

## Bible Focus

“When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.”

1 Corinthians 13:11



## Student Ministry

# Guide Teenagers on the Road to Independence

“There are no well-adjusted adolescents. Adolescence is, by definition, maladjustment.” That quote from Eugene Peterson isn’t meant to be a putdown. Instead, it’s an important reminder. Well-adjusted teenagers are still fully adolescents, growing in virtually every direction—physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

During this important transition, kids will start separating from you. Some of that is natural and important, as you’ll read on page 3. But it’s possible to stay close to teenagers even as they’re becoming their own individuals.

To impact kids, even when they’re in full-blown rebellion mode:

- Be an aggressive observer by paying careful attention to your kids in their comfort zones.
- Be available to listen as they talk about their struggles.
- Pray for them, that God will touch their hearts and help them own their faith.
- Be patient as God works in the lives of these emerging adults.

Read on for more ideas about handling the push for independence.



### Practical Help

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Tips, statistics, and discussion questions to help you connect with your teenagers

### Going Deeper

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Insight for parents about the nature of adolescence

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Musicians Kid Rock and Josh Wilson, the movie *Beastly*, and the video game *Limbo*



## TIPS

Many rebellious teenagers are simply crying for help. Here are some ways to answer:

Model God's love and grace. "Human nature reacts to the moment, while grace looks at the big picture," says Tim Kimmel, author of *Why Christian Kids Rebel*.

Create a path to trust. Help troubled teenagers take small steps toward being responsible and earning back the trust they've broken.

Forgive and move on. Don't dwell on past failures. Help teenagers move toward new beginnings. Emphasize that God loves to give second chances.

Expect success. Teenagers usually live up (or down) to labels and expectations. Let them know by your words and actions that you expect the best from them.

While holding high expectations, also accept kids for who they are. If they don't find acceptance from you, they'll turn elsewhere.

Celebrate success. Take time to point out specific progress or change you witness in your teenagers.

## THE VIEW

- 97% of teenagers say they get along with their parents reasonably well. This number is consistently high every year.

(Gallup Youth Survey)

- After 25 years of research into strong families, Dr. Nick Stinnett determined that regular involvement with one another is a key trait of close parent-child relationships.

(*Fantastic Families*)

- Almost 90% of Christian teenagers agree with this statement: "I'm fully convinced that God has created me for a particular purpose in life that will bring glory to him."

(*Group Magazine*)



### For Discussion

Why do the words *teenager* and *rebellion* often seem to go hand in hand? Is that an unfair stereotype? Why or why not?

Why do you think some teenagers rebel against their parents? What, if anything, are they trying to show or prove?

What are some healthy, positive ways to declare your growing independence?

How can we stay connected with each other's lives, feelings, and needs as the years pass?



By Steve Merritt

# GOING DEEPER

Expert Insight for Parents of Teenagers

**In *Group Magazine*, counselor Steve Merritt provides these key insights about teenagers:**

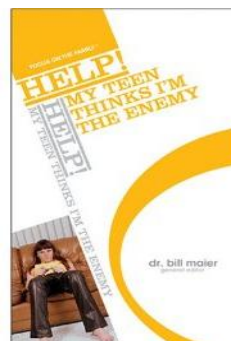
It's easy to fall into either of two traps: forget that teenagers are a work in progress and expect too much, or be consumed with the idea that they're a work in progress and expect too little. So remember:

**They're drainers.** Teenagers can look adult-like, but generally they still take more resources than they give. Because they're using tremendous energy just to survive adolescence, young people often don't have much extra for others. Of course, they're capable of significant caring, giving, and forgiving. But sustaining these attributes is almost impossible, with the many tasks of growing up.

Intimacy requires a solid sense of identity. That's tough for anyone in our fast-paced, fractured society. Finding your identity requires you to practice and try on different "selves." This process takes its toll on kids but also on adults who love and work with them. Because we're the fuelers, our relationships with kids are often nonreciprocal. This can lead to disappointment, resentment, and frustration.

**They need to pull away.** On the road to independence, teenagers must take this new life for a test drive, and adults don't get to ride shotgun. Parents often misread such pulling away as rebellion or ungratefulness. On the contrary, it's essential for kids to develop confidence in who they are without us and, more importantly, who they are in God—and who God is in them. Our job is to pour God's love into teenagers' tanks and give them room for self-discovery. Meanwhile, we can learn from kids as we allow God to continue to form our identity in him.

## Resource



In *Help! My Teen Thinks I'm the Enemy* (Tyndale House), Focus on the Family psychologist Dr. Bill Maier offers parents advice for building healthy bonds with teenagers.

## MAINSTREAM MUSIC



## KID ROCK

**Background:** A 2003 album showcased Kid Rock's blend of rap metal and Southern rock. Since then, he's had multiple platinum albums that celebrate an "it's all about me" party lifestyle. His songs contain foul language, pot references, and sexual lyrics. Kid Rock has had many run-ins with the law.

**Albums:** *Born Free* (2010), *Rock n Roll Jesus* (2007), *Devil Without a Cause* (2003)

**What Kid Rock Says:** "I've surrounded myself with some bad people...went through some situations.... Now all the...drama's out of my life.... And I'm not gonna let it back in."

**Discussion Questions:** What things—both good and bad— influence you the most, and why? Read Matthew 6:5-18. How have you seen bad influences hurt someone? Was he or she aware of the influence? Why or why not? What influences might you need to purge from—or add to— your life? How have you been a positive or negative influence on other people?

## CHRISTIAN MUSIC



## JOSH

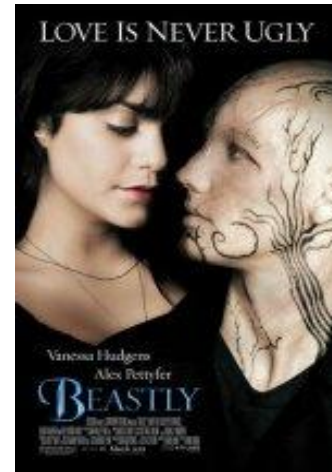
**Background:** Singer-songwriter Josh Wilson released independent albums before signing with Sparrow Records in 2008. His sound resembles that of Jason Mraz and John Mayer. Wilson recently gained attention when, during a blizzard, he broke out his guitar in an airport and led a Beatles sing-along. The clip became a hit on YouTube.

**Albums:** *See You* (2011), *Life Is Not a Snapshot* (2009), *Trying to Fit the Ocean in a Cup* (2008)

**What Wilson Says:** "'Forest Fire' is about the power of our words.... It came from the idea that we should be careful what we say because our words can hurt."

**Discussion Questions:** How are tongues like matches and ears like trees? How have you seen a small "spark" of words become destructive? Read James 3:3-12. What do these verses say about the power of words and how we should handle them? When are you most susceptible to speaking words of "fire"? How can you combat those tendencies and use your words for good, not harm?

## MOVIE



**Movie:** *Beastly*

**Genre:** Romance

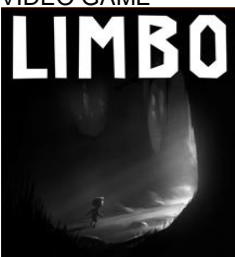
**Rating:** PG-13 (for language including crude comments, drug references, and brief violence)

**Synopsis:** In this modern-day take on the *Beauty and the Beast* tale, a New York teenager is transformed into a hideous monster in order to find true love.

**Discussion Questions:** What does the phrase "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" mean? How have you seen that reflected in society? What standards does our culture have about outward beauty? Read aloud 1 Peter 3:3-4. According to these verses, what is beauty, and where does it come from? How much should we pay attention to or work on appearances, and why?

For more media discussions and ideas, check out [www.MinistryandMedia.com](http://www.MinistryandMedia.com).

## VIDEO GAME



**Limbo** (Xbox 360)—This game was atop numerous "Best of" lists for 2010, and for good reason: It's amazing. Players get no back story, tutorial, or clue as to why they're in this stark, black-and-white, puzzle-filled world. They just wake up and make their way through the haunting, creepy, and compelling environment. But know that the young protagonist does die, in horrible ways. The player's job is to try to keep him alive.



