

# Putting Gas in the Tank of Our Teens

Ever run out of gas or sitting on empty? (What happens to your plans?)

Teens run out of gas and run on empty too.

Not having their emotional tanks full will affect how they live

Three things we will talk about today

- First, we want to discuss what type of fuel is needed in the tank.
- Second, how do we recognize when the tank is almost empty and the danger of an empty tank?
- Last, we want to talk about how to actually put the fuel in the tank and how often.

## So what type of fuel do we need to put in the tank?

- Special blend of gas called unconditional love
- What is unconditional love?
  - Simply put, it's loving your teen no matter what-

No matter what you're teen looks like and dresses like

No matter how he or she acts

No matter what you see as a liability or asset

It's important to note that unconditional love doesn't mean you have to like their behavior but it does mean that you love them even when you detest their behavior.

### Three Type of Love in the Bible

- The first is "eros" which means a sensual or sexual love. It's the type of love a husband and wife would share in their relationship which completes them physically.
- The second type of love is 'philia" or "phileo" which means a brotherly love. This is the type of love we have for relatives and friends.
- The third type of love is known as "agape" which is the most popular that we have heard. It means a selfless love or what we refer to as unconditional love. It's the highest level of love in the Bible.
- This is the type of love found in THE verse in the Bible to explain what unconditional love it. It's found in I Cor. 13:4-7
- ***"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."***

***Can't improve on verses 4-6 so let's focus on verse 7***

- ❖ How secure does our teen feel? Do they feel protected or smothered? Protected from what, whom, why, and where?
- ❖ How much trust is developed in our relationship with our teen? Do they feel we trust them? If not why? When can they be trusted again? How will we help them trust again?
- ❖ Does our teen have a hope? What do they place their hope in?
- ❖ How do we teach our teen to persevere without being uncaring? Do they know we will be there for them in the long haul?

### Some thoughts to remember

Dr. Ross Campbell who wrote “How to Really Love Your Children”, stated after raising his teens he had come to the following conclusions.

- ✓ Teenagers are still children in many ways
- ✓ Teenagers will usually act like teenagers and not adults
- ✓ Much of teenager behavior is unpleasant
- ✓ If you love your teen only when they please you chances are your teen will not “feel” loved
- ✓ However, if you love your teen unconditionally they will feel good about themselves and be comfortable with themselves.

The most important question a teen will ask in their mind and heart....

Do you really love me \_\_\_\_\_ ?

- Teens (remember are still children in a way), will ask that question behaviorally not verbally.
- Therefore, parents need to answer behaviorally and not just verbally.
- ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS TO A TEEN BECAUSE THEY FEEL FIRST BEFORE THEY THINK FIRST (LOGICALLY).
- Example: Husband/dad is out of town on business trip. Tells mom on phone he loves her. That sends her on cloud 9. Gets the teen on the phone and says same thing. Teen responds “thanks, now what did you really want to say.”
- Though the words are important to your teen he is more affected by what you do than what you say.

### **So how do you know when their emotional tank is getting empty?**

- When their emotional tanks are full with the right fuel (unconditional love) it will affect their behavior. You will notice they seem to be more obedient, respectful, happy, and content
- When their emotional tanks are running low and have the wrong fuel (conditional love) it will affect their behavior. You will notice they seem to be more disobedient, disrespectful, angry, and troubled.
- Teens are like reflectors-They reflect back the type of love they think they are receiving. (Because they learn to love behaviorally)
  - **If the teen feels like they are being love conditionally they will respond in kind.**

### **So how do we put the fuel in their tank and how often?**

- **Remember this important point.** Our teenagers are like two year olds. They both want and need to develop independence. However, when they start to feel insecure in their feelings of independence they will run back to the parent for their emotional tank to be refilled.

- Example: Two year old at a party with their parents-(Won't let go until they feel secure)
- So too is the emotional tank of the teen. They strive for independence but deep down inside still want and need their parents to refill their tank when it gets empty. If the parent does not allow that to happen then the teen will go to peers to make sure their tank stays full. When a teen gets all their emotional love from peers then it usually will turn into a dangerous situation within the home.

### Why do teens prefer to have their tanks filled by peers rather than parents?

- It can be found in one word. overreaction
- Teens respond to love behaviorally-If the parent overreacts to a negative situation then the teen will not run back to the parent to get their tank refilled.
- Who then will they run to in order to get their emotional tanks filled?
- **I repeat, when our teens test us with inappropriate behavior to be independent, it is vital that we not overreact emotionally.** You don't condone the behavior but you do respond in a respectful way without yelling, name calling, or attacking the child verbally.
- Question: How would you respond if you saw an adult yelling at their teen in the church lobby? The home is also the church if believers live there.

### Finding ways of filling their emotional tanks

- **Understand that letting your anger enter into your conversation will ALWAYS hurt your communication with your teen.**
  - "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control." Prov. 29:11
  - "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger". Prov. 15:1
  - "A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel." Prov. 15:18
  - "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" Eph. 4:29

Notice 4 critical things from the verses above to improve communication with your teen and keep the tank full.

- 📖 Your teen will think you are a fool when you let your anger get out of control.
- 📖 The more anger you display the more chance your teen will reflect it right back to you. Keep your cool by removing yourself from the situation if you need to for a few minutes and pray for a calm spirit.
- 📖 Patience will help calm the argument and anger can't be part of the equation
- 📖 Even in a disagreeable situation, your teen needs to be built up. Their emotional tank gets refilled when they feel like you want the experience to benefit them.

**Understand that your teen needs to not only feel forgiven but they know how to forgive as well.**

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Eph. 4:32

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Ps. 103:12

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him..." Mark 11:25

- One of the greatest emotional feelings a person needs, especially a teen, is the need to feel forgiven.
  - Too many teens stop getting their tanks filled by their parents because they do not feel forgiven for a past transgression they did.
  - Learn to forgive in Christ and don't hold onto past failures of your teen. Let them know you release them of this and set them free just as God in Christ has done for you.
- **Understand that laughter must be a part of each day with your teen and that it will help fill their emotional tank quickly.**
    - *A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Prov. 17:22*
    - *A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed. Prov. 15:13*
    - *A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; Ecc. 3:4*
    - *You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. Ps. 4:7*
    - *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Phil. 4:4*
    - *Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. Ps. 43:4*

## 5 Important things laughter does when filling the tank.

- ✓ It helps reduce the chances of wounding your teen and helps limit depression
- ✓ If timed right laughter can meet a need just at the right time.
- ✓ Laughter comes from the Lord
- ✓ We need to learn to laugh with our teens even when things are not going the greatest. Find a way to see the humor in some difficult situations.
- ✓ Laughter is drawn from a relationship with God. Learn to worship and learn to sing praises and you'll learn to laugh.

### Summary

- **So there you have it. Making sure your teen's emotional gas tank is full is critical to their success. Watching for signs of it being low is just as important.**
- **Remember your teen responds to love behaviorally and not just verbally. Find ways to communicate this to them and don't let your behavior ruin the opportunity to fill their tank.**
- **If you do, you'll find them running to someone else to get it filled. After all, they must continue to journey down the road of life so make sure they have the right fuel. Don't let someone else put bad fuel in their tank. Remember, it's your car so take responsibility for making sure it's properly filled.**