

## *What can the Church and Family Do to Save our Girls?*

### *Be on the Same Team for the Teen*

What are some ways to build a bridge between your child and your family and the youth pastor or youth staff?

- *Be interested:* Register early. If there is an activity or event, respond. Act interested, volunteer to help spread the word by contacting other parents. Be on their team!
- *Be on the Team:* Ask what you can do to help: bring cookies, offer to drive, man the registration or check in table, etc. Small things add up in a big way! Offer to be a part of the youth volunteer staff. Ask your son or daughter first to make sure he or she is comfortable with you volunteering in this way. They might not be excited about you being their Sunday School teacher but perhaps you could mentor or teach the group just younger or older than they are. The youth pastor often has to staff Jr high, high school and college positions. Just being involved with those near your child's age will help you tune into his or her world.
- *Be a friend:* Try to make the youth pastor's life a little easier. Most youth pastors have a pretty limited salary so coupons for movies meals, or car repair go a long way in showing appreciation. If he or she is also the parent of young children, offer to baby sit so he or she can spend time on a youth event, with your child, or go on a date with his/her spouse.
- *Be alert:* As a parent, you might know the inside scoop on happenings at the local public school, in the neighborhood or about the family of a problem child. You'll want to keep confidences, but you might also be comfortable being a liaison between youth pastor and a new family in the church because maybe they have been your friends longer.
- *Be prayerful:* Youth work is a battle zone. Everyone in the ministry is on the front lines and the evil one wants to wipe them out. Offer to pray for the youth pastor, his/her staff, and his/her family.
- *Be assertive:* If you are new to a church, invite the youth pastor and his family over for a meal, or offer to pay for him/her to take your child out for a soda or burger. Don't think you have to only build a bridge with the youth pastor, often there is someone on volunteer staff that might better connect or have more time to give personal attention to your tween, teen or young adult. Ask other mothers who on youth staff likes some of the things your child likes. One of my friends had a son who surfs with a youth worker, my boys share a love of football with some youth workers, for others it is music or drama. It may be something not very spiritual like Star Trek or skateboarding. It may be least threatening for a youth worker to show up at the game on Friday night and you can

introduce him or her to your teen and his/her peer group or better yet, ask another teen to introduce the youth worker to your child.

- *Be encouraging.* If your son or daughter has a gift that can be used to serve in the church, encourage them to use it. If they are musical and old enough to be a part of the worship team, encourage them to serve musically. If they enjoy children and can assist in Sunday school during one service on Sunday morning, encourage them to give of their time and energy. This may connect them to other church leadership that can also encourage, influence, and serve as a mentor to your teen.
- *Be an investigator:* As your college student moves away to school, you might have to help your student find churches, mentors, and on campus groups to be a part of. A good place to start to locate a church or on campus group is the Internet. Research churches then call and ask them to send a sample bulletin and guest info packet. Call Christian bookstores in the area, they usually know which churches are healthy and growing and have college ministries. Narrow the field and call a few youth pastors and ask to talk for a couple minutes. (Beware; those that are great with parents aren't always the best with students. If they are hard to reach or seem flakey, do not write him or her off—they may be hard to reach because he or she is always with the kids). Don't force a meeting but instead get the information on when the college group meets and give the info to your student.

It is even better if your student does all this work! If he or she is 18, and going away to school, a list of churches from the phone book might seem a little overwhelming but a handful of info packets or business cards of youth pastors seems less daunting. Encourage your college student to try several, to talk with those in the upper classes or in parachurch groups at the college. By surveying their peers one or two churches will rise to the surface as great churches for young people. Keep in mind that some college students prefer smaller congregations where they can serve and be a part of family rather than a mega church. There is no one right way, rather offer resources so your child can find the best fit for him or herself.

Adapted from [Got Teens?](#) By Pam Farrel and Jill Savage