishment in this life will be to see you "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV

Dear Tween Child, hear the Word, read the Word and write the Word in your heart!

When I have you copying Bible verses is because I know how much having it in your heart will protect you, guard you and guide you in your life.

I know sometimes your hands hurt from writing it over and over again. I know it could be tiring to memorize the same verse every day for a whole week, but it is for much more than just an Awana sticker.

Until the Word of God is written in your heart, I will take no rest. His Word is strong enough to keep you from falling when you are weak.

"With my whole heart have I sought You —let me not stray from Your commandments. Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:10-11

Why do you need to guard your heart, dear child?

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9

Because your heart will play tricks on you. Your feelings and emotions can lead you to bad decisions and to sin. The devil will use emotions to confuse you and the desires of your flesh to make you fall.

But God's Word will be a shield to guard your heart against evil schemes in every circumstance. And the Holy Spirit of God will remind you of God's Word and whisper in your ears "this is wrong, don't do it". Make sure you listen to the voice of Truth. God's Word is Truth. His Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.

"However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come." John 16:13

Sweet Tween Child, I love you! Make sure you guard your heart at all times. I don't want to see you suffering.

My child, I only wish I had known these things when I was your age. I wish I had known the Word of God and the love of God to keep me from all the guilt, shame, and condemnation from my sin - but, dear tween child, you do. Run away from sin, run as fast and as far as you can for sin will only destroy you.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

Don't listen to your "friends" when they say they know better than your parents. They will be deceiving you. Just as you are, they are also young and have much to learn in this life. Remember that a real friend will bring you closer to Jesus, not away from Him and His Word.

"Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the LORD and turn away from evil." Proverbs 3:7

Dear Tween Child, don't let God's Word depart from you.

"Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;" Proverbs 4:21

I promise to read you the Word and I will teach you God's ways. I will hold your hand and help you walk in His ways until you can walk on your own.

Seek His face first thing in the morning and let His Word be the last thing in your heart before you sleep. Meditate on it day and night and you will prosper in all you do.

God's Word will never let you down. You can always trust in Him! Jesus himself relied on His Father's Word to fight temptation and so can you. God's Word is your best weapon!

Dear Tween Child, I am here for you. I will never leave you.

When doubts, fears, and confusion comes to your mind, you can come to me and together we can look into God's Word to find what it says about it. The Word of God never fails and His Word will guide us both.

"Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105

You will never have to face anything on your own. Whatever life brings, God knows and will be in control of it. And because He knows all things, you can rest assured that His Holy Spirit will guide you through it. [Cast your cares on the Lord](#) and He will sustain you.

My dear Tween Child, God's precious gift to this mother, guard your heart!

I know one day all my prayers will be answered and I will see you becoming everything God created you to be. You were born to bring Him glory, to expand His kingdom in this earth and to make the name of Jesus famous.

Don't take less than the best God has prepared for you. Cling to His promises. Walk in His commandment. Shine for His glory.

With love, by God's grace, who enables me to raise you up for Him,

Mom.

Does this post resonate with your heart for your tween?

Dear tween parent, you can download a template of this letter and personalize for your child by clicking [here to visit the post on-line](#).

What a beautiful letter for our tweens and such an encouraging reminder for our hearts as well. I found myself shaking my head in agreement with Ana as she works us through God's word -narrowing in on the importance of teaching our tweens to guard their hearts. Simply Incredible.

Ana Willis from They Call Me Blessed has created an inspiring and encouraging a community of busy homemakers like you and me, a.k.a MOMS!

It is a community of women who deeply desire to have a closer relationship with God and to serve Him, their family and their community better. The goal is to simply inspire, encourage and empower moms with: Healthy Living – Homeschooling – Homemaking – Holy Moments

Ana shares: My hearts' desire is that every mom will find beauty in the ordinary moments of her life and be fulfilled in doing all God has created and called her to do.

Make sure to visit [They Call Me Blessed](#) and join her in subscribing by email where she loves to encourage and inspire you in your journey! She's also available to connect on social media [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#), [Periscope](#) .

Download a copy of Ana's 10 Habits of a Highly Encouraged Mom Guide FREE [here](#).

And don't miss her incredible Homeschoolers FREEBIES ZONE [here](#).



Don't forget to download your copy of the letter to personalize for your tween!

Can Your Tween Have Too Many Friends?



Shelley Noonan
Pumpkin Seed Press

by Shelley Noonan of [Pumpkin Seed Press](#)

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

Friendship has been described as being the bacon bits in the salad bowl of life. However, today, we bestow the title of friend so freely it is like having a little lettuce with our bacon bit salad.

Summertime is the perfect time to help your tween evaluate all the friendships they have in their lives.

I believe the overabundance of friends is the main reason something meant to be one of life's sweetest pleasures - causes some of life's deepest heartaches.

We have too many friends.

Today, the broad, generic term friend is used to describe and define many different levels of relationships.

Facebook has taken the term "Friend" to a new watered-down level. I am pretty sure I don't have to tell you "Friend" is actually a techy term used for "Contacts" by FB. They have masterfully marketed "Friends" as an appealing substitute for the rather cold sounding "Contacts". Who doesn't want to have thousands of "Friends"?

I have no desire to run down Facebook, I'm just saying, this is the reality of where our children are with the concept of who a is a friend. In Switzerland, calling a person a friend is held in such high esteem it is bestowed very carefully upon only a very few acquaintances. So, the word friend in Switzerland and a Facebook friend are light years apart. Our world encourages kids to have friends in high quantity, not high quality.

What's wrong with having a lot of friends? More is better, right? A kid can never have too many friends!

In the area of friends...not so much. Let's face it, we keep up with our friend's lives. We care deeply about them. We invest in their lives. When they hurt, we hurt. They laugh, we are happy! When they cry, we weep with them. But what happens when our friends don't care for us as we expect? Ouch. We get hurt feelings. Expectations will get you every time. William Shakespeare summed it up when he said: "Expectation is the root of all heartache."

So how do we help our kids navigate through the plethora of friend-like relationships and understand who is a friend-to-the-end and who is just an acquaintance? How do we open up the topic of the different degrees of friendships and the hopes (less binding than an expectation) we have for the different levels?

Here is a simple exercise for you to go through yourself and then with your tween.

A wise counselor once explained friendship like this as he drew a diagram. He said, "In your life, you will have relationships that can be placed into consecutive circles that surround you. **These circles are layers of intimacy and access to your life.**

The circle nearest you has the most intimate access to your heart.

The next layer contains friends and the outermost layer contains acquaintances.

He had me make a list of all the relationships in my life and place them in a hand drawn diagram of me in the center as a dot and three consecutively larger circles coming out from me. He then encouraged me to place each person's names into the appropriate circle.

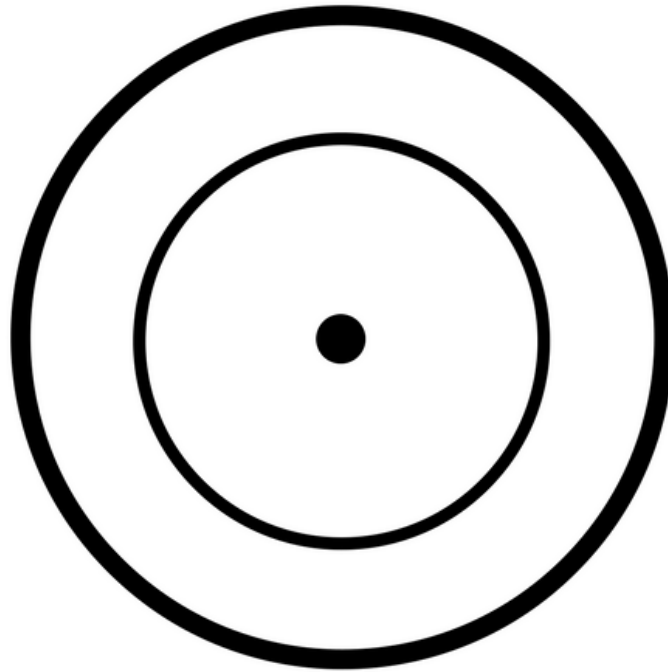
This little exercise was eye-opening for me because it gave my mushy, fuzzy thoughts about my friends' form and structure!

Not all friendships are created equal and we hope for different levels of commitments from each. Once the structure of my friendships with women was illustrated, I was better able to discern the function and when you know the function of a relationship...you are less likely to hurt or be hurt.

Now, you try it on yourself before you try it with your tween!

1. Grab a piece of paper and draw the diagram I described by making a lovely dot in the center of a sheet of paper. Follow this by drawing three consecutively larger rings around the dot.
2. On another piece of paper make a list of your friends. List 8-10 people in your life who you spend the most time with. Which friends help you to be a better person? Which bring out the worst in me?
3. Now, fill in the diagram with where the names belong according to how close you feel to them and how much access they have to your life.

Can Your Tween Have Too Many Friends? Day 29



www.LikeMindedMusings.com

- The circle surrounding you is filled with the ones who know your heart, your deepest fears, your joys, in other words, your BFF. They would be considered and intimate, a bosom buddy, a confidant.
- In the next circle place the names of your chums, your buddy's. People you hang out with.
- The outer ring is for those you are acquainted with but your lives really don't intertwine.
- Take a long hard look at the names and where they have been placed. Does it surprise you

4. Think about/discuss the different expectations- there is that word again- for each of the friend rings. You wouldn't expect the outer ring to act like the inner ring, would you? Why? Which relationships are you putting most of your time, effort or investment? What changes could you make today to help you have healthier friendships?

5. After you have done this for yourself, take some time to do this little exercise with your tween.

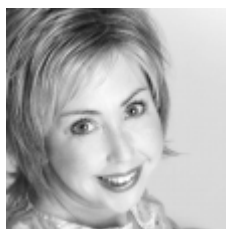
Admittedly, friendships are complex and at times can be so tricky to define as they shift from one circle to another. Yet, by helping your tween understand the friendship structure and function you can teach them what true friendship means.

Leave a comment and let us know how it went. *Did it turn out like you thought?*

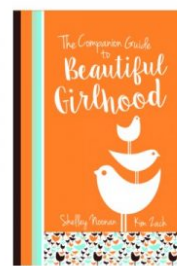
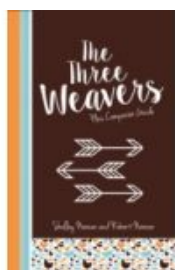
What a fantastic post today! Shelly Noonan from B'twixt & B'tween and Pumpkin Seed Press provides us with wisdom in the importance of true friendships! I very much appreciate these practical steps to help keep our friendships in check as well as for our tweens. It can be really hard today to define what true friendship should look like! I am ready to work on this exercise, how about you?

Leave a comment below and let us know how it went. Did it turn out like you thought?

I personally have been beyond blessed by Shelley Noonan and the information, resources and loads of wisdom she shares in parenting, mentoring and homeschooling. Now it's your turn to check it out for yourself!



Shelley Noonan is a homeschool veteran, popular conference speaker and [co-author of four books](#) including [The Companion Guide to Beautiful Girlhood](#) which I highly recommend. Shelley founded and operates [Pumpkin Seed Press](#) as well as B'twixt & B'tween.



Shelley is a dreamer | creator | idea lover | communicator | friend | coach | passionate.

How to Encourage Your Tween to Develop a Quiet Time

by Lee Felix of [Like Minded Musings](#)



Lee Felix
Like Minded Musings

[This post](#) first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

As a Christian Mom, **there is little else more important to my heart than encouraging my tweens in their own walk with the Lord.** I understand the importance of doing my best to teach them how to have their own quiet time from tween to teen and beyond.

I also know from mama busyness and the **#quiettimeguilt** of my past that I need to be intentional in walking them through each stage. ***Without consistent encouragement, it will not become the priority to them that it should.***

How do we encourage our tweens to develop a quiet time?

Here are 4 Ways that have helped me encourage our tweens to develop a daily quiet time so far.

#1 Pray. Ask. See.

Definitely, **take it to God** first. *Ask Him for wisdom* in how to encourage your tween in this area. It can be challenging to know what to do when they vary in their learning styles and maturity level -more than age. Ask Him to help you see clearly your child's needs. He can give you the strength you will need to be diligent in encouraging them about it.

After praying about it, ask your child. Ask them what they think they would like their quiet time to look like. Is there a certain special place in your home where they would like to spend time with God each day? For example, our oldest likes the room to herself during her quiet time. That takes effort on our part. The kids share a room and there is always someone around. This "ask factor" is also a great opportunity to make sure they understand the importance of it. The heart of it, not just the action. It doesn't have to be complicated but they need to know it's important.

Your tween knowing the importance of daily quiet time ties in with the "See" factor. **Let them see you being consistent with your quiet time.** Yes, I know the busyness. Remember the #quiettimeguilt I mentioned? But they notice, and it does make a difference.

#2 Do it together.

In the younger tween years, having a quiet time/study time together is a great way to develop a consistent habit. As homeschoolers, we have that together time built into our day. But this can certainly be done with any schedule as it works for you!

One of my favorite ways of doing this is super simple. Read a couple of verses etc and ask them some questions.

What it says about God, What God would think about ____, why? Or even what they think, what they would do, what they should do in that situation, or how it relates to situations they have experienced.

I absolutely love to hear them processing things out! And yes, I have been totally stumped before by an 8-year-old with some of the questions they come up with! It's crazy sometimes. But it's also a beautiful thing. *It gives them a safe place to ask good questions of Gods word and they can know mom doesn't "know it all"*. I can tell them I don't know the answer and offer to look into it together more.

If you want something more laid out for you, here's a couple of resources we recommend.

Homeschooler or not, you can use this [FREE online resource](#) where she has passages laid out and specific questions to ask if you choose. [Bible Old Testament](#) and [Bible New Testament](#).

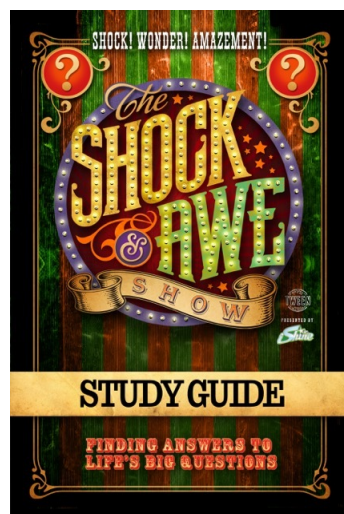
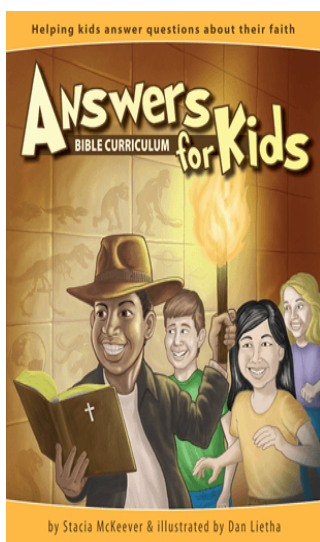
I also have a [FREE 10 Week eCourse for your Tweens Spiritual Growth](#). It's where **Intro to Inductive Bible Study + Bible Art Journaling 'meet'!** You can get more info and walk thru together [by starting here](#).

Here are some other resources we love for studies together! You can click on the photo to take you directly to the resource or explore the store.

[Answers in Genesis Store](#)

[i Shine Store](#)

[Not Consumed Ministries Store](#)



And here is why we love Bible Journaling with Kids!

You can also choose something related specifically to [developing character](#) or specifically to girls [like this](#).

#3 Transition to on their own.

The tweens are an "in between" for many things as you know. Helping them develop a daily quiet time is no different. As they grow, you can begin to encourage your child to start seeking God on their own. As your tween gets older or has been consistently growing in this area, you can add in different options for them.

Devotions or studies that they can do on their own. [Here](#) and [Here](#) are two of our most recent choices. If you have a tween girl you can go here for many resource ideas and grab our [FREE Ultimate Resource Kit for Tween Girls](#).

Narrowing in on studies or [journals](#) that lead them to develop their own way. Using some kind of [prayer journal](#) along with slowly reading thru a book of the Bible and asking questions is a great option. I too like to have them retell me what they have read, it gives me great insight as to where they are.

Kim Sorgius [Developing a Quiet Time](#) is also a great resource for this.



#4 Grow together.

This is another fun stage we are at with our older tweens. Being intentional in your doing your daily quiet time together when they are young is great to show them what it looks like and to get them digging in and asking questions.

Growing by studying together as they get older can be a really fun way to continue to build that bond.

Now that they've grown some, there are added hormones, pressures, questions and more. You can both benefit by picking a Biblically based course or more lengthy study and digging in each day to a part of it together. You can choose to [go deeper into a Bible study](#) or you can choose something specifically for boys or [girls that deal with those topics they are experiencing](#).

(If your older tween daughter has turned **newly teen** Aimee Imbeau from [A Work of Grace](#) has a wonderful course for mothers and teen daughters to go thru, [you can find out more information here](#).)

It really has been an awesome thing to walk thru these different stages with our tweens so far.

As they grow into their teens, my prayer is that they will have not only a consistent habit of daily quiet time, but an increasing hunger for God's word!

***So what do you think? Do you do any of the same or something different?
What would you recommend for Developing your tweens quiet time?***

Leave a comment and let us know!

Joining you in the in be'tween',

Lee

O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life.
Lamentations 3:58

You Are a Tween Girl who Struggles with Her Body (and you are in my kitchen)

by Jennifer Strickland of



Jennifer Strickland
U R More

This post first appeared on Like Minded Musings.

“I don’t have a bathing suit body,” the sweet one says as she takes off her shirt on fast forward and jumps in the pool.

At the table later, she explains she has lost seven pounds by cutting carbs.

The girls are thirteen.

Standing behind the kitchen sink, I lean in.

We talk fruits, vegetables and strength training, but inside my mind battles. I really wish she didn’t need to do this. That instead, she knew it was okay for

her to be plump because she is the most exuberant girl in the bunch — and that's how I define beauty.

"What are complex carbohydrates?" one of the girls asks, the one who has been bouncing in here bubbly since fifth grade. I explain the difference between broccoli and white bread.

The girl in question eats fruit for breakfast, and I wonder how long this will last. In my mind, I ask why we are supposed to be proud of her dieting. Is this good or not?

I wonder. Is it her genes or her jean size that we can really change?

***Beauty comes in all shapes and sizes, but that's not what the magazines say.** As I wash dishes sudsy, I think and say quietly, "Bella, you are [pretty from the inside out](#)." In truth, she is more beautiful than she knows.*

***I want to jump out of my skin and help her see what beauty is** — and it's not comparing her thighs to the girl sitting next to her (which they all do, by the way).*

I want her to redefine beauty by her generosity; by her laughter that fills the sky; by her eyes, pools of humility.

I want to redefine beauty for her ... by how she looks in her Father's eyes.

*The one named Beauty who thinks she's not: I wrote this book for her, and all the tween girls out there who need a new definition of the mirror. **Who need to know their value, their identity in Christ, their purpose beyond the measuring tapes and pant sizes and screen likes and shares.***

At 21, I was measured by a line of judges, and the other girl's bathing suit body beat mine.

That was the last time I felt good enough in a bikini.

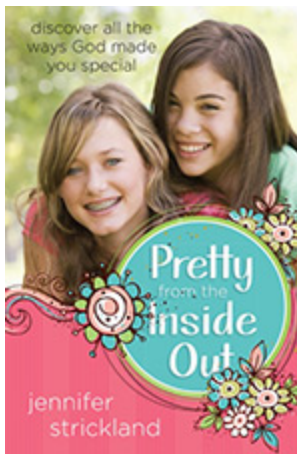
While the girls with "bathing suit bodies" guzzle sweet tea and crunch potato

chips, I want to make a big banner of my book's cover and hang it over the pool for this girl. (That would be kind of cool.)

It would say, **"YOU ARE PRETTY FROM THE INSIDE OUT."**

That's why I run in the mornings and eat veggies. I do it because I decided I'm worth that, not because I'm in search for worth. And that's all I want for our girls.

*Find a tween girl, and teach her value. When we know our value — **when we know who we are and whose we are, everything we do flows from that**, and the imperfections melt away in the light of He who loves us perfectly.*



Click on the image above to [grab a summer read for a girl who might need it.](#)

Or keep one handy at home.

You never know when you'll look up from your kitchen counter and see her sitting at your table, about to jump in the pool and fill the sky with laughter.

With care,

Jen

It is such an honor to share this post today from Jennifer Strickland on True Beauty. After we watched The [Girl Perfect](#) Documentary on [Right Now Media](#) and read the book highlighted here [Pretty From the Inside Out](#), Jen quickly

*became "a favorite" of our oldest tween daughter. **We highly recommend her books and studies to other girls and other women in our lives.** She writes rooted in God's word and with transparency and compassion.*

I strongly feel every Tween girl should read [Pretty From The Inside Out](#). We are with each of our girls as well. Girls today maybe more than ever need to learn about True Beauty. The True Beauty that each of them has. True Beauty that God designed purposefully in them when He knit them together!

Please take some time to visit [U R More](#) and all of the resources Jennifer has to offer. You will be glad you did!

Jennifer Strickland is a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend, AND published author, speaker, and former international model. She is married to her best friend Shane, who she affectionately calls "the Cowboy."

The Stricklands reside in Dallas - Fort Worth with their three precious children, where they stay busy with football, cheerleading, and ranching.

Jen loves to curl up with a cup of coffee, journal, and Bible -- the three ingredients to her inspirational messages on faith, beauty, and all the ways God makes us "More."

As a speaker, Jen draws upon her career as a former professional model to help women and girls find their beauty, value, identity, and purpose. Unveiling the media's lies about women's worth, Jen deposits true value in her listeners. She speaks on college, high school, and junior high campuses (public and private); at recovery centers, women's prisons, sororities, and at women's and girls' events. She also shares her experiences at writing, speaking, and leadership conferences.

Jen is a gifted communicator. Her latest book, [21 Myths \(Even Good\) Girls Believe About Sex](#), explores the topic of sexual integrity, forgiveness, healing,

and the beauty of sex in the freedom of marriage. She penned her life's message on identity, worth, and purpose in her [Beautiful Lies](#) book, study, and leader kit for women eighteen & up; the teen version [More Beautiful Than You Know](#), and pre-teen [Pretty From the Inside Out](#).

Jen's incredible personal story of transformation is found in her page-turning book, [Girl Perfect](#), which includes a [Study Guide](#), teaching [DVD](#), and [Documentary](#). This series is based upon her journey as a professional model and follow the battles she waged to find the real meaning of beauty.





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