

Do You Park Them In The..



The garage has three main functions for the home. First, it's an extension of the home and often will tell you what kind of people that live in the home. Second, it's a place for the car to have security and protection from the elements. Third, it's a place where certain tools are available to make life's chores a little easier. Think about your garage for a moment. Is it neat, tidy, and organized? Is it messy, dirty, and disorganized? What type of things do you keep in your garage? Do you store boxes filled with things you have no idea what's in them? Do you have broken down tools or brand new well-conditioned tools? Are there grease spots on the garage floor or does it have epoxy cement paint and is spick and span? Your garage tells a lot about your family. Think about your garage being an extension of your home, a place of protection and security, and filled with certain tools to help make your home more productive as we explore where and how we park those "valuable" vehicles.

There are two types of garages for a family home. They are called "attached" and "detached" garages. Attached garages are structures that are attached to the actual home. Attached garages are more convenient in many ways because you don't have to be exposed to outside elements and there is closeness to the proximity of the home. On the negative side, you might have to pay more for your home-owners insurance because there is a greater risk of damaging the home if a fire starts in the garage. As long as you are diligent in taking care of risky things in your garage the advantages of having an attached garage are great. So, does your home have an attached garage? In other words, how close are you to your teens? Do you work hard at developing a strong bond with each one? Remember, just like each car is different so are your teen's temperaments and must be communicated differently. It takes a lot of work to think about the different types of temperaments that your teens have ~~wh~~ understanding the first, middle, and last-born traits. It takes even more work to realize what type of person you are and how your strengths and weaknesses in your temperaments can affect how you communicate with each child.

Proverbs 20: 5 says, "***The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.***" As parents, we need to understand how to draw out from our teens what's going on in their life. The parent who can communicate on a level with their teens where they can get to the heart of the matter will have a great relationship with them. Some of you may ask, "That's fine Keith but how do I do that exactly? I can barely get two words out of my teen daily. *I agree it's not easy.* You have to start with James 1:5 which says, "***If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.***" So if you want to start drawing your teen out you need to do the following steps.

1. **Ask God for wisdom.** You must accept the fact that God knows your teen better than you'll ever know them and He knows what kind of things you'll need to do to reach that child. Too many times parents try to do the same thing with each child expecting the same results. **THAT WON'T WORK.**
2. **Apply the principles of wisdom.** If you are going to ask for wisdom then you have to be willing to apply what God's word says about wisdom. James 3:17 says, "***But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.***" Wow! Think about that for a minute. Your success in drawing out deep waters in your teen and understanding them will take the type of wisdom that comes down from heaven. Do you want to know what's going on with your teen? When you communicate with them do the following things take place?
 - a. Is it **pure**? In other words, is your motive pure in what you want to know and why? Or do you want to know so you can figure out a way to control? Your teen won't open up if they feel you are trying to control them.
 - b. Is it **peace-loving**? Is your number one priority to make sure you lovingly strive for peace with your child? **EVEN WHEN THEY ARE REBELLIOUS? This can't be done naturally. It will take a Spirit-filled person to accomplish this. You need to ask God to anoint you daily as you "learn" to communicate peacefully.**
 - c. Is it **considerate**? The idea behind this word is a marked determination to place the needs of others before yours. Philippians 2:3-4 states this wisely when it says, "***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others.***" That sounds like a very considerate thing to do, doesn't it? Wise is the parent who can learn how to show selflessness from an authoritarian position, just like their heavenly Father.
 - d. Is it **submissive**? This is the hardest thing to do as a parent. Learning to submit to our teens is very difficult. This doesn't mean you let your teen walk all over you. It does mean as Ephesians 5:21 says, "***Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.***" The key to that verse is "reverence to Christ". When you are trying to communicate at the highest level with your teen do you have a respect for them as a brother or sister in Christ? (They, of course, need to have a personal relationship with Christ). By respectfully treating your teen as a co-heir with Christ you'll find yourself desiring a better walk with them.
 - e. Is it **full of mercy and good fruit**? Mercy means kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly. The idea of producing "good fruit" is simply you want something good to come out of this and not something negative. I think a good paraphrase of this could be the following. **You could be much harsher than you are by showing justice without mercy, but instead, you use wisdom by offering justice and mercy to produce good fruit out of your teen.**
 - f. Is it **impartial**? Of course not, right? We want to make sure we get our opinion stated clearly. The idea behind the word impartial is that we treat all people in all situations equally and without favor. We'll never get very deep with our teens when we are so

opinionated. It's okay to let your teen know what your opinion is in the matter but we have to ask ourselves are we treating our teen's opinion fairly. We must work hard at being impartial and listening WITHOUT AN AGENDA.

- g. Finally, is it **sincere**? Are we honestly sharing our feelings with respect? Ephesians 4:25 says, **"Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor (teen), for we are all members of one body."** I get the idea of speaking respectfully from the concept of "being members of one body." Paul later goes on to explain that we would never do anything that would hurt our bodies so why do it to others who are part of the body of Christ?

So you still want to draw out deep waters from your teen? You still want to have a great personal and long-lasting relationship with them? You want them to tell you things that they only tell their friends? It's going to take Godly wisdom. It is something that you and I cannot come up with on our own. It must come from God through His Spirit that lives within us. (Gal. 2:20). The good news is according to the book of James, wisdom is a promise that will be given to us if we ask. Matthew 7:7 says, **"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened...."**

Be persistent in asking for wisdom and soon you'll find yourself receiving wisdom from heaven that is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

What about the risk of fire in our garages?

What are we doing to help minimize the risks that are found in the garage that can potentially destroy the home? There are numerous risks that your "cars" (teens) are exposed to which can destroy them and thus hurt you. We will address this in detail later in our driver's education course when we discuss "what about when they get a ticket or are in an accident". For now, let's just have an overview. What are some of the risks that we can have in our garage that could hurt the home should it catch on fire and be destroyed?

First, let me say that God gives parents a great promise not only for us but for our children that we can claim. I Corinthians 10:13 says, **"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."** We can claim this for our children. God will provide a way of escape for our teens when they are being tempted with risky behavior. If we can help them stay strong in their faith during these very difficult years in their life then we'll see them experience a lot of victories.

So what are some of the risks that could turn into destruction? We could spend chapters talking about risky behavior that can turn into destruction but for our purposes now, let's look at Ephesians 5:3-4. **"But among you, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or**

greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place..."

Risk #1- Sexual immorality. If ever there was a challenge for our teens it's in the area of sexual activity. According to the Guttmacher Institute, an organization solely developed to study teenage sexual activity, the following alarming data was given.

16% of teens by the age of 15 have experienced sexual relations in some form.

33% of teens by the age of 16 have experienced sexual intercourse

48% of teens by the age of 17 have experienced sexual relations 61% of teens by

the age of 18 have been sexually active.

Even if some of the data given by teens is inaccurate, we cannot deny that by the age of 18 years old our teens are faced with being in the minority if they choose to be sexually pure. There are movies out reaching teens by telling them they will never be part of the "in-crowd" if they are not sexually active. Almost every commercial has some sexual innuendo while trying to sell their product. The music that our students have to deal with has a tremendous sexual flavor to it. There is nothing riskier and tempting to our teens than sexual immorality. We must recognize and realize that the "gas can of sexual temptation" is close to an open flame in the garage and must be dealt with properly. That is why I will devote a whole chapter in our manual on the sexual activity of teens in our "Student Driving" section. For now, understand that even if your child is committed to being sexually pure, there's a good chance that at least 50% of the teens they know DO NOT have the same conviction. It's also naïve on our part to assume that all good Christian kids in youth groups are not sexually active. Having worked with youth in my past I know that not to be true.

Risk #2- Impure Lifestyle-What does Paul mean "or any kind of impurity"? The idea in the Greek does not necessarily mean sexual. The main idea has to do with anything that requires a person to covet "outside their relationship with God". It's when a person wants to fill their desires with material objects that take place over God. So when we or our teen want something materialistically greater than a relationship with God we develop an impure lifestyle. That's when we start quenching the Holy Spirit in our lives and walking further from God. For example, when a teen desires a relationship with their boyfriend or girlfriend before they desire a relationship with God, they will start walking dangerously to an impure lifestyle. When a teen wants cars, grades, popularity, etc... more than they desire God, then they will be walking toward an impure relationship. How? Think about it for a moment. When a teen places a boyfriend or girlfriend in front of God, they are making that person "their god". Their devotion goes to them and not God. You'll start finding your teen making excuses as to why they can't do certain things spiritually and walking further from God when they place their devotion on a boyfriend. When a teen starts putting "things" like popularity and rewards in front of God then they more than likely will start developing **PRIDE**. According to Proverbs 16:18 pride comes before a fall.

Pride is a risky character quality that can quickly destroy a person.

Risk#3-Greed-Not much needs to be said about greed, I think everyone understands that a greedy person is a selfish person. A selfish person is someone who thinks only of themselves and could care less about serving others. That's risky behavior that will cause more heartache and frustration in the home. **Proverbs 28:25** *"A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper."*

Risk#4- Obscenity-The Greek word simply states a "filthy gesture or word". Most teens don't cuss in the home. They know mom and dad wouldn't stand for it, therefore mom and dad ~~naively~~ believe their teen doesn't cuss. However, place a teen among their peers who do cuss and you have a different situation.

Most teens have a difficult time NOT cussing when they are around friends who do. After all, you find many of the words now on television regularly, in songs all the time, and certainly in movies. Athletes hear their coaches cuss all the time and students might even hear a teacher say a word now and then. For the sake of decency, I won't print the words that are used often in obscene language but I'm sure most of you are aware of them. Most importantly, our teens should never hear any of these words in the home. There might be a question out there about "what's wrong with a cuss word every once in a while?" Why is that so risky? The Greek word here is of obscene language; we would be referring to main body parts, character assassination, and taking God's name in vain. (This, of course, is a major no-no). However, the risk is minimized by being able to control their tongue. The book of James has some very stern and frightening words for us. **Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself on fire by hell."** James 3:5-6

Man those are tough words. Let me point out a few things to anyone who doubts that using obscene language is no big deal. A teen may think that using a few obscene cuss words is no big deal but God says it will CORRUPT them and set them on a course of destruction. If a teen, or a parent for that matter, can't control their tongue, then what makes you think you'll be able to control it when it's critical for your success? God says you won't be able to just turn it off. No instead, it will be like a spark and one word will lead to another and before you know it you'll have nothing but trouble. You'll not only not be able to control the cuss words you'll not be able to control a gossiping tongue, a lying tongue, a slanderous tongue, and a prideful tongue. God says that not controlling the tongue is just flat out EVIL. So the next time you hear a teen cuss using the "C" word, or "F" word, or "GD" word or "S" word, ask yourself how much self-control do they have in other parts of their life. More than likely very little and that's going to lead that person down a path of destruction according to God. On the other hand, a teen who can control their tongue and bless people with it rather than tear down will find themselves not only being respected by those in authority but eventually, they will be respected by the very peers who are putting pressure on them to "be like them".

Risk#5-Foolish talk and course joking-Everyone likes a good joke. There's nothing wrong with witty and funny jokes. That's not what the Greek words are implying here. The meanings of these words are much more powerful and strong. No-where else in the New Testament are these words used. They mean one who talks in a filthy way and jokes without ever considering whether it could offend or hurt someone.

This type of person loves to tell jokes that are just nasty. Parents beware; you'll find a lot of this going on in the locker room. It's risky to even be around these types of people because they will pull your teen down. It's not enough for your teen to not tell these types of jokes but to not be associated with those who do. The more they hang around this type of garbage the more they will find themselves fighting impure thoughts in their minds. They will also be associated as one who tells those types of jokes even though they don't tell them. Have them do what the Word of God instructs, FLEE! Just walk away.

But I have a detached garage!

A detached garage can sometimes be a pain because if you don't have a covered pathway you have to go out in the elements to reach it. This structure is simply not connected to the house. Do you feel like sometimes you are not connecting with your teen and you are far apart? Since the detached garage is not connected to the home there is a tendency to be a little more complacent with those risky things that could do damage to the home. You also don't want to go out to the garage as much, especially if the elements are challenging. How aware are you of the things going on in the life of your teen? Are there any risky things going on in the life of your teen? If you're not paying attention due to the distance between you and your child there's a good chance a fire might get started.

Do your teens feel like they "fit it" your garage? Is the garage so full of stuff that they feel crowded out and have to park out in the elements? Our garages can be so disorganized and filled with clutter that there is no room for what it was intended to be. A place of protection and security for our "vehicles" (teens). The Bible says in Matthew 6:21, "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" Take a deep look into your life. Look around your home and garage. What does your teen see? Do the things you place great significance or value on show the level of importance of family? It's okay to have things but how do you use those things? I'm sure no one would say that they place a car, big-screen television, hunting equipment-sporting goods, clothing-shoes, and other things above the relationship with their teen. How do you use the things you do have to strengthen your relationship with your teens? Do you use that fancy television to just enjoy the big game or movie or do you find ways to use that tool to build and strengthen your relationship? Do you use that time in front of the television as a teachable moment sometimes to discuss what you are viewing? Do you ever take your kids along with you to the golf course or hunting to just build that "we" time? Look around your house and look into your garage. What do the things on the walls and around your home say about you? Do your things show your priorities in life and what you value?

Many times, during our life we have things called **GARAGE SALES**. Why? It's usually because we have too much stuff that has been replaced with other stuff that is going to soon be replaced with even newer and better stuff. This stuff that we are going to get rid of in our garage sale is getting in the way and has lost its usefulness. We want to get rid of things so we can replace them with things that might

have more value. Sometimes, we even want to get rid of all the clutter in our garages so we can use the garage for what it was intended, to park the car inside.

What is clutter or a better word might be “junk”? It's anything that is getting in your way and keeping you from feeling comfortable with what you see in your garage. Perhaps your garage has too much stuff in it that is not organized very well, and you can't even fit the car inside. I can guarantee the car wants to be parked inside the safe environment of the garage. There may be some of you that say I have plenty of room in my garage and it's well organized with no mess whatsoever. It's great there is so much room for the car to fit in your garage. If your car could talk (and teens rarely do), what would they say about the sterile environment you've placed them in? Do they feel it's so clean they are afraid to leak any oil? Do they feel it's so cold and calculated that they wish it had a little personality to the garage? There needs to be a balance between being too organized and too messy. Finding the right balance is critical for the vehicle to not only fit in the garage but to feel that the garage is the right place for them to be.

Steps of ridding ourselves of junk-

1. **REVEAL** and **REMOVE** the junk. Junk is stuff that gets in the way of us seeing clearly. Sometimes we don't even recognize it as junk. To see what junk in our lives we need to have someone reveal and remove it for us. I John 1:9 says, ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*** We need to ask God first to reveal to us any junk in our lives that might be getting in the way of us seeing clearly how we should approach our teens and then confess what He reveals. If necessary, if He convicts us to go to the one we have offended as stated in Matthew 5:23-24 then we must do that as well.
2. **Manage** the junk. Once we recognize the things in our lives that have kept us from seeing we can now use the garage for what it was intended. The garage should be a place of protection and security where our tools can be used properly, For that to happen we have to manage the junk in our lives. We have to determine what we can keep and what we need to throw away. What are things that we need to throw away that hurts the home and is not a positive extension of the family? What are the things we need to keep that will build up and edify the home? Out of all the pieces of junk we could throw away there are three major pieces that we need to make sure do not reside in our garages.

Three things to throw away-

#1-Worry-Worry is one of the worst pieces of junk. It is almost impossible to see clearly how we should handle any situation when we are worrying. It's natural for parents to worry about how they are going to take care of their kids, how they are going to pay all the bills, career decisions, health issues, the dating life of the teens, getting the kids to college, etc... The worry, however, is a joy stealer. It keeps parents from really enjoying those great moments in a teen's life. Jesus made it clear in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:25-34 that we are not to worry. The biggest reason we shouldn't worry is that it shows our lack of trust and faith in God. Do we believe what Jesus told us? Those are great stories about

how God feeds the birds and the lilies but are they relevant to me when my teen wants to go out with a person, I'm convinced is bad for them? Isn't it an instinct for a mother to worry about her babies? It may be an instinct but it doesn't make it right. There is a lot to Matthew 6:25-34 but I want to focus on when He said, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Notice the three choices one has to worry about. You can choose to worry about things that you thirst after, (what to drink). In other words, what does it take to quench your thirst for life? Usually, when you never can get enough of what the world says you should have, you will worry. You can choose to worry about things that you hunger after, (what to eat). In other words, what sustains you and makes you content. Usually, when you are never content with your circumstances you will worry. You can choose to worry about things that you covet after, (what to wear). In other words, what do you feel you have to have to feel comfortable in life? Usually, when you are too concerned about what makes you comfortable in life, such as your finances, your home, and your portfolio, you will worry. Throw the piece of junk called worry away. It will only make you miserable in the long run.

Take heed of the counsel from Psalm 37:1-11. Don't fret or worry, instead learn to trust in the Lord, learn to delight yourself in the Lord, learn to commit your way to the Lord, and learn to wait patiently on the Lord. The key in every one of those is "In the Lord". Not in yourself, or your career, or in some book, or your spouse, but in the Lord.

#2-Fear-Fear is also a huge piece of clutter that needs to be thrown out. Fear can grip a person so tight they can't see clearly. Fear is one of the great emotions that God gave for our benefit to help us move away from bad things. However, it is also an emotion that is used improperly. It's not used to help us move away from bad things but it's being used by many parents to paralyze themselves from moving forward in a relationship with their teens. What do I mean by that? Parents sometimes are afraid to tread new ground with their teens. They are afraid to be approachable and most of all they are afraid to be transparent. They don't want their teens to know they don't know everything and they certainly, don't want to admit they have faults or make mistakes. Heaven forbid for a parent that has to admit they are wrong. News flash to all parents, YOUR TEEN ALREADY KNOWS YOU'RE NOT PERFECT. I'm not suggesting that you bare your soul to your teen and burden them down with your problems. I am suggesting that you consider allowing your teen into certain areas of your life they can relate to and areas where they need growth and understanding.

Jesus was transparent in front of his disciples. They saw the real person and character of who he was. Remember the story of Jesus traveling with his disciples to go see Lazarus who had died. Everyone remembers how he raised Lazarus from the grave and indeed that was truly a great miracle that should be discussed. However, in that story, there is a piece of scripture known as one of the shortest verses in the bible. It says in John 11:35, "Jesus wept". Think about that for a moment. Jesus saw how the people who were very important to him were hurting and it affected him in such a way that he showed the emotion of sorrow to the point of weeping in front of his disciples. What a powerful example of

transparency. He was not concerned about how those closest to him thought about him weeping for his friends. He wanted them to know that he hurts just like anyone else. Teens desire a relationship with a parent who can openly show that kind of emotion in front of them. In other words, when you're hurt and feel sorrowful does your teen see your pain or do you mask it because you don't want to let them see how you hurt? Do you think if you show how you're hurt it is a sign of weakness before them and possibly something that they shouldn't be bothered with? Blessed is the father or mother who can cry in front of their teens unashamed or at least openly express true emotions of the moment. The fear of transparency in front of our teens is a piece of clutter that needs to be thrown away.

#3-Selfishness- You could even call this piece of clutter **self-centeredness**. This piece of clutter is more interested in making sure the parents' way is the only way. Many parents don't think they act like this but to the teen, it comes across like the following:

"My way or the highway" "This is my castle and you're just renting" "I own you and don't you forget it" "As long as you live under my roof you will do as I say". To the parent, it's all about personal preferences and family traditions. There is nothing wrong with these types of expectations, right? Family traditions can be special and personal preferences if based on biblical reasoning can indeed be edifying. However, many teen/parental conflicts occur over preferences that the parent has while their teen does not see the value and thus, they rebel.

Let me give you an all-time parent-favorite preference. **What's wrong with a teen cleaning their room every once in a while?** I don't know the percentage but I'm betting that it's over 80% of teens' rooms would be condemned by the environmental protection agency. Boys often will have clothing that accidentally didn't get washed over weeks hidden in crevasses that mom couldn't find and only found when she followed the smell of a dead fish. It smelled like a dead fish because the teenage boy who was in a hurry crammed part of a tuna fish sandwich in his pocket because he needed both hands to quickly grab his Xbox controllers and system. Mom soon found out that he didn't finish the sandwich. Many moms are probably saying, "what's wrong with demanding that my teenage daughter learn how to keep a clean house by just cleaning her room? I'm not asking she clean the whole house, just one little room? I just washed her clothes and I can't tell what's clean and what's dirty because it's all over the floor. She never picks anything up." I wonder how many arguments have been started between a teen and a parent about an un-kept teen room. The parent would justify their position biblically by finding verses that pertain to be a slothful person or doing things as if you are doing them to Lord. The teen, on the other hand, would justify their position biblically by saying they are not placing great value in materialism, or explaining to the parent that the unconditional love has now become conditional. Let's ask our self an important question. What do we want to accomplish by demanding a clean room? Some would say self-respect. Some would say learning to appreciate what has been given as a gift. Still, others would say learning self-discipline.

All those things are wonderful and there is nothing wrong with teaching those types of values. But to a teen, their room is their domain and a place for privacy. When a parent starts demanding that a teen's room get cleaned up they are naturally going to feel their space of privacy is being invaded. A parent needs to ask themselves is this a battle worth fighting. You may win the battle but lose the war in the

long run. Remember to check your motivation and make sure a selfish desire is not the reason why you want their room cleaned. There are other ways to teach teen respect and self-discipline outside of the “messy” room. Prayerfully consider if in the eyes of the teen, infringing upon their only places of “freedom”, their room, is a place to pick that battle. Remember, there are always two areas a teen is going to want to explore in their growth, identity, and independence. Forcing them to clean their room oftentimes attacks those two areas. When a teen has learned what self-respect and self-discipline are from other areas of their life they tend to transfer that knowledge to their room. Before you know it they might even pull their bedspread up to the pillows one day to make the bed look half made.

However, they will still probably walk over perfectly good clothes that should be placed in a more suitable place. I can hear it now in a typical teenager’s room when a close friend comes over. **“Man, you must have got into a lot of trouble this week to have to live in such a clean room.”**

Three Things to Keep:

Galatians 5:22-23 says, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control against such there is no such law.”* All of those are tremendous character qualities that the Holy Spirit can empower a teen-age believer (and parent) in their daily walk. Three very important things that we want to make sure we keep in our garage are joy, peace, and patience. Let’s just focus on three important tools for now.

#1-Joy-Many teens will say that they don’t like hanging around their parents or stay in the house much because there is not a lot of joy. Many parents will say that it breaks their heart because it seems like their teen just isn’t very happy, especially in the home. What is it that causes such a disconnect between parents and teens and enjoying each other’s company? Many times, it’s a lack of joy on either one or both of the parties involved. When a person has no joy, they display negative emotions more frequently. A person who lacks joy usually will be an angry person who lacks patience and often finds themselves in a form of depression, sadness, or even bitterness. There are not too many people who want to hang around a person who has these things in their life. Teens often say their parents are always mad or complaining about something. We have to be very careful about how we let circumstances affect our attitudes daily. How does one make sure they let joy be a part of their character?

First, joy is not something that can be manufactured. It has to be a part of one’s soul. Something that is deep within them. Joy is not just always smiling and jumping around happily, especially when things are difficult. That is not natural God-given joy but manufactured joy that will not last. Biblical joy is something that comes from the Holy Spirit and one must be submitted to Him to experience real joy. Romans 14:17 says, *“For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* Real joy is something that comes from a right relationship with God. To have real joy, it must be something that lasts while a fake joy that is self-indulgent and pleasure-seeking will not last. Think about how fleeting joy is in the life of your teen. They get a new car, new clothes, new shoes, a new laptop, they made the football team, they were selected to be a cheerleader, was voted student council President and all of a sudden, they experience

real happiness and are excited. However, over time the happiness starts to fade away and if something else doesn't come along like a new boyfriend or girlfriend, a new toy, some new success, then that original joy has had its season and is no longer interesting or fun to your teen. Guess what, that often happens to us as well. There is so much that could be written about joy, but I don't believe that's my purpose in this section. I want to point out just a couple of critical things that all parents must be aware of if they want to have their teens experience the joy that was created by God.

The tangent can get in the way of the in-tangent. What do I mean? To a teen, happiness is found in material things and relationships you can touch. As stated earlier in our course teens feel first before they think first. Therefore, they place a great deal of their happiness on how they feel. That's why they are so emotional time bombs. Material things like the latest electronics, the latest fashion, the cool car, and even the latest boyfriend or girlfriend can bring on strong feelings of happiness. On the other hand, without those things, teens can feel a great deal of sadness. This feeling of happiness is how they associate how things are going in their life and what they "think" the Bible says joy is. What they don't grasp is that all of these "things", even relationships, the Bible states as fleeting. In Matthew 6:20-21 it says, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* We all are familiar with that verse but to a teen, it can be extremely revealing and wise is the parent that can get the main message across.

-Material things will not last thus the happiness they bring will not either. We should be happy with our teens when we see such joy on their faces when they get that new "teen toy" but we should help them realize the big picture, that if not associated with blessings from God then it will only be temporary. We need to constantly remind our kids that because we are blessed, we were able to provide. We need to remind them that since God blessed us to give them an iPhone then they will not be allowed to use that phone in a way that would not honor God, including putting music on the phone that God would not approve of. We need to help them understand that if they are blessed with a car that they use that car to bring God honor. We honor God in the use of our car by not driving it in such a way that would put others in danger as well as making sure "activities of the sexual nature" are not performed in such a place. We might even honor God by giving someone who is not quite a popular person in school a ride to school. If material things in the world are treated with the proper perspective, then they can be of great value to them.

Teen relationships between boys and girls when placed above God have a great chance of not lasting, and the devil will literally "steal" out from among them the joy/happiness that the relationship brought. If their heart is right and they want to make sure their date life honors God, then their treasure will have a great value and from that will come great joy. A teen will soon start to understand that real joy comes from things that last. They'll start to understand that happiness and joy they felt for the "toys" they received are only temporary but the reason why they received the gift will be permanent.

-Joyful parents have joyful teens. Why would a teen want to become an adult if all they see is a stressed-out unhappy adult? How are we modeling our lives for them when it comes to joy?

Do they only see us joyful and content when things are going well? Then chances are they will only show joy when things are going well. Joy is not dependent upon circumstances but on being centered, specifically Christ-centered. Our teens need to know that real deep joy that comes from God is not determined by how you feel but how your faith. You can have God's joy even during some pretty heavy trials. We don't always have to have a smile on our faces to be joyful. Remember, happiness is usually closely aligned with a feeling (which God can and is in), but Spirit-filled joy is more closely aligned with a faithful knowledge that all will be well. All will be well because we know that God is in control and will not forsake us amid our trials. That knowledge will bring a supernatural understanding of peace, contentment, and joy. When you ask God to fill you with His joy, you'll often find that it comes during times of hardship just as much as good times.

Philippians 4:4 says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.*" It doesn't say rejoice (be joyful) only when times are good. It says to rejoice when it's good and rejoice when it's bad. By the way, Paul wrote those words inspired by the Holy Spirit from prison knowing that there is a good chance he would be dying soon at the hands of his enemies. How could he do that with the events of his life not going so well? The truth is he couldn't. That's the point. He learned to allow the Holy Spirit to fill him in such a way that no matter the condition his life was in he was still able to experience the joy of the Lord. Wise is the parent that can model that for their teen and show how they get through tough times without losing the joy of the Lord.

#2-Peace-Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" What kind of peace does the world give? Think about that for a moment. I suggest that the world doesn't give our teens much an opportunity to experience real peace. Their world is filled with turmoil and uncertainty. Their future has the footprint of the fear of more terrorist attacks, the threat of nuclear war, looming economic disaster for the country they live in, not counting all day to day things they deal with. It's hard for a teen to understand this concept of peace. We are not talking about the peace the world gave when we grew up. What I would call the "Coca Cola" peace. Where we all agreed to live in harmony and raise our Cokes to each other and say, "I love you, man." It's more than just holding up two fingers in the V formation and saying peace. The world today doesn't offer peace to our kids. It's a foreign concept to them. Yet if Jesus said He leaves it with us and wants to give it to us then it must be pretty important. So, what's this peace He wants to give us. Like joy, it's not something that only comes in the presence of no conflict. Otherwise, there would certainly be no peace between parents and teens.

The word peace in the original Greek language is εἰρήνη stated eiréné, (i-ray'-nay). It means peace of mind, wholeness, completeness, when all parts are joined together, undisturbed. Now add it to the idea Jesus had behind this word in this passage. He is saying He is giving us a peace that will make our whole mind be at peace, complete and not troubled or disturbed. It will be the kind of peace He has with the Father (God). You have to understand that Jesus was giving them and desiring that they have the same kind of peace He had at the very moment He is telling them He will be leaving them soon. Do you know what is going to cause Him to leave them pretty soon? He knows He will be brutally beaten and crucified on a cross and yet He is at peace. Doesn't sound like the kind of peace He wants to leave us will be only offered when there is no conflict.

As with joy, peace is something that must be modeled by parents and shared with teens for them to grasp its benefit in their life. When a parent is always troubled and bothered by things going on in their life then their teen will soon learn from them. Instead of having peace about an issue that has come into their life they will be troubled and bothered and not have a clear understanding of what they should do. Soon not only worry will appear on the scene, but they could start losing sleep and not eating well because they are so nervous and bothered. **Once again, this kind of peace is something that must be given. You can't make yourself feel peaceful.** This peace is a fruit of the Spirit. It's something that comes out of you during times when you need it most. However, you must ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit and His peace that He gives not as the world gives. When you do that then you'll be led to understanding verses like Philippians 4:6-7. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And the PEACE of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*

Pace will remove the worry that is troubling your mind. How do you let it do that? Take the things that are disturbing you and causing you to have no peace to God in prayer. You mustn't complain to God about what has you so troubled. Instead, thank Him for these things because they are driving you to Him rather than to the world's solutions. When you do that, the scripture promises us God will through His Spirit that lives in us, give us a peace that we won't be able to explain to people. However, people will see it and they will want it. Can you pass the legacy of peace down to your teens? When you see that they are troubled do you teach them how to overcome a disturbed mind? Laying your burdens down at the feet of Jesus and asking Him to walk with you through this trial with a thankful heart will bring a supernatural peace. If ever our kids need to be able to live in peace it is now.

#3-Patience-This is a fruit that everyone needs. Parents need patience to raise their teens in a way that will help them become successful citizens for the kingdom of God. Teens need patience so they can learn how to listen and grow from the wisdom shared by those in authority. The obvious question should be, "Why is it so hard to show patience when my teen responds improperly?" The answer is simple. They respond improperly. When things don't go the way we want and need them to go we usually struggle with patience. What drives many parents crazy is having their teen simultaneously capable of showing precocious wisdom and incredible foolish choices. How can their kid be so smart and so dumb at the same time? This type of behavior can test parents' patience. We parents must realize that God in His infinite wisdom saw fit to develop our brains so that they react and respond in different ways while in different stages of our lives. In other words, your teens' brain, believe it or not, is different from yours. We will spend a good deal on the teen brain and how technology has affected the chemicals of the brain. For now, let's look at how the teen brain affects the parent's patience.

For example, one of the hardest things for parents to grasp sometimes is when they feel their teen missing curfew or doing something stupid in a car is an affront to their authority. Many times it may have nothing to do with wanting to be rebellious against your wishes. Often when we ask our teens what they were thinking and they say, "I don't know", they are probably telling the truth. I won't bore you with all the facts but here are some interesting things for you to know about your teenager's brain.

A well-known study of the teenage brain done by Dr. Laurence Steinberg of Temple University concluded that teens act differently because their brains are different. You say, "That explains why I can't communicate to that child on a rational level." Indeed, there is probably some truth to that. It's very important at this stage in their life that we don't put them in situations where they have the opportunity to make too many bad choices. According to Dr. Steinberg's study, the old teaching that the brain reaches 90 percent of its adult mass by age 6 and is full-size by age 12 is no longer the standard. The development of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in recent decades opened a new window into the adolescent brain. Research and MRI scans conducted by Jay Giedd, M.D., and others at the National Institute of Mental Health show that the adolescent brain is still very much under construction. I know, some of you parents are saying the brain of your teen is not under construction but demolition.

However, according to Dr. Giedd, instead of adding new neurons, adolescent brains are busy building and strengthening the pathways between nerve cells. He further goes on to say this ongoing process results in a more efficient brain. It does not, however, result in a more mature, adult-like brain. Steinberg's research shows that teens are more likely to make risky decisions than adults because the growth of their socio-emotional brain system outpaces the growth of cognitive controls that serve to regulate emotions and behavior. In other words, teens are developing more efficient thinking without the inhibitory controls of the adult brain. These changes continue into young adulthood, finishing up between the ages of 22 and 25

This seems to explain why so many people say that boys mature later in life than girls and when they get in their mid-20s then they start to develop more maturity. Here's an important point if this study is accurate and why God may have allowed their brains to develop as they do. This type of brain function causes a teen to develop riskier not well thought out behavior which can drive a parent crazy but it also gives the teen the necessary "independent" streak in them that will be required to take flight from home when it's time to leave the nest. Without this "built-in" desire to take a risk we probably would still be having a house full of young adults who are afraid of leaving the home. So that's the positive side, what about the negative side of this brain function?

This sounds simple but it's not. When a parent accepts the fact that their teen has a unique brain and they can't be expected to act and think like an adult, then their teen behavior becomes a little easier to tolerate. I didn't say it's easy to tolerate, just a little easier to tolerate. In some ways, they do have an excuse, it's called immaturity that is brought on by a teen brain. A wise parent understands that God planned your teen to start developing physically as an adult. During the industrial revolution, the culture changed how families got started. Not too many years ago families were started while they were still in their late teens to help produce more offspring for farming. In the Biblical days, it was not unusual for mid-teens to be betrothed to each other. Mary herself was with child when she was around 14-15 years old. It was not that unusual back then for a girl who was 16 to be married to a boy who was 18. Our technological and fast-paced culture today with the immense responsibilities that go with taking care of a family makes this almost impossible. However, just because culture changed doesn't mean the creation that God made has changed. Through the ages, a man seems to be getting bigger and stronger due to these advances, yet the internal structure of the brain has not changed. The hormones and testosterone still exist in the same way.

I'm sure many of you are saying why did you devote so much medical science to this section. What does this have to do with patience? My purpose was to help you consider how your teen thinks or in many cases doesn't think. When they do think, what is going on in that wonderful brain of theirs? With limited cognitive controls and immature communication abilities, teens can run into danger in risky situations — scenarios they intentionally seek out, says Ronald E. Dahl, M.D., a professor in the School of Public Health at the University of California at Berkeley. According to Dahl, when puberty floods the brain's limbic system with the sex hormones estrogen and testosterone, teenagers are driven to seek out "intense experiences," flocking to intense horror movies, dizzying amusement rides and graphic video games. This taste for thrills can also lead to run-ins with the law, says Steinberg, particularly when teens are with their peers. In recent research published in *Developmental Science* and *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, he reports that in the presence of peers, teens are more likely to make risky decisions and choose more immediate rewards — effects not seen in adults. Simply put, thrusting a teenager plus a peer or two into a risky or volatile situation can lead to poor choices and even worse outcomes with lasting consequences, from a juvenile record to disability and death.

If studies like this are true, and I believe they have some merit, then it would help explain why our teens seem so smart intellectually sometimes (book smart) yet have no common sense. It also explains why they may be willing to be disciplined by mom and dad to get fulfillment through riskier "intense experiences". Wise is the parent who makes sure they don't put their teens in a potential situation where peers together can get into serious trouble. That's why it's never a bad idea when teens have graduation parties that an adult chaperone must be present. By the way, it's very important to screen the adult chaperone because they may still have the brain of a teen.

Teens don't logically think of the consequences of their behavior due to brain construction. This doesn't mean all teens will make poor choices. The home environment and unconditional love from mom and dad play a big role in their choices. However, it does explain why they can be such an emotional roller coaster with so many highs and lows. Here is something to think about.

The Bible says this about patience in Psalms and Proverbs:

"Be still and wait patiently on Him". Ps. 37:7. "I wait patiently on the Lord", Ps. 40:1.

"Dad, I've got to have it now. The new iPhone 8-15 (LOL) has just come out and ALL my friends have one. I can't be the only one who doesn't have one. I bet you just love me being outcast in my school!" (How many teens you know that when the latest and greatest hits the stores they don't want it?)

"A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly." Prov. 14:29.

"I hate you mom, you're just mean. I don't understand why you won't let me go out with Bobby? He is too a nice boy. Why else would he be doing community service every weekend for the rest of the year?" (Sometimes teens just don't quite have it all upstairs)

"A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel." Prov. 15:18.

"Now come on mom and dad let's not get so upset about my bad grades. I'm sure there is a logical explanation of why I've failed two courses. Let's calm down and look at all the facts so we don't make

an irrational decision. Is this a good time for us to discuss this or do I need to go to my room so you guys can calm down before we continue our conversation?" (Most teens speak this way during conflict, don't they?)

Proverbs 19:11 says, "*A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*"

"You know mom, I've decided that even though Jennifer stabbed me in the back at school today and took my boyfriend away, I'm not going to let it bother me. After all, there are lots more fish in the sea as they say. I also better get on the phone and talk to all my buds, so they don't start spreading gossip about Jennifer." (Know a lot of teens like this?)

Well, there we have it. Three things we want to throw out and three things we want to keep in the right place within our garage. Throw out worry, fear, and selfishness and keep joy, peace, and patience. Those three things are great tools and are not developed strictly from personal effort. Instead, they are a gift from God that must be pursued passionately through His Spirit. As a teen parent, I encourage you to ask daily for these three things in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His joy, His peace, and His patience. Recognize as you grow in your walk that He will anoint you with these beautiful character qualities so that you will bear fruit, fruit that will last and impact your teen forever.