

→ Closing ← The Generation Gap

God's concern for us as His children is tremendous. Do we have this same concern for our teenagers?

By Doug Horchak

“I don't know my own child anymore! Ever since he started high school, he has been off with his friends, doing his own thing. I wish I knew how to get through to him.”

Does this sound like you? Thoughts like these have gone through the minds of many parents of teens in God's Church.

The tragedy is that all too many of these parents become frustrated and conclude that there is no way to close the gap between them and their teens.

Some parents come up with some choice excuses for divorcing themselves from their teenagers' lives and interests. Here are but a few:

“My teens don't want me there. They want to be by themselves.”

“We just don't have the same interests.”

“I have to work hard all year long. I'm not going to spend my time during the Feast with my teen.”

“I have more important things I need to be doing. I can't bother with these juvenile matters.”

“That's why my kids are enrolled in school — it's the school's job to provide for them.”

“That's the job of the pastor and the Church. I thought YOU [Youth Opportunities United] was established to take care of these needs.”

The list goes on. Some parents will even hold back until 75 percent of the other parents in the Church get involved before they will volunteer to sponsor or provide transportation to any youth activities. They feel they don't have to get involved unless everyone else does, too.

The “generation gap”

Involvement, time and effort are all essential in nurturing wholesome, healthy, growing relationships between parents and teens. Yet, some parents in God's Church neglect these key ingredients and add to their own family's “generation gap.”

In Proverbs 22:6 God promises that if we “Train up a child in the way he should go . . . when he is old, he will not depart from it.” God is talking directly to us, the parents, showing the integral part we play in giving proper direction to our teens as they mature to adulthood.

In this verse the Hebrew word for “train” is *chanak*. This word's root meaning is “to narrow.” God is showing that training our children involves narrowing the choices they have to make from the vast array of deceptive, negative lifestyles this world has to offer (Matt. 7:13-14).

All too often parents give up on their sons or daughters, virtually turning them over to this society. “After all, they're carnal” or “They are responsible for their own decisions,” these parents say. The truth is

that they want to wash their hands of involving themselves in the lives of their teens in a viable, loving way.

Church teens in different category

As Jesus Christ revealed to His Church through His apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong, I Corinthians 7:14 shows that the unconverted children of Church members are set apart — holy. That includes the teenagers.

Knowing about the spirit in man and that our children have access to God's spiritual values is the key to successful child rearing in God's Church. Therefore, God expects even parents of teenagers to take advantage of the tremendous opportunity to positively influence their children about God's way of life.

The Church's dynamic thrust to strengthen the family, initiated by Christ through Mr. Armstrong, includes countless opportunities for parents and children to be actively involved in functions provided by God's Church: YOU activities, group outings, family socials and many others.

Teens need parental involvement

No one can take the place of a parent. The bonding that is experienced between a newborn baby and its parents is a beautiful and necessary process, and years later the need still remains for parents to love and guide their teens. Psalm 127:3-5 tells

us that our children are really a blessing to us. They are described as arrows in a parent's quiver, and truly, they are arrows that need to be shot in the right direction. Skill and effort

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