

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as "15 minutes of fame". Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, "The Al Denson Show." "You've got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport," says Al. "This has all been so amazing. I can't imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don't have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, 'I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.' You can't ask for anything more or better than that."

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PARENT/TEEN RELATIONSHIPS 101

UCLA won national titles ten out of twelve years during its golden era of basketball dominance. The legendary Coach John Wooden was the driving force behind these successful teams. He had a philosophy of coaching that many considered unorthodox—UCLA never scouted the teams they were going to play next.

Coach Wooden believed what the other teams did or didn't do wasn't important. He believed that if his team would master the essentials of the sport, they could beat any team in America. He always taught his players that the key to success is majoring in the fundamentals. Master the essentials; major in the fundamentals, he always said.

Coach Wooden's philosophy works in relationships, too. Relationships can become very confusing and complicated, especially when there is conflict. Even under the best of circumstances, parent-teen relationships are not easy. Adolescence is the shortest and most confusing time of life; yet it is the time when teenagers are suppose to make decisions which will affect the longest part of their life. For parents this is probably the scariest time of the parenting years because they realize the clock is ticking and this child they love so much is moving towards independence. Soon their teen will be on his own in a world which can be cruel and dangerous.

Relationships are very fragile during these years and can deteriorate over night if careful attention is not given to keep this from happening. For

example, teenagers know instinctively they need to be moving toward being independent of their parents if they are going to make it as adults. Part of them yearns for the freedom that is just on the horizon, but there is another part which is fearful and wonders how they will ever make it on their own. This internal, God-given desire for independence sometimes makes a teen think being independent means "being different from." So in their own way of thinking, many times teenagers believe the only way to be independent is to take an opposite position from their parents on every issue, whether they really agree with their parents or not.

Relationships can become very confusing and complicated, especially when there is conflict.

Even though this is normal, most parents see this kind of opposition as rebellious and disrespectful. If parents panic or take this as personal rejection, they may respond by being even more restrictive and the stage is set for a power struggle. Instead of majoring on the minors at times like these, parents would be wise to major in the fundamentals and go back to the basics of Parenting 101.

If you will make the basics—the fundamentals the thing you major on in your home, you will help your family have healthier, happier, relationships with less conflict and stress. Both teens and parents have a part to play in building healthy relationships, but because God always starts at the top and works down, lets talk first about the basics parents need to master.

It is God's job to fix and to change your kids.

Parent to Teens Relationships 101

All human beings are born with three basic emotional needs:

- The need to feel unconditionally loved and accepted.
- The need to feel valuable and capable.
- The need to feel that we are not alone.

To consistently meet these three basic needs in your child's life is what good parenting is all about. These basic needs do not change throughout life. When they are met, the result is a child who is secure, confident, has a healthy sense of self-esteem, and is able to cope with the pressure and stress of life. This child will see his parents as allies, not enemies, and will be more likely to embrace his parents' beliefs and morals, and stay on their team for life.

On the other hand, a child who feels there are strings attached to his parents' love and acceptance, who has been made to feel worthless, or as if he can do nothing right, or who feels very alone and isolated from his parents, will be angry, rebellious, insecure, depressed,



have poor interpersonal and decision-making skills, and usually have below average academic performance.

Dr. H. Ross Campbell says, "Most parents love their children, that is not the problem. The problem is that most parents have no idea how to make their children 'feel' loved." Parents don't realize their words and actions impact more than anything else how their teenagers feel about themselves. Your attitudes, tone of voice, facial expressions, and body-language are subtle messages which have much to say to your teen about how you really feel about him.

For example:

1. When your teen is in an athletic event, do you talk afterwards about how proud you were of their effort, or do you only point out what they didn't do right?
2. When your teen brings home a test for you to sign, do you first congratulate him on the questions he got right, or do you immediately talk about the ones he got wrong?
3. When your teen does chores around the house, do you thank him and praise what he did well, or do you focus on what he should have done better?

To have healthy relationships and emotionally healthy teens, it is very important for you to be a PROACTIVE parent and not a REACTIVE parent. Proactive parents deal primarily with what their kids NEED. Reactive parents respond primarily to what kids DO. If you will focus first on making sure your child's basic emotional needs are met, you will find any child will be easier to discipline when he feels loved. When

you make behavior the focus, you are becoming a controller of behavior which is dealing with symptoms and not the real problem.

You need to always think of behavior in terms of its relationship to your child's needs. When your child is misbehaving or disobeying, begin to ask yourself, "What need are they trying to meet with this behavior?" If you will do this, it may eliminate the reason for their inappropriate behavior. For instance, if your teenager becomes involved in premarital sex, is it just because their hormones are out of control, or because they are rebelling against God, or hate you and your rules? Could it be they really are "feeling" unloved and unaccepted by you, or even feeling alone, and in their immature way of thinking believe sex will meet those needs in their life?

When your child yells at you, is it always because they are being rebellious and disrespectful? Or could it be because they feel you don't really listen to them and value what they say, so getting louder is an attempt to be heard by you? What if your teen is acting out in an inappropriate way, could it be they are simply trying to get your attention and let you know they need more of you? If being good doesn't get your attention, then they have probably figured out being bad will, and negative attention is better than no attention at all.

One area where many sincere Christian parents promote an atmosphere of conditional, performance-earned acceptance is by excessive emphasis on the "dos" and "don'ts" of the Christian life. Too often Christian parents work hard, but at the wrong job. They make their focus the "wrong" or "unspiritual" behavior, then set out

to apply pressure, control behavior, and do everything in their power to change their kids. The end result is exhaustion, depression, hopelessness, and the desire to quit.

You must learn the difference between your job and God's job. It is God's job to fix and to change your kids. It is your job to depend on Him and to equip your children to make wise choices. The goal of godly discipline is to help your children be responsible for their own choices. If you were honest, you may admit that sometimes you, like most parents, are more concerned about how your child's bad behavior will make you look to other people than you are about them. You need to remember your children should not have to act appropriately so you can feel like a valuable person. It isn't their job to validate you as a parent with their performance.

In Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21, Paul cautions parents not to "provoke (exasperate, or embitter) your children to anger...lest they become discouraged." In other words, don't overcorrect them or they will grow up feeling inferior and frustrated. Paul is not saying here you should never do anything about which your kids will feel angry. A person's anger is their own responsibility. You are not in charge of controlling your children's anger any more than they are in charge of controlling yours—no one can "make" you angry.

There are three Greek words for anger in the New Testament. The word used for anger here (*perigismos*) is referring to anger which is forced to exist beneath the surface. In other words, suppressed anger. Here are some ways you can "provoke" this kind of anger:

- By not allowing your kids to express their anger. It is your job to teach them appropriate ways of expressing anger.
- By living with double standards in the home. Children and parents should be equal when it comes to being treated with respect. For example, if you don't want them to interrupt you, you shouldn't interrupt them.
- By not allowing them to speak and think for themselves.
- By discounting or minimizing their feelings.
- By violating their boundaries. Forcing a "yes" from them when "no" is not an option.
- By turning a deaf ear to them. Your children deserve to be heard and they deserve the right to state their case or defend themselves before being disciplined.
- By being an absentee parent.
- By shaming your children or by sending them messages that they are an embarrassment to you.
- By crushing a child's spirit and leaving them with unresolved conflict and anger.

Children may respond to something they don't like in anger but in a healthy relationship the anger will not be provoked by their parents. There is an important principle involved here that you can remember by putting into a formula: Rules + Regulations - Relationships = Resentment + Rebellion. Rules and regulations are important and should be enforced, but only in the atmosphere of a loving, healthy relationship, or the

results will be destructive, not redemptive.

Sometimes parents believe that if they can just pour on enough guilt, raise their voices loud enough, frown hard enough, or lecture long enough they will insure obedience in their children. But, James 1:20 says "man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." On the other hand, Romans 2:4 says, "kindness, tolerance and patience lead to repentance, and to God."

The emotional wounds parents inflict, whether intentional or unintentional, are the deepest and most long-lasting of any ever received in life and many people carry those wounds for the rest of their lives. Hurt will happen—this is a fact of life, and the only way those hurts can be healed is through forgiveness. Unfortunately, not many Christians know much about real, scriptural forgiveness.

Most mistakenly believe forgiveness is a feeling—it is not. Forgiveness is an act of the will, an act of obedience. It is giving up your right to get even and it is making a decision not to hold on to anger, hurt, or negative emotions. Some parents will hold unforgiveness over their children in an attempt to control their behavior. It's a way for them to feel they have the upper hand, making the child feel he must earn his way back into his parents' favor.

Some parents have a hard time forgiving their children because they believe if they do forgive them they will be excusing the behavior or letting them off the hook, but nothing could be further from the truth. Forgiveness is acknowledging what was done was wrong and inexcusable but choosing to show the same

kind of forgiveness to your children God has showed you.

Colossians 3:13 says, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as God forgave you." This is a commandment and not a suggestion. God gives it to you for your own well-being because He knows unforgiveness is the soil in which bitterness grows. Bitterness is a poisonous plant with very ugly fruit such as depression, anger, hostility, resentment, rage, physical, mental and emotional disorders, and the inability to love and trust others, to only mention a few. Bitterness will be like a cancer of the soul which can destroy you physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. It is a highly contagious condition which will spread down through generations, if left unchecked.

Your children will either learn forgiveness or unforgiveness from you. The forgiveness Jesus offers is unconditional and complete. You don't deserve it, but He provided it before you ever asked for it or even knew you needed it. This is exactly the kind of forgiveness

which must be active in your home and in your relationship with your children. Your home must be the place where the first seeds of undeserved, unconditional love and acceptance are sown.

The impressions you give your children about life and about themselves will have long-lasting, sometimes life-long effects on their personalities. That is why this is such a serious issue, because just as parents have the greatest potential for helping their children, parents also have the greatest potential for hurting their children. The way you love and forgive will either draw your children to the Lord or turn them away.

Dr. Gary Smalley says the most important principle in raising children is this: Increase honor and decrease anger. You honor your teen by majoring on the fundamentals and meeting those three basic emotional needs in their lives. You decrease their anger levels by releasing your anger to the Lord daily. The more honor and the less anger your teen feels, the stronger your relationship with him will be.

Rules + Regulations - Relationships = Resentment + Rebellion

The choice to honor your child...

Honor is simply a decision to place high value, worth, and importance on another person. You do this by viewing your child as a priceless gift and granting him a position in your life worthy of great respect. The choice to honor your child is one of the most important choices you will ever make and the effects of that choice will be felt for generations to come.

Your teenager must know and be assured of your unconditional love and acceptance. He must be secure in the fact you will always love and accept him, even when you cannot accept his wrong behavior or attitudes. Your relationship with your child must always be a reflection of your heavenly Father's relationship with you, which has nothing to do with your performance and everything to do with grace. God's grace—His unmerited favor and acceptance—is extended to you despite your failings, weaknesses, and sin. God's unconditional love was proven two thousand years ago in that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

As a parent, your attitude toward your teenager must be the same as God's attitude toward you. Your interaction, communication, and responses must be characterized by acceptance of your teen as a person, regardless of his performance. When you get frustrated and discouraged with your teen, you must remember God never gets frustrated or discouraged with you. This verse should be your goal as a Christian parent:

Titus 2:11-14 says, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It (grace) teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness

and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, EAGER TO DO WHAT IS GOOD."

God doesn't nag, manipulate, shame, or shout at you to get you to live this kind of lifestyle—one which is "self-controlled, upright and godly." This will not be a reality in the life of your teenager by nagging, manipulating, shaming, or shouting either. Learning to deal with your teen in grace can produce exactly what you are looking for—not just obedience, but "eagerness to do what is good." If you are only concerned about controlling your teen's behavior and not meeting his needs, then you will be helping to create an angry, insecure teen who may, or may not, comply with your demands while in your presence, but will probably ignore your wishes when you are not around. You will also be creating a weak, unhealthy relationship with your child which will come back to hurt and haunt you in the years ahead.

Teen To Parent Relationships 101

To improve your relationship with your parents, you must A.C.T. This stands for three basic, fundamental things every Christian teenager must work on:

1. A is for Attitude

The wisest man who ever lived knew an important truth. Over 2500 years ago, King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 23:7, "As a man

thinks in his heart so he is." He knew that your attitude affects your behavior. If you want to evaluate your attitude toward your parents, ask yourself one question: "What does my behavior say?" Does it show the love of Christ toward my parents, or does it reveal that my main concern is me?

If you do believe your attitude affects your behavior at home, then the important question is: "What is the right attitude?" Jesus tells us in John 13:35. He said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." This is the secret to the kind of attitude which can make a difference in your relationship with your parents. When you love your family the way Jesus loves you, that



... is one of the
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The two most important characteristics of the way Jesus loves is first, His love is unconditional and, secondly, His love is expressed in actions. Loving people this way doesn't guarantee they will love you back. But if you are consistent, it will guarantee to make you more loving and lovable. Many times kids think they can't change their attitudes because, "that's just the way I feel!"

It is true you can't help the way you feel at this moment, but you can make the decision to begin changing the way you feel.

If you truly want a better relationship with your parents, the first thing you need to do is realize wrong attitudes are sin and confess them to God. Secondly, you need to understand your feelings are always going to follow your thoughts, so you have to change your thinking. Remember, to change your life, you have to change your thinking.

The Bible speaks of this in Romans 12:2 when it says, "Don't be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This simply means to refuse to go along with the world's way of thinking, but instead have your life transformed by beginning to think God's thoughts.

Your thoughts about yourself must be as positive as God's thoughts about you, if your attitudes are going to be positive. You are not a helpless child in a hopeless situation. You have been placed in your family and given the parents you have by a sovereign (in control) God. You are unique, special, and have great value—you are a child of the King.

You must also have a positive attitude toward your family. You can choose to either look for the good in them or the bad. Remember, you will always find what you look for. If you are willing to have a positive attitude about yourself, your parents, and the home where God has placed you, you can improve your relationship with your parents.

2. C is for Communication

In order to run properly a car has to have oil because when things heat up in an engine the oil keeps the parts lubricated and moving smoothly. Without oil the heat would cause the engine to burn up and become irreparable. What oil is to an engine, communication is to a relationship. It is the thing that will keep all the parts of the relationship moving smoothly when life heats up. Without it, there will be all kinds of friction in the relationship and things will eventually get so hot that the relationship will look irreparable.

Good communication is the key to what all of us want—to be understood. To be understood is one of the deepest needs humans have because to be understood is to feel we have value and are loved unconditionally. It means we can feel safe sharing our deepest feelings and needs. You need to realize your parents want to be understood just as much as you do.

There are five levels of communication, moving from the superficial to the most meaningful. The more often you can communicate on the fourth and fifth levels; the more successful your relationship with your parents will be.

When you communicate on the first level, you speak in cliches: "How are you?" "Have a good day." Most of the time communication on this level is as superficial as you would be with someone you have never met before.

The second level of communication is where you share facts—just information. "Looks like rain." Just like level one, this is pretty shallow conversation.

At the third level you state your opinions. Here is where communication is not quite as safe and conflicts may arise.

The fourth level is when you say what you are feeling. "I was really hurt by the way you talked to me last night." Opening up this way can be risky but it is the only way to reach the deeper levels of communication.

The fifth level is where you reveal your needs. "I need to know I'm important to you." When you are expressing needs, you are at the deepest level of communication.

Too many times teenagers are guilty of putting the responsibility for communicating on their parents, but being a good communicator is the responsibility of everyone in your family.

3. T is for Trust

If your parents know they can trust you, it will go a long way in making your relationship with them stronger and your home happier. Building trust isn't easy—it takes time and careful attention to the little things. Once you have it, it is very fragile and easily broken. How do you build trust? Here are several ways:

- A. A personal trust in God is the most solid foundation on which to build trust with others. A person who genuinely trusts God can be trusted because God can be trusted.
- B. Live and behave in a manner that is consistently worthy of trust. If you sneak, hide, lie, deceive, or cheat there is no point in complaining your parents don't trust you. Your parents would be fools to trust you until your behavior consistently changes.
- C. Always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Your parents want with all their hearts to trust your every word. By refusing to lie, even if the truth gets you in trouble, you will win their trust.
- D. Remember, good communication builds trust. A trusting relationship means showing your parents the courtesy of always letting them know where you are and how to reach you. If you have a curfew and realize that you are going to be late, CALL AND TELL THEM. Don't wait until you get home to explain. You can never communicate too much if you are trying to build trust.

You must protect the trust you build with your parents very carefully. Once it is lost, you will have to start all over again. It can sometimes take years to rebuild trust that has been broken and sometimes it will never be regained. If you will consistently demonstrate trustworthy behavior, you will maintain your parent's trust.

You may feel like these principles only apply to "normal" families. Maybe your parents are divorced, or they aren't Christians, or they fight all the time, so you think that none of this stuff will work for you, but these principles will work in any situation. There are no perfect kids and no perfect parents. All families struggle and have problems. If the love of Jesus is only effective in perfect homes, then it means nothing because there are no perfect homes. Be encouraged because no matter how bad your relationship with your parents is now, Jesus can help you make it better.

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