



Teaching Them To Park

In this chapter, we are going to discuss parking. One of the greatest challenges a parent faces when teaching their teen to drive is learning how to park. A lot of frustrated parents come home from practice parking sessions letting the teen know if they don't learn how to pull in straight or learn how to parallel park then they will never pass the driving test. There are three things we are going to discuss in this chapter. First, we are going to look at how much space is needed in order to properly park the car. Second, we are going to look at straight on parking and staying within the lines. Finally, we are going to look at the concept of parallel parking and how frustrating it can be for teenagers and parents alike.

Here in the south, we don't have to worry much about snow; however, those up north can see during the winter 6-8 inches of snow which causes 3-4ft drifts. In order for cars to travel on neighborhood roads, cars have to park on the same side of the street so the snowplows can come through and plow enough off the roads for cars to travel. It reminds me of a story once when Harry and Martha were drinking their morning coffee listening to the weather report and it said that "all cars are to be parked on the odd number side of the street due to 4 inches of snow expected tomorrow". Harry got up from his coffee to move the car. A couple of days passed and the couple was listening to the weather report again while drinking their coffee and it said another 4 inches of snow is expected the next day so "they need to park all cars on the even-numbered side of the street." Harry got up to move the car again. Three days later, they tuned in to the weather report. "There will be six to eight inches of snow today. You must park your cars on the...." The power went off. He said to Martha, "What am I going to do now? Martha said, "Just leave the car in the garage." Think about it...keep thinking...it will come to you...

Hopefully, my instructions won't be as confusing to you as they were to Harry in our story above. Think about parking for a moment. What's the purpose of parking? Parking is an organized way to make sure cars can be put in a space where people inside the car feel comfortable enough to leave the vehicle and go into their destination. In life, we want our teens to feel comfortable enough that they can leave their secure environment (the home), and enter into their intended destination (their future). Our parking metaphor represents the goal we want to achieve with our teens. We want to make sure they have enough space to be able to either park straight on by getting straight answers or by flexible enough to come along-side them to help them parallel park.

So how much space is needed?

When our teens are looking to leave the comfort and security of the home environment how do they know how much space is needed in order to park the car? The last thing we want our kids doing is parking in a space that is too small so when they try to open the door they either can't get out or they ding the car next to them. A teen who feels smothered by not being able to open the door when they want to get out will become very frustrated. If they have to keep pulling out of the parking spots without being able to get out they will start to exhibit not only signs of frustration but will eventually show signs of rebellion. Our teens will get to the point where they don't care if they ding the car next to them. I'm reminded of a movie called "Fried Green Tomatoes" which tells the story of a Depression-era friendship between two women, Ruth and Iddie, and a 1980s friendship between Evelyn, a middle-aged housewife played by Kathy Bates, and Ninny played by Jessica Tandy. Evelyn has been meeting with Ninny at a senior's home where Ninny has been telling exciting stories about Ruth and Iddie back in the depression

days. Evelyn was becoming more and more embolden throughout the movie due to the stories being told to her by Ninny and Evelyn started making some major changes in her life. One day Evelyn (Katy Bates) was at a grocery store driving around and around waiting for a parking space to come available. As the car she was waiting for was pulling out of the parking space another car from the other direction which had two younger girls in it quickly pulled in to take the place. Evelyn was livid and couldn't believe the girls did that and as the two girls got out of the car she said, uh, excuse me I was waiting for that spot". As they walked by her car they looked at her and sarcastically said, "yeah tough, face it, lady, we're younger and faster" as they laughed going into the store. She started to do what she normally does and move on non-confrontational to another parking spot only to remember how bold Ruth and Idgie were in the story that Ninny was telling her. She gripped the steering wheel and put the pedal to the medal as she screamed "Tewanda", a bit from the movie. She kept ramming the car until it was severely damaged. The young girls came out of the store screaming at her "what are you doing are you crazy?" Evelyn smiled and simply said, "face it, ladies, I'm older and have more insurance."

Now I'm not telling this story because I'm counseling you to let you teens go around and smash the heck out of someone's car just because they didn't get their parking space. Although some of you might have felt that's what your teen did when they came home from trying to park the car one day. My main point in telling you that story is how different people respond to different situations when they feel smothered in life. The Kathy Bates character felt smothered all her life and she decided to do something about it by doing something totally uncharacteristic of her past. A big challenge parents have is to learn how much "space" to give our kids so they learn how to be independent while at the same time limiting the space so their independence doesn't get them into trouble.

The amount of space that is given for our teens to park is critical. Let me emphasize this again. ***Space is critical for a successful relationship with a teen. Being a parent who is rigid and not willing to be flexible is lethal.*** What I mean is too many parents expect their teens to respond to the same type of discipline and explanations as to when they were younger. That won't work with a teen. Charles Swindoll has a great statement. "Parents who are secure and mature enough to give ground, provide space, allow room, listen more than lecture, release tight control, maintain a calm and affirming attitude and a good sense of humor can look forward to some of the most invigorating and adventurous years in all of life."

Here's the challenge for our teens. They desperately want independence and emotionally feel they deserve it. There's only one major problem. They can't pull it off because they don't have the maturity or the resources to handle independence on their own. So they have to fight for little victories of independence on a daily basis which can and will drive many parents crazy. How much space are we to give them? When it comes to teaching our teens to live a life of independence it often boils down to many of the other things we have already discussed in our series. The temperament of the teen, the age of the teen, whether they are a 1st born or last born or in between, if they know Christ along with how they view God's moral absolutes, all play vital parts of how much independence they get from us. Every parent will struggle as they see that child leave the home and go off to college, the military, or a job and worry did they prepare them properly? I doubt if you'll worry about how many times they didn't clean their room or how many strong-willed battles you faced during their adolescent years, whether you liked his or her friends, or even if you didn't like the television they watched or music they listened to. What will matter is if you feel you have prepared them properly to survive in the rat race and jam-packed parking lots of life. Giving them enough space will equal proper teenage independence. Proper teenage independence will equal maturity which qualifies them to leave the car and go to their intended destination. Sadly too many teens think that just because they turn 18 they have the right to unlimited

independence. Wise is the parent and teen that understands that independence is earned and not granted.

Let me ask you a question. When your child was becoming a teenager did you ever ask yourself the following question? What am I doing or going to do to make sure my teen becomes his own person and not dependent on me? Sadly, too many parents deep down inside don't want to let little Johnny grow up. They want to keep them dependent on them so they feel a level of importance in their life. As hard as that is for some parents to let go of their children it must be done for the well-being of that child. Always remember that the moment your child became a teen they started working on the process of moving away from you. They deliberately push certain independent buttons just to see how far you will let them start moving away from you. I know for some of you it seems like you can't get them to move far enough away but if they move away either physically or emotionally from you too soon then their lack of maturity will wreak havoc. *It's so important to understand that your teen wants so desperately to make decisions without making mistakes. Parents, on the other hand, don't want their teens to make decisions because they are trying to protect them from making mistakes. A balance must be developed for both the parent and the teen.* God's Word can give some sound principles in the area of giving our teen proper space.

Tips for the proper amount of space in the parking lot

#1- Be real and be interested

Too many parents are always on "parent mode". In many ways, they talk to their kids in what I call "preacher mode". You know what I mean, don't you? There are some preachers out there that I know who when I talk to them or hear them they always sound like they are in preacher mode. Their language and vocabulary don't seem real and certainly not personable. I always feel like I'm talking to a recording or false persona. I want to know what that person is really like in their own home. When the wife walks in does he say "How are you my dear and may God's blessings be upon you? What travails and temptations have you had to deal with this day my sister in Christ?" I mean all of that is indeed accurate but is that how she wants to be talked to? Wouldn't it be much nicer and sincere if he just said, "Hi honey, how was your day? Did the kids drive you crazy today or was it a stress-free day?" Many teens feel they can't talk to their parents because they aren't real. They are always in a parent's mode. This simply means to the teen that their parents are looking for ways to "catch them" in a lie or correct them, or lecture them or... The parent needs to understand that the proper amount of space starts with being who they really are with their teen and show real interest in that teen. Obviously, your teen is more than likely going through major changes and you might not like some of those changes to music, clothes, friends, and other changes. Ever think that they might not like some of your interest in music, clothes, friends, and other things? We often say, "That's different, I'm the parent and I know what's best." That won't go over well with a teen who's trying to have some space in their life trying to develop independence. It's time to compromise and find a way to have both. You can have your interest and they can have theirs. There's a great verse in the Bible found in Deuteronomy 6:5-9, "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates*"

Though this passage is mainly teaching your children about a personal walk with God and what methods we are to use to impress them upon our children there is a hidden principle behind this command. We

are to impress upon our children how much we love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, and strength. No argument here on the importance of that and it's a critical influence on our teens. However, one of the reasons we are to impress this upon our teens is because it's so important to us. It's what we have as a real interest in our life. God should always be number one in our lives and our kids should see that interest. Do they only see you're interested in God on Sundays? Do they see you loving Him on a daily basis? A parent who is "real" to their teen doesn't have to lecture their teen on the importance of God. Instead they "live" the importance of God in their life. They let God influence how they communicate and discipline that teen. They love the teen unconditionally as God loves them and they learn to discipline and train the teen as God disciplines and trains them. But notice the underlying principle of this verse. The parent is to encourage conversation when they "sit at home and when they walk along the road, when they lie down and when they get up." It's an all-day kind of thing. A "real" parent is one that works hard at finding ways to communicate with their teen through-out the day on what's important to each other. There is a reason why God gave us the counsel of taking advantage of daily activity to discuss Him. He encourages this kind of activity because stuff happens throughout the day and sometimes it's at that moment when a teachable moment arises and the parent can now be a mentor. When a teen sees their parent as a real person and not just an authoritative person in their life then they will start trusting the counsel of the parent. When a teen trusts the wisdom of the parent who is living and loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength then that parent will learn to loosen the rope a little and give the teen more space or independence.

Here are a couple of examples of how this can happen.

- Sitting around the dinner table or at a fast food place discussing what the teen and parent really think about new legislation in Colorado about legalizing pot. Parents have to work hard at listening and not judging responses. They must let the teen know what God's Word teaches about how this could be dangerous and why you don't smoke pot. (Hopefully, you don't). You need to perhaps spend some time in I Cor. 8:13 discussing how such a thing could "make a brother stumble" or Rom. 14:13 by putting a "stumbling block in their way". Perhaps we need to talk about Rom. 13:1-5 and the importance of obeying the laws of our land. The parent must also be prepared to handle the teen's objections to how alcohol can be more dangerous than pot in the eyes of the teen. This makes for wonderful discussion and can eventually allow the parent to trust the teen more and release the rope some or perhaps depending on the true conviction of the teen be very careful how much rope they release until they can show they are trustworthy. If the teen comes home from the party drunk they shouldn't be disciplined because they got drunk. They should be disciplined because they lied about what you agreed was wrong. They should be disciplined because of the danger they could have put themselves or someone else in. They should be disciplined because the Bible teaches that we are not to get drunk with wine but be filled with the spirit, Eph. 5:18. God doesn't prohibit the drink of wine but He does prohibit being under its influence. Wise is the parent who takes the time talking about and getting real about alcohol. Be prepared to answer for yourself if you ever got drunk. They'll want to know why you could get drunk but they can't.
- Curfews! This sometimes seems like a nasty word to the teen. The teen says, "Why in the world do my parents always want to rob me of fun? Don't they trust me?" A simple answer by most parents is "No I don't trust you". Teaching a teen to obey a curfew is critical in helping them understand the importance of being responsible by following certain rules. Life is full of rules that we have to learn to obey in order to be a productive

citizen. Prov. 22:6 says, "Start children off in the way they should go and when they are old they will not depart from it." Teaching a teen how to be responsible is critical to their success in the world. A great tool for teaching responsibility is the curfew. So where in the Bible is the 18-year-old told that their curfew should be 12 midnight? In their mind, they don't get it. They think you're only setting up this rule because you don't trust them and you are an old person who has no idea what's going on in the real world. Once again wise is the parent who sits down with the teen and spends time with them being "real" and interested in what their teen thinks and why. Showing respect to the teen's ideas is actually quite Biblical.

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets". Matt. 7:12. If you want your ideas respected you're going to have to show some respect to their ideas no matter how stupid it sounds.

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Rom.12:10. If you want to be honored then show honor as well. Dismissing your teen's feelings and comments is not very affectionate.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Eph. 6:4. (One of my favorites).

It doesn't mean you always succumb to the teens thinking but active listening does show you respect them as a person and not just flippantly disregard their feelings about the matter. So how do you answer them? More than likely some of you have used what your parents used who used what their parents used, who used what their parents used. Great great grandparents might have said, "No good thing happens after sundown. Only cattle rustlers and horse thieves are out after dark." Great grandparents probably told their teens, "No good thing happens after lights go out. Only gangsters and lawbreakers are out." Grandparents might have told their teens, "No good thing happens after 10 pm. Only a bunch of Fonzie's in leather jackets are running around." And now you say to your teen, "No good thing happens after midnight. There are just a bunch of people drunk, on drugs, stealing, or having sex." Though that might be true it often doesn't come across too well to the teen.

Remember, the teen wants to make decisions but they hate when their decisions become mistakes. They know better than anyone that costly mistakes will make it more difficult for more independence. The problem is they don't always have the maturity to make a decision that doesn't cause a mistake. So the challenge for the parent is to help them be part of the decision-making process so they learn how to be more trustworthy. Let the teen become part of the discussion as to why there need to be curfews. Too many parents blow it by giving younger teens the same curfew as older teens. There's no room for growth and teaching if you do that. If a teen is responsible for making a 10 o'clock curfew during their sophomore year, an 11 o'clock curfew their junior year, then chances are they'll handle a midnight deadline better when they are a senior. Special circumstances always apply to a rigid curfew. Help them understand what the Bible teaches about learning to be responsible.

I Corinthians 13:11 says, *“When I was a child, I spoke like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways”*. Paul emphasized that there will be evidence of your teen's maturity. If they act like a child spiritually then it stands to reason that they will base their activity in childish ways. However, if they act like mature young adults spiritually, then they will base their activity on a more mature path. Proverbs 18:7 gives wisdom when it says, *“A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.”* Pay attention to the way your teen responds to you when you discuss such things as curfews. Let them know the way they respond verbally to responsibility like a curfew goes a long way in letting out more rope and freedom. The improper language will only bring them to ruin and snare them according to Proverbs. They will fall into the immature trap where no parent will feel comfortable with giving their teen more freedom. Take the time to help them understand why your answer is "no" if they respond improperly. Show them verses like Proverbs above. If they learn to respond as a soon to be adult then you'll feel more comfortable letting them have more freedom and independence.

Also, if you are going to let them in on the conversation to be part of the process of helping set and discuss curfews then they must also be part of the consequences should they break the curfew. If their responses are immature as to the consequences of breaking curfew then that's a sign to the parent of the amount of space they should give. On the other hand, if the teen has a very mature outlook as to the agreed-upon consequences then the parent can give more space. Another great benefit of having your teen part of the process when it comes to curfews is it saves a lot of arguing because they agreed to what the time should be and the consequences should the time not be followed.

On a side note here's a funny commentary about the differences between how mom and dad look at curfew broken by a teen.

Mom thinks

- **One minute late -- "I'm starting to get worried, dear."**
- **Five minutes late -- "Oh, I just know that something bad has happened."**
- **Ten minutes late -- "Call the police and hospitals."**
- **Fifteen minutes late -- "Why isn't someone dragging the lake and putting up roadblocks?"**
- **Twenty-one minutes late -- "I'll have to buy a dress for the funeral."**
- **Anything over 30 minutes late and Mom wants to call the pastor for grieving counseling.**

Dad thinks

- **Whatever happened to the kids can be better dealt with a full night's sleep instead of a half-crazed man with no sleep.**

- **If it's been more than 2 hours then dad becomes frantic and starts thinking in dollars. How much is it going to take to fix what they busted up?**

#2- Allow For Privacy:

Teens not only need you to be real and interested in them within the space you allow but they need you to give some privacy within that space. One of the areas of privacy that bothers parents the most is their desire to hide how they communicate through social media from their parents. Today's social media makes it very difficult for the parent to protect their teen. In any given moment from texting, tweeting, or Facebooking a teen can get themselves in some hot water or post some very inappropriate material for the world to see. They don't understand the importance of protecting their reputation for long term success. They don't realize how many predators are on the web searching for teens that they can take advantage of. Teens can make seriously bad comments about a teacher that can cause administrator and parent nightmares. Parents need and must monitor their teen's behavior through social media. However, it is also critical that the parent not rob the teen the opportunity to mature and develop skill sets that teach them to know the difference between proper and improper technological behavior. After all, this is another area of skills that a teen will have to learn how to deal with when you are no longer around to teach them. During this stage in a teen's life there needs to be a balance between being a helicopter parent, who hovers over the teen so there is no freedom or independence, and a non-existent parent just letting the teen do and say whatever they want through social media tools. Remember, your goal is to teach your teen to think and not just dictatorially demand obedience. We don't want to rob them of communicating as their world communicates but we need to make sure we help them understand the dangers associated when no parameters set in place.

So what's this stuff about teens needing space privately and how does this apply Biblically to what we are discussing?

Get Out of My Room Please!

Ever wonder why your teen wants to always retreat to the solitude of their room and not be seen for days?

Believe it or not, they actually need to do this so they can grow up. Many times they want separation from you because they need to think about whatever they want to be without worrying about what you think. It gives them a level of freedom they desire while still in a protected environment. It's their perfect world. The parent that does not allow for this privacy by saying "don't close your door" is asking for serious problems of rebellion in the near future. Believe it or not, most teens are not closing their doors because they have something to hide but they want to be free to be themselves without the parent's input. Their room becomes their sanctuary. I know some of you are thinking that if the room is an extension of themselves then what does that say about the teen whose room can't be seen due to the amount of stuff on the floors, walls, ceilings, etc...In many ways, messy rooms are a way for the teen to say I actually do have the freedom to live as I want. They learn eventually that this private space is an extension of who they are and soon will want to be respected. That's why when a parent goes in and cleans the room, snoops around, etc... in a teen's room, they feel that they have been violated. If you feel you must clean or snoop let them know you will be doing this. Be very careful that you don't make your teen feel like they always have something to hide just because they want a little privacy. The parent who can't trust their child for some privacy is the one who has some insecurity that probably needs to be dealt with. After all, do you as a parent ever need some privacy? Give your teen the same respect. As a

quick reminder, *"Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" Matthew 7:12.*

Having said all the above however does not mean that you leave the teen completely alone without ever checking up on them or having some standards set for their privacy. It's critical that the parent talks to the teen about the desire to give them some space (privacy) but it must be earned through a level of trust in both parties. In the early stages of a teenager's life, a parent should have certain parameters with privacy and social media. You as the parent should clearly state that as the teen learns what is acceptable as a Christian teenager on proper social communication then more freedom and privacy will be given to the teen. For example, I don't recommend that a teen have a computer in their room until they have proven they can handle it properly without going to improper websites. Even then the computer should always have good internet blocking software as well as requiring that for the privilege of using the computer you need to have their passwords. You also need to make sure they "friend" you so you can monitor what they post online. I also recommend the parent monitor cell phone and texting use in the early stages and placing a time limit on when they have to shut it all down, such as 10 pm. It's very important that the parent not do this in secret but be very clear in your verbal communication with your teen as to how often you plan to monitor their involvement. That way there is no misunderstanding as to why you are doing what you are doing. Continually remind them as they earn your trust then less monitoring will be required. Accountability is critical throughout this process. Learning to communicate properly through social media is no different than learning how to treat people right, or learning how to tell the truth. Social media activity is a value system that has to be a training ground for the teen. The parent who just lets the teen go into social media without any kind of standards is asking for trouble. Here are some scary statistics.

A survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project showed 32% of online teens (43% of social networking ones) have been contacted by strangers and 17% of online teens (31% of social networking teens) have "friends" on their social network profile that they have never met in person. Believe it or not 1 in 3 teen girls have had sexually explicit messages, pictures, or videos on their cell phones. (Not boys but girls!). Wonder what boys cell phones are like?

Direction from God's Word-

"Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning." Prov. 9:9.

How about this paraphrase for our teens? ***Instruct a teenager and he will be wiser on how to handle uncertain things. Teach a teenager who is growing in Christ and he will become smarter of the ways of the world and the ways of God.*** They won't know what's right and wrong about social media if we don't constantly teach them.

"If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer." Prov. 9:11. This is a great verse in helping your teen understand how they respond to your guidance goes a long way toward their freedom.

"He who seeks good finds goodwill, but evil comes to him who searches for it." Prov. 11:27. Privacy can be a great thing for a teen's maturity if they use it for good. However, if they use that private space to search for our bad things than usual, nothing good comes out of that.

"The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice." Prov. 12:15. Teenagers have a really hard time listening to advice, especially when it comes to keeping yourself pure and staying away from trouble. They often think they can't and won't get trapped in bad activities. Teens will often think certain activities in private behind closed doors are harmless and there's nothing wrong with it. Parents this applies to certain video games as well.

"A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke." Prov. 13:1. I just had to throw that one in for the dads.

"The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble." Prov. 19:23. This is a great verse. Think about what it's really saying. If we can ever get across to our kids how to respect the Lord and live for him then they'll figure out how to really live and be content in their circumstances. They will protect themselves from so much trouble that is out there. Learning to use their privacy to grow and mature is a good thing. Learning to use that privacy to be deceptive will only bring trouble. Encourage your teen to use their private moments to grow in their thinking about God and what He wants them to be and according to God, they'll be much more content.

Okay, now we have to teach them to park straight on!

Now that we are confident they have enough space to park their car we have to teach them how to pull that car in straight on. Symbolically we're talking about shooting straight with our kids. This is where we have to tell it like it is in the area of money, sex, friendships, family, behaviors, school, jobs, extra-curricular activity, church, or in other words life in general. Who is going to tell our kids the truth when it comes to some of the most important things they think about? Too many parents leave it up to their teachers, friends, youth pastors, employers, anyone but themselves. Some parents are so busy in their own lives that they hardly have any time to spend sharing and teaching their teens about some of the big and small issues they face every day. The average father only spends around 7 minutes a day talking to their teen. The good news is mom spends twice as much time as dad talking to their teen. Some of you got that last statement. That means mom only talks about 15 minutes a day with their teen in meaningful conversation. Here's another way of looking at this. Parents spend an average of 1.763% of each day talking with their teens. So let's take a few minutes and discuss shooting straight with our kids. It doesn't mean we are rude and unkind but it does mean we have to be honest with them even if it disappoints them.

Step 1-You Can't Fool God

Our teens have to know that we know that they have secrets and we are not going to try and force it out of them. Think back when you were a teen. I know if my parents would have ever found out that I did some of the things I did I probably wouldn't have made young adulthood. It's amazing I lived and got out of my teen years with some of the stupid things I did. I'm not condoning those things and glorifying those things, I'm just saying I know if my teens were like I was I'm sure they had some secrets they'd prefer I not know about. But I wanted my kids to know that just because I didn't know what was going on it was important that they knew that God always knew what was going on. Proverbs 21:21 says, *"There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord."* God is telling us that when we do stuff that is against His will for us we might think we're going to get away with it but we won't because God will let us know about it. Look closely at what this verse says. Break it up so it reads like this: "There is no wisdom that can succeed against the Lord. There is no insight that can succeed against the Lord. There is no plan that can succeed against the Lord." The idea is that no man's wisdom or insight

or plan that would be against the Lord will succeed. What would be against the Lord? Anything that would not be pleasing to Him will not succeed in His great plan for us.

When it comes to teen sex what wisdom do you think your teen is learning about it and from whom? What insight are they getting from all the media and print they hear and see every day? What plan do they have in place? Does any of their thought process internally go against what God would want? You can put any subject material to the test with this Proverb.

Let's say Johnny has a plan with his buds to tell mom and dad they are going to Steve's house for a party but don't worry Steve's parents will be there. In reality, Steve's parents are out of town and the party will have lots of beer kegs. They can't wait to fool mom and dad. Now, mom and dad just accept and trust Johnny because he's never given them a reason not to trust him because he really hasn't given them anything in his past to be concerned with. However, Johnny's been listening to the wrong kind of wisdom and has been influenced by his friend's insight about how cool it is to get drunk. So they develop this great plan and you know what? It worked! Johnny got to the party and got drunk, spent the night at Steve's house and mom and dad never knew what went on. He came home the next day and everything seemed just like normal with mom and dad. This plan worked so well that Johnny wanted to continue to sneak out and party like this. It made him more popular with the kids and what's wrong with being popular? I forgot to mention that Johnny was a true believer in Christ and a leader in his youth group. He just started sliding a little away from God at this moment in his life. But God's Word says that Johnny might be getting away with this activity with mom and dad but not Him. God has a way of letting natural consequences teach huge lessons to us. God loves Johnny very much and it breaks His heart to see him traveling down this path. In the same book of Proverbs in chapter 10 verse 9 it says, "*The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.*" Johnny hasn't learned yet that living a lie to his parents lacks integrity which will eventually shape him into someone you can trust or not trust. He'll have to learn that lesson in a tough way. You see, Johnny was coming home from one of these great parties when he accidentally hit another car parked on the side of the street because he had a little too much to drink. When the cops got there he was arrested for DUI and taken to the local jail. Johnny came from a pretty well to do family and being in jail with some of the people there was an eye-opening experience for him. The worst part was Johnny knew he was going to have to face his parents and explain how he got into this mess, not to mention how he totaled the car. Can you imagine what Johnny's life is going to be like not only at home but out in the world now that he has a DUI on his record? Using Proverbs 21:21 is a great way to have some open discussions with your teen.

There is another side, however...

Proverbs 16:3 says, "*Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.*"

That's just the opposite of what Proverbs 21:21 said. When you make your mind up to try and do what you believe God wants you to do, then more times than not you will succeed. What those two verses tell me is that God is involved in our everyday activity whether we want Him to be or not. If you chose to serve the Lord you've got a good chance of seeing some good things happen in your life. If you chose to try and push Him aside you'll find that no matter what wisdom you think is superior, what keen insight you have, or a master plan there's a good chance that eventually you'll fail in feeling content in your life. So let your kids know that they might as well take the easier road and shoot straight with God knowing that He's not there as a cop watching their every move but He's there as a companion wanting the best for them.

Step 2-Earn Trust through respect (5 ways to get your teen to respect and trust you)

Shooting straight with teens is one thing, having them listen is another. When we tell our teens like it is, they have a couple of choices. They can choose to let the information we are telling them to go in one ear and out the other or they can take it to heart because they know it's for their own good. A lot of what we tell our teens never gets taken to heart because they have a hard time trusting what we tell them. It's not so much that they don't trust us as parents but because they don't really think what we are telling them is really that significant. They think it's what we are supposed to tell them because we are their parents but they actually know what's better for their life. Ask yourself why a teen would not trust what their parent is telling them? Many would say it's just because they are parents and teens don't want to admit parents are right. It's their way of staying in control of their own values. That may be part of it but there are many other reasons why a teen doesn't trust the advice of a parent. It's almost reverse psychology because now it's the parent asking the teen "don't you trust me?". Their answer back internally is "no I really don't think your answers are best for me." So how do we get our message across to our teens and know that they will listen? There is no guarantee that they will listen but there are some things you can do as a parent to help them understand and apply what you share.

Teens will start to listen more frequently to their parents when they feel their parents respect them as a soon to be young adult rather than a kid. I know it's hard sometimes to think of your teens as soon to be young adults and quite frankly it can be a little frightening with some of our teens. Respect is a two-way street and many teens act in ways that don't give cause for respect. However, you don't have to respect what they do but you still need to respect who they are. When a teen does something that is not worthy of our respect we often will let them know by attacking the person and not the problem. Teens often say "I can never please my parents" or "my parents only love me when I'm doing what they want" because they feel accepted only by parental conditions. We must make it clear to our teens that we respect them and trust them as a person but we will be cautious when they do something that discourages trust. The critical thing for parents to remember about gaining your teen's trust in what you say is how you respond to their blunders emotionally and verbally. Remember, teens, are emotional beings and feel everything. The tone of your verbal words and the action you take toward them are analyzed by the teen into how does that make them feel. If the action you took doesn't make them feel loved then they'll not trust what you're telling them. You can still be stern and discipline your teen and they can still be upset and disappointed in what you said to them but they have to walk away from that confrontation believing they are still important to you. There's great wisdom for parents in Ephesians 4:25-32. It gives 5 really good steps to take when we want to earn the trust of our teens so they'll start applying what we teach them.

- **Keep it honest with respect-***"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body"* Eph. 4:25. When talking to your teen you must always remember that as you speak truthfully to them you must do it respectfully. Be very careful not to say anything that could be considered character assassination. The passage in Ephesians makes it really clear that we are to talk to our teen in truth. Don't sugar cookie the truth. If your teen did something dumb or potentially dangerous or they acted and spoke in a disrespectful way they must be corrected. But at the same time, your conversation must be how you would want to be talked to. I get the idea that we are to talk to our teens respectfully while speaking the truth from the comment that "we are all part of the same body". You would never do something that

would hurt your own body. A good rule of thumb is before you talk to your teen who has blown it is to ask yourself when you do something wrong how would you like your spouse or boss talk to you. Here's a quick example of how you might start a conversation with a teen who came home drunk and you're more than upset. "Steve if I speak right now I'll probably say something that is not respectful to you as a person so for now, I'm going to wait and collect my thoughts. Go to your room and get some rest, when you feel you are capable of focusing and I'm capable of talking without yelling at you we'll talk"

That way you don't let your emotions which are probably a little out of control at that moment taint what you need to say. Then when all parties have had time to cool down you might say. "Steve I feel it's important you understand that I respect you as a person and speak honestly to you. What you did last night was not only hurtful to your mom and me but extremely dangerous to you. Tell me some things that could have happened last night that would have ruined or at least made your life really hard."

Spend some time trying to make this a teachable moment with open discussion. Hopefully, you prepared your teen properly by having discussions BEFORE they chose to get drunk on the consequences. If not, your discipline will more than likely not go over well. If you did prepare them they might not like it but they will respect it because you didn't leave them out in the cold. You might say something like, "Steve, you mean too much to your mom and me to just overlook it when you do things that can hurt you. We had a discussion about what the consequences would be if you ever decide to come home drunk. I remember you telling us that we'd never have to worry about that because you'd never do something so stupid. We trusted your word but unfortunately, that didn't happen. We still believe in you as a person but we can't trust this last activity you participated in so you know what has to happen. You agreed to be under house arrest for the next month along with no car privileges for the next month. We know it's going to be difficult for you because you've got some cool things coming up this month. Trust me, being under our care and house arrest for the next month is better than losing your driver's license due to a DUI or worse being in jail for 30 days with community service because you got caught by the police while driving."

That type of conversation can take place with almost anything. Let's say you want to talk to them about sex. They often don't want to discuss such a subject with parents but you must be the adult and find ways to talk about relevant current events. For example, just recently on the Grammy Awards Beyonce did a very provocative sexual dance with Jaz-y on stage. You could bring that up in conversation and ask what they thought about it. Listen very respectfully to what they say and continue to communicate with them from the position of what they say not what you say. You might even throw in some of the statistics you've learned in this material about the % of teens by what age are having sex. Then conclude it by saying something like, "Steve, you know I respect you a lot as a young man. One of the things I like about you the most is you don't hold back how you feel. I've really enjoyed how you told me straight up how you felt about what we just talked about. If it's alright with you I'd like to put my trust in you and hold you accountable to what you told me about how you would never have sex with your girlfriend before you're married. I think that's really neat and actually is exactly how God feels too. Thanks for putting faith in me to trust you with this very delicate subject and I look forward to seeing you grow more into a man and have a wonderful

wife someday. I know there will be times in the coming months and years that you'll be tempted to do things to your girlfriend that is not morally acceptable but you hang tough and just know you have someone in your corner all the time." If you need a good scriptural reference for this subject try using I Thess. 4:3-5 which says, *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.* Remind them that sanctification is a fancy word for being different or set apart for something special. There's no greater feeling than knowing you set yourself apart from what the average person would do by presenting yourself to your wife or husband as pure. You will be their one and only which brings honor to the one you love.

- **Keep it under control**-The The passage says, "In your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger and give the devil a foothold." This is actually a pretty neat verse about anger. It says you can be angry just don't sin in your anger. God allows anger because it's an emotion that motivates us to do what's right. When anger is used to selfishly get your own way then it's sinful. If anger motivates you to want to see a change in your teen so they grow in Christ and mature then it's being used properly. You should never let your anger make you lose your emotional control. When we as parents let our anger become loud and abusive then we will lose a lot of respect and trust with our teens. The second half of the verse says not to let the sun go down on your anger. I take this verse literally. It's a proven fact that if the situation is not dealt with properly until later then there is an opportunity for bitterness to dwell deep within the heart of a teen. If you and your teen have a strong disagreement before bedtime make sure you deal with it before you go to bed. You don't have to fix the problem but you do have to deal with it. You might say something like, "Susan I realize it's going to take more discussion and time to resolve our issue but I can't go to bed angry with you. So I'd like to agree with you that we have a cool-down period right now and think about this overnight so we can discuss this without getting angry. We'll come back tomorrow afternoon after school so we can calmly try to deal with this and I'll have more time to make recommendations from my end." Then take the time overnight and the next day to prayerfully consider how God wants you to deal with this problem.
- **Keep it tactful**- *"Watch your words and guard. 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. Your ultimate goal as a parent is to figure out ways to build up your teen so it will benefit them in the long run. Your teen will learn to trust what you say and accept it as truth when you consistently speak to them in a manner that builds them up and not tear them down. The louder you speak the less they will listen. Don't let any unwholesome word (the Greek word literally means rotten or smelly word) come out of your mouth when you are trying to share a truth. They may have done something that was really wrong but if you're going to help them trust you so you can give them wisdom it must be delivered in a tactful way. There a small section of this verse that is often quickly passed over. The part that says "according to their needs" is very important in learning to speak tactfully. If we would slow down and ask God what does our teen need from this conversation that would build them up then we'd probably say a lot of stuff differently to them. This activity is very hard to do and a parent really needs the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, especially when our teens have pushed

our emotional buttons. Ask God to help you keep this verse in the back of your mind when it's time to do your daily lecture when the teen screws up. You'll be amazed at how you will go about teaching them a life lesson.

- **Keep it private-** *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice". Eph. 4:31.* There is more to this verse than just learning to not have bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, etc... Notice the progression of the sinful nature discussed in this verse. Bitterness is something someone holds onto because they were treated unfairly in their eyes. It's something they keep to themselves. Rage and anger are something that is displayed outwardly by someone but it's still in the nature of the person and not on someone else. Brawling, slander, and malice are now way that bitterness, anger, and rage are thrust upon someone in a public way. The progression has gone from being private to moving to public. When there is strong disagreement between teen and parent it must be dealt with in a private manner. If there is something going on in the family between teens and parents don't reprimand the teen in front of his or her brother or sister. If you are out in public and have a strong disagreement never correct the teen in front of other teens. Take them aside and let them know that you will deal with this in a private manner when you get home. The parent who learns to keep strong disagreements between themselves and their teens private will earn the right to have their counsel trusted by their teen. They will know by the way you treat them publicly that they mean a lot to you and they will honor you by listening to your counsel in private.
 - **On a side note, never joke with your teen in a sarcastic way and then say "just kidding". You might think it's harmless but the teen will hold those words against you.** *Like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death is one who deceives their neighbor and says, "I was only joking!" Prov. 26:18-19. Your teen will feel like you are deceiving them and shooting flaming arrows straight to the heart.*
- **Keep it compassionate-***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Eph. 4:32.* This one is pretty evident. Your teen will learn to trust you when you take the lead and show them compassion and forgiveness when they screw up. Remember your teen wants so desperately to start making decisions but are afraid that if they make a mistake they will get the "the lecture." Give your teen enough freedom to make some decisions and allow for the opportunity to fail without fear. Show compassion and forgiveness in their failures. In fact, it's a good thing when parents allow their teens in situations where it's a high % they are not going to succeed. We love to protect them and you should never put them in a situation where their decision is going to hurt them in the long term. But letting Mike grow through a bad financial choice and then showing compassion after he picks himself off the mat is a good thing. They will start to run to you for advice when they realize every decision they make is not a make it or break it decision with you.

Now the really hard part-Parallel Parking!

One of the most challenging things a parent can do when teaching their teen to park is parallel parking. How many times do we have to go back and forth and back and forth before they get it right? Sometimes it seems like they will never get it right. A parent has to be really flexible during the time they learn to Parallel Park. In many ways the parent has to do with the teen what the teen does when it starts the

process of learning to parallel park, they have to be willing to pull alongside the teen and guide them into the proper space. It's a fine line between being a parent and being a friend. We still have to be stern enough to discipline the teen when they need it but we also want them to know they can turn to us whenever they need it for support much as they would do with a friend.

When teaching your teen to Parallel Park you can't do it for them. They have to do it by themselves and learn the hard way no matter how many times they have to keep trying. Often they will get very frustrated and want to quit. Parents too may get exasperated with the number of times the teen tries to get it right but they must let the teen do it. We can't do it for them or they will never learn how to get into the right space. So it is with life. We could step in and save our teen some anguish and pain but they will never learn how to properly handle certain situations if they don't do it themselves. I think one of the most difficult things a parent has to learn with their teen is to watch the teen fail when it could have been avoided. You can only protect them for so long. Eventually, they'll be on their own and must learn on their own.

Steps to help them parallel park

#1- They have to commit to Parallel Parking

A teen could have plenty of space to park but decide they don't want to parallel park. When they see the space that requires they parallel park they have to commit to doing it and must receive support from their instructor the parent. Committing to parallel parking means the parent will help the teen through this difficult stage of learning to go back and forth until they get it right. Proverbs 16:3 says, "*Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.*" Your teen needs to know that you will not give up on them no matter how many times they fail nor will God. What plans do you have or want to be established for your teen? We all know the great verse that says, "*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.*" Our students desperately want to have a life that will have hope and know they have a great future. We will make it more difficult for them if we don't commit ourselves to help them achieve God's plan for their life. Along the way, they are going to come upon challenges where they have to parallel park. Sometimes they won't succeed on their first try and will have to pull out and try again. We want them to try again and not give up and find the easy spot. In order for that to happen, we also have to become an encourager.

You become an encourager by doing at least these 3 things.

- a. **Help them know that no matter how many times they fail God will always be a safe place to run.** "*The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*" Prov. 18:10
- b. **Help them know that God doesn't make junk and He has given them the tools to make it when it's difficult.** "*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*" He gives them a way not to fear if they call upon Him. There is a unique power they can draw upon that will help them love and be self-disciplined enough to solve this problem.
- c. **Help them not discard the importance of God's Word in everyday living.** "*You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.*" Psalm 119:114. They will have hope and feel protected from making major mistakes in life if they focus on His Word and apply it in their life. Encourage them to read His Word often.

#2-They have to agree to pull alongside another car.

Pulling alongside means there are now two cars side by side. At a moment in time when the car is stopped, it is maneuvered so that it is next to another. Our teens need many opportunities to pull

alongside another. A parent should always make it available for the teen to have the opportunity to have mentors and companions when trying to do difficult things. Two are better than one and strength is found in more than one. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, *“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”* One of the best things a parent can do to help a teen learn how to parallel park in life is to make sure they understand they never have to go at it alone. Being a Lone Ranger doesn't work well for teens. Help them find good faithful friends and spiritual mentors.

#3-They need to check for obstacles coming their way

In order to properly parallel park, the teen will need to look in their rearview mirror and make sure there are no obstacles in the way so they can start to back up. If there are cars coming then they need to make sure either the cars stop for them to continue or they need to wave the cars on by before they proceed. An obstacle is anything that would prevent our teen from being able to complete the difficult task. Some of those obstacles are discouragement, anger, frustration, lack of patience, depression, and a desire to quit. Parents need to stay on top of this for their teens and provide ways for them to develop endurance. Romans 5:3-4 ESV *“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,”*. It's not easy for our teens when they fail. The last thing they usually want to hear during a failure is that it will help them produce character and hope. Usually, failure is something that a teen has to live through and not be lectured through. When they fail our job as parents are to help them know that we won't give up on them because we know if they endure they will develop Godly character, Colossians 1:11. ESV says, *“May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.”* Colossians tells us that the only way they will be able to truly endure is to be strengthened by God and to receive a “power” that only He can give. Not according to anything we can do but according to His might. The unique thing about this verse is it implies that the teen will be able to receive power from God so they can endure these difficult things in their life so that they will develop patience and joy. There's nothing better for a teen and their instructors to watch him or her pull back and forth properly because they took their time and had the patience to maneuver the car properly into the spot. Once the car is six inches from the curb and properly spaced between two other cars you'll see joy erupt inside.

Well, there you have it. We've learned about making sure our teens have enough space to be able to park properly. We've talked about making sure the teen pulls in the space straight on by shooting straight with them. Finally, we talked about what is required to parallel park and help the teen continue to try and not give up no matter how many times it takes to go back and forth. With the right amount of love and support we can as parents teach our kids how to park in life. Take a few minutes and ask God to help you offer patience and wisdom as you teach them how to properly park in a very busy world.