



029: Preparing your kids for adolescence and the teen years

INTRO AUDIO:

I don't know your opinion about the junior high and high school years, the adolescent period of life. But man, I would never want to go back and relive that. Not for all the money in the world. That's because that time of life is so fraught with so many changes and challenges. This episode we want to talk to you about how you as a godly parent can equip your kids for adolescents in the teen years.

CAREY:

Hey friends, welcome back Carey and Mindi here with you. Today we're going to ask you to do something. As we begin, we want you to turn your memory back to your adolescent years or your teen years and think about the kinds of scenarios and situations you had to learn to navigate during that time of life. There were all kinds of changes going on in your, your body and the way you thought, the way you felt. There were hurdles that you had to overcome. There were confusing things, peer pressure, all kinds of things that came up, right? So get that image in your mind for a moment. Now think about the reality that your kids are one day or possibly even now, facing those very same kind of situations. How can you as a godly parent, help your kids prepare for adolescents and for the teen years? This is a topic that we found in our parenting, uh, was well

MINDI:

When we started parenting, we had the teenage years in mind. The things we were speaking to them about and teaching them at age three and eight and 10 and 11 was for their preparation of becoming a teenager and eventually going out on their own. So parent, you need to have the mindset that what you're teaching and training your child at a young age is preparing them for those adolescent years.

CAREY:

Yeah. And that even goes so far as to having very honest conversations with your seven-year-old, for example, about when you're a teenager you're going to want to do this and this and this, but you shouldn't. You should obey mom and dad because this is right. You know? And you just have very frank and open conversations about them. Because believe it or not, your seven year old, your 10 year old is probably excited about becoming a teenager and they will eat up your advice at that age because it's something they're anticipating.

MINDI:

Just like we as adults find that when we look down the road and see what's coming, we prepare our minds. That's wisdom that the Lord gives us to know how to prepare our minds because we've looked down the road. It's the same kind of thing with your children. You want to help them to look down the

road, they don't know what to see you do because you've been there. So that's a good example that Carey communicated that it's very helpful to bring up what's going to be happening, what it will be like for your child.

CAREY:

Yeah. And to back up a step from there, maybe it would be helpful before you start just diving into those conversations, to think through all the issues that you know are going to be a part of adolescents, at least the ones you can remember. And make yourself a little topic list, perhaps even just a pen and paper list of topics you want to talk about with your kids to prepare them for adolescents for the teen years. And some of those things might be, I've got a little bullet point list of my own here. The bodily changes that are going to happen for boys and for girls during that time of life. Emotional issues like insecurities, attitudes they might have during those years. Fear of people, those kinds of things. The various temptations they're going to face as adolescents and teenagers. And just the fact that they're going to be exposed to more ungodliness the older they get, they're going to become aware of it and they're going to see more of it. And so make your own list like this of topics that you want to discuss and even pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you compose that list.

MINDI:

And also ask the Lord for wisdom about when it's best to speak to each of your children. Sometimes children, quote unquote, seem to grow up fast and so they're asking questions that's more fitting to an adolescent at an earlier age than you would expect. So be prepared to answer them and to take them down the path in a wise way. Generally speaking, we tended to talk about these things with our children around 11, 12, right before they become a teen at 13. Those are good years for that. The child is starting to move in that direction, especially if they're going to public school. The topics are already being talked about with their peers.

CAREY:

Yeah, I would say if they're going to public school, you may even need to start sooner. Yeah. Because those topics are probably being addressed, if not by their peers in some immature juvenile way by their teachers possibly bringing up these issues and even worse things. So, so you need to be prepared as a parent ahead of time. I remember one of our kids was interested in the whole topic of sex much earlier than we expected, like at six or seven was asking questions about where babies come from and well how does that happen? And so we just decided if he's curious, we want to address it in a healthy way and with wisdom instead of saying, well let's wait till you're older to talk about that. Because I guarantee if he's curious, he's going to search it out some way with friends, with television shows, with something. And so you need to be the resource that gives him God's wisdom on those.

MINDI:

Right. And I remember our five year old daughter in kindergarten came home one day asking you what the word sexy meant. Yeah.

CAREY:

And that she had heard it from a friend. Yeah.

MINDI:

And we were shocked about that. So that's, I mean that's a moving into those teen years a little bit in that whole mindset. So you know, we would answer with God's wisdom truthfully, but also age appropriately. Yeah. And the beauty of that is it just planted a seed of wisdom. Wisdom in our children's hearts to understand that. And you know, our daughter was five years old, she didn't dwell on it very much at all. She went about her merry way and it was when she became a little bit older, the meaning of that was more real to her. Yeah. And we had more talks about it then.

CAREY:

Yeah. And so what we've been seeing is essentially talk practically about all these issues as you feel the Lord would have you do the right season, the right time, the right topics, all of that and be available and proactive during this time. Don't convince yourself that, oh my kids are getting a little older. I can kind of check out a family life and go do my own thing. Whether that's a hobby, a career, more education, whatever. I mean those things might be possible. Don't hear me saying you shouldn't do those things. But you need to weigh that decision in light of the priority that your kids are still very much in development stage. They're very much growing toward adulthood. They're not there yet and they need your help in your presence.

MINDI:

A good way to think of the adolescent years for a parent is to think this is the application years. Yeah. Let's say that you are a Christian family, you have raised your children to know the Lord from a young age. Let's even say you've been involved in church and all the Sunday school AANAs, maybe you even homeschooled your kids. You're encouraged and you feel good about how you've raised your kids. Like Carey was saying, don't check out when they get into their teen years thinking oh they're a good kid. They love the Lord, they're responsible. I've heard of examples of people who did go back to school or did go back to full-time work and they were out of the house a lot and their children were left to themselves when they got home from school or they were out with their friends a lot because the parents weren't home.

MINDI:

And it's those years when the, some of the greatest temptations come to our children. That's right. That's when they get into pornography because they're on the computer all the time or they get into drugs because they're hanging out with their friends. So a huge role of the parent during the adolescent years is helping your child know how to apply all that they've learned about Jesus and Jesus who lives inside of them because their insecurities are going to be flaring up at the highest level. <laugh>. Yeah. And the peer pressure's going to be at the highest level. So you need to help them daily knowing how to apply that and how to live it out and how to be a Christ follower during those times. And those are wonderful years. I remember our years, we had so many conversations with our kids at night. Night seemed to be the best time to talk with our kids. We went on regular dates with our kids. We were flushing things out with them all the time. How to apply life, how to live in spite of what their friend might have said or how to think of themselves because they were feeling insecure and,

CAREY:

And I just think it's really important for us to consider the gravity of what's going on in the adolescent 18 years. I mean, I love what you said, that this is the season in which they're starting to learn how to apply the truth that they should have been taught their whole life. And so if we as parents check out through any means just following our own interests, getting back into a career, whatever, and we leave our kids

to figure it out on their own, they don't have the experience to apply that truth well to the situations that they're facing. And so they're going to apply it badly. They're going to make bad decisions. And how many times have we heard parents whose kids now in their twenties and the kids going off the rails and they say, I didn't raise them that way. Well maybe you didn't raise them that way, but did you help them apply it in the teen years? Did you help them put that training to work practically through wisdom, through the leadership of the Holy Spirit, through the cultivation of their relationship with Christ so that it transfers from being your faith to being their faith? That's what's happening in the adolescent and teen years and it's vital that we stay engaged.

MINDI:

And a huge thing to remember on that is it's vital that you stay close to your child in relationship. That you fight to have a good relationship because we all know and have heard how many times the daughter and the mother are at odds with each other. You know, the 15 year old daughter is against what the mother is wanting her to do. Or you know the son against the father. You hear so many times that a parent is struggling to win the heart of their teenage child. And so you need to see that approaching as you're a parent of your young children. Keep their hearts, ask the Lord to show you how to do that. And for, for you parents who tend to not be emotional, I want to encourage you to work hard at feeling emotion towards your child and helping them to feel it.

MINDI:

Because that's going to help them to feel your love. If you can show emotion by, by hugs, maybe even getting a little bit emotional. I teed at times sometimes when you explain to them how much you love them, that's going to get to their heart at the deepest level. And so if you can carry that kind of an attitude out with your children all the way through the teen years, they're going to have this love for you and they're going to want to be close to you because you are one of their best friends and they don't want to hurt you and they don't want to rebel against you.

CAREY:

And thereby they're going to respect your opinion about things more. They're going to be willing to listen because you've proven yourself not just to be a, a reliable source of godly wisdom, but also someone close to them who cares for them and has demonstrated that year after year. You know, it's much easier to keep your child's heart if you don't lose it in the first place. I think that's what Mindi's trying to say. And you know, I think about that mother-daughter scenario that you described where they're at odds with each other. I mean think about practically how that's happening. What's going on in that daughter's life. Well she's got friends who are expressing bad attitudes toward their mom and she's looking at her mom going, yeah, and my mom kind of does that too. Or she's watching movies that are encouraging that kind of an attitude. And if we as parents have checked out from conversations about what's going on with their peers and conversations about the movies they're watching and we're not aware and therefore able to speak to those issues in a godly way, those temptations and tendencies are just going to run. They're, they're going to run away from you rather than you being able to pull them back to a godly basis. And so we as parents just have to be savvy about what's going on in our kids' hearts.

MINDI:

And it's important in those kind of conversations with your children to explain why you're laying down a rule or explain why you don't want them to do something. Because they need to apply their relationship

with the Lord to write decisions. And so you're wanting to explain it to them from God's perspective. The reason why I don't think it's best is because this is what God says in the Bible and I, that's why I don't think you should do that. And so I don't think it's healthy hardly at all to ever say to your child, well because mom said so or because dad said so. Especially in the this adolescent teen years, they need to understand why. They need to know your conviction behind it.

CAREY:

Yeah. And point their conviction toward your conviction. Help them to see, I think this because God says this in his word and you love Jesus. So doesn't it make sense that you would want something similar? We can definitely talk about what that looks like, but this is where your heart has been all these years. Let's keep moving in that direction. That's really what you're trying to do as a parent, right?

MINDI:

That's so good. And another point, as you raise adolescents, teenagers, encourage your children. Yeah. Be their greatest cheerleader, their greatest encourager every day. Think of it every day. How can you build up your child? Maybe write them notes. Make sure you speak it privately and public around the family. Your children need to know how you see them. That's going to help them to develop into that kind of person. So be your child's greatest encourager.

CAREY:

And when it comes to encouragement, make your focus on internal things of the heart rather than external things of performance. Don't spend all your time encouraging your kid because they get all A's or because they're great at football or because they made the cheerleading squad. I mean those are definitely things to celebrate. But don't make that the primary place you're encouraging. Encourage wisdom, encourage them about their insight into some situation. Encourage them about the way they loved their friend. Encourage character, encourage godliness and it will grow as you encourage it. It's just like water on a plant.

MINDI:

That's a beautiful way to end it on the encouragement note because the Lord is going to be faithful to guide you, to encourage your children because that's one of his commands. Encourage one another daily in the Lord and be,

CAREY:

Hang on a second, second. Hang on a second. Let's do the last part of that verse. Encouragement of the daily so that none of your hardened bison's deceitfulness, that's what you're doing, parents right?

MINDI:

Amen.

CAREY:

So continue my love.

MINDI:

Amen. <laugh>. So be hopeful, parent that as you seek the Lord and ask him to give you wisdom about these kinds of things he will answer because you're asking for his will. So let me pray for us. Father, thank you so much that you care to guide us as parents in raising our children to love you and to honor you and to fear you. And I just pray for these parents who are approaching the adolescent years, who are in the adolescent years. I just pray that you will give them your wisdom and your encouragement and hope. Give them your discernment in how to guide their children and the things to say on a regular basis. Help them during those hard times of conflict. And when the child is pushing back and wanting to do something differently. I just pray that you'll give parents who are listening a humility and a wisdom in how to respond and help them to keep their children's hearts by continually showing them and telling them how much they love them. We thank you Father in Jesus' name. Amen.

CAREY:

Amen.