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Praying ^{the} Scriptures for Your Teens

A Study Guide for
Small Group Discussion
and Personal Reflection



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BY JODIE BERNDT

When the publishers asked what I wanted the cover to look like as they began the design work for *Praying the Scriptures for Your Teens*, I suggested that they just make it black.

I was kidding—sort of. I knew God loved my teenagers and that he was at work in their lives, but there were plenty of days when my heart just felt...dark. **The list of what-ifs and worries—safety on the road, substance abuse, eating disorders, anxiety, technology use, sexual purity, spiritual doubt—seemed limitless.** And my friends felt the same way: No sooner would we finish praying about one thing than another would, like a crazed whack-a-mole, pop its head out of the hole.

If that's where you find yourself as you open this guide, may I share three things that sustained me?

The first was that I knew God's promises in John 15, the chapter where Jesus invites us to remain in his love, to make our home there. Tucked right in the middle of this beautiful invitation is a power-packed pledge: *"If you remain in me," Jesus says, "and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."* That's John 15:7, and it represents both an anchor and a launching pad for our prayers. **When we spend time in God's Word, letting the Bible shape our thoughts and animate our desires, our requests start to line up with what God wants to do—what he is *already doing*—in the lives of the people we love!**

The second thing that equipped me to persevere in prayer for my teens, even when my spirit was heavy with worry or fear, was the fact that I had seen God's faithfulness in the past. Reflecting on how he had cared for my children—how his Spirit had worked in their lives (and in mine), giving us the desire and the power to do what pleases him—filled my heart with hope for the future.¹

And third, I had a handful of friends—prayer partners—who knew what I did: That God's Word comes with power, and that his faithfulness can be counted on to continue through all generations.² **It can be easy to feel anxious and alone as we parent our teens; partnering with other parents who are walking the same road—and who are willing to carry our burdens, even as we carry theirs—can be a lifeline.**

That's actually the main reason I created this study guide.

¹ See Philippians 2:13 NLT.

² See Isaiah 55:11 and Psalm 100:9.

You are welcome to use this guide on your own, but there is power in the “two or more” prayer of agreement.³ Consider inviting a friend or two to read, talk, and pray with you.

Designed as a companion to the updated edition (2021) of *Praying the Scriptures for Your Teen*, the chapters in this guide parallel the chapters in that book, offering a handful of questions to discuss and ponder, as well as space where you can write your own prayer. You can do the questions for each chapter all at once, spread them out over a week, or skip some chapters entirely. Do what works!

And as you do, be expectant.

James 5:16 reminds us that our prayers are both powerful and effective. **It might feel like our teens are out of our reach, but they are never out of God’s, and he is able—and eager—to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine!**

To God be the glory!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodie". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large loop for the 'J' and a small dash above the 'i'.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

³ See Matthew 18:19-20.

Introduction: Whack-a-Mole Parenting

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “The true purpose of prayer is that God may be glorified in the answer.” (p. 6) R. A. Torrey wrote those words more than 100 years ago, but they are still true today.

- In John 15:7, Jesus invites us to ask for whatever we wish and it will be done for us. But this promise is conditional. What do we have to do if we want to take Christ up on this invitation?

- Read the very next verse—John 15:8—and tease out three things that happen when we allow God’s Word to remain in our hearts as we pray:

1.

2.

3.

- How does John 15:8 sharpen your perspective on Christ’s remarkable promise in John 15:7? Do these verses support what Torrey wrote about the true purpose of prayer? How is this similar to, or different from, your understanding of prayer?

2. Think about your own experience with prayer. Has it felt awkward or easy? Does it feel more like a duty, an adventure, or like something else?

3. As you think about “praying the scriptures”—taking the words we read in the Bible and using them to shape our desires and requests—how do these verses encourage you?

- Hebrews 4:12
- Isaiah 55:8-11
- Jeremiah 1:12

4. In 1 Samuel 7, the Israelites are under attack and they beg Samuel to pray for them. He does so, and God throws the enemy army into confusion and panic. Afterwards, Samuel sets up an “Ebenezer stone” to mark the victory.

- Samuel knew that the enemy army had not been banished forever. Why do you think he put up the marker?
- What are the benefits of thanking God for the victories he provides? How might reflecting on what God has done “thus far” equip you to pray with confidence for the future, even when you know there are battles yet to be fought?

Poised for Prayer:

Use the book's Introduction and what you've discovered from these questions to write your own prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recall evidences of God's faithfulness in your family's life and start with an "Ebenezer" of gratitude.

Heavenly Father...

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen.
He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

1 Samuel 7:12 NIV

PART 1: PRAYING FOR YOUR TEEN'S RELATIONSHIPS

Chapter 1: Praying for Your Teen's Relationship with Christ

For Reflection and Discussion

1. The story about Darcy and Patty's friendship (p. 11-12) underscores the value of having someone join you as you pray for your teens, particularly when you find yourself growing discouraged or weary. For additional context, read Exodus 17:10-12.

- What qualities do you think make a good prayer partner?

- If you do not already have a friend to pray with, take a moment to ask God to provide someone. If a name comes to mind, write it here and make a plan to reach out and invite her to pray.

2. Trusting God with your teen's relationship with Christ can be hard, especially when he or she makes choices that seem to push them farther away from the Lord. Read one or more of the following verses and tell how they encourage you:

- Philippians 2:13

- John 5:17

- Ezekiel 11:19-20

3. Romans 2:4 highlights the riches of God's kindness and patience with us, reminding us that it is his kindness that leads us to repentance. How might this verse impact the way that you pray for your teen's relationship with Christ?

4. Darcy admits she and her husband did a lot of things wrong. "But we hung in there," she says, "and we kept pointing Mark [their son] toward the Lord." (p. 17)

- What are some things you might do to keep pointing your teen toward the Lord?
- Read 12:12. How does Paul's three-fold instruction in this verse challenge or encourage you? Be as specific as you can with your answer.

Bonus Material:

Memorizing Scripture is one of the best ways to build your faith and equip you to pray *specifically* and with *perseverance*. **Consider setting a memory goal for yourself (one verse a week? one a month?), and use the pages at the end of this guide to record your verses so that you can revisit them often.**

Not sure where to begin? How about with **Philippians 2:13**, a verse you read earlier. As I prayed for my teens, this promise became a lifeline for me, bringing peace to my heart again and again:

It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Philippians 2:13 NIV

Poised for Prayer

As you think about your teen's relationship with Christ, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 19-20 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him,
rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught,
and overflowing with thankfulness.

Colossians 2:6-7 NIV

Chapter 2: Praying for Good Friends

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Friends are a powerful influence on our teens today; their desire to “belong” will inform their behavior and choices more than anything else. “Walk with the wise and become wise,” says Proverbs 13:20, “for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

- Consider your teen’s friend group. How are these relationships impacting your teen?
- As you think about the friends who might have a negative influence on your teen, does the way Isabelle treated Jarred challenge or inspire you? How might Proverbs 18:21 motivate you as you interact with your teen’s peer group?

2. Parenting teenagers isn’t easy, and there will be plenty of times when we don’t know when to hold our kids back, when to let them go, or even what they may be thinking.

- Read 1 Peter 5:7 and Psalm 147:5. What do these verses reveal about God’s understanding and his ability to care for your teen? For you? How might they help shape your prayers?
- Read 2 Chronicles 20:12. How does this verse help free you from the pressure to “get it all right” as you parent? What would it look like for you to surrender your worries and concerns and let God answer your prayers however and whenever he chooses?

3. Read the story of the paralytic and his friends in Mark 2:1-12.

- Think about the different dynamics in this scene. What might the paralyzed man have been thinking? What motivated his friends? What about the onlookers? If your teens had been in the crowd that day, how might they have reacted?

- It could not have been easy or convenient for the men to bring their friend to Jesus. Can you think of a time when your teen has gone “above and beyond” on behalf of a friend? Or when a friend has done that for your teen? What risks or challenges were involved?

- As you pray for your teens, do you find yourself asking God to *give* them good friends, *make* them good friends, or both? How might the Mark 2 account influence the way you pray?

Poised for Prayer

As you consider your teen's friendships, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 29-31 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed.
If one person falls, the other can reach out and help... A person standing alone can
be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12 NLT

Chapter 3: Praying for Connection to a Church Community

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What has been your family's experience with church? Do your teens see attendance as optional? Do they see you (and if you are married, your spouse) making church a priority? If so, what would *they* say is the reason for your involvement?

2. When Jackie began praying for her son Eric to become more involved in church (p. 36), she asked God to do three things:

- Open a door into Eric's heart through the Holy Spirit
 - Send a friend to invite him to church
 - Draw Eric closer to God
-
- Which of these requests resonates most deeply with you as you consider your teen?

 - Check out the verses that support these prayers—Colossians 4:3, Proverbs 17:17, and John 6:44—and consider how they might equip you to pray with a greater sense of expectancy.

3. It can be tempting to compare our teens with their peers in myriad ways. If our child's involvement in church or youth group doesn't measure up to whatever standard we think is "right," we might fault ourselves.

- How does Jackie's choice to focus on what she could do right (instead of where she might have blown it) encourage you? Are there lessons from her story that you might put into practice?

- How can you guard against falling prey to the "comparison trap" as you parent?

4. Mother Teresa said, "God doesn't call me to be successful. He calls me to be faithful." (p. 38) Read Romans 4:17 and Philippians 1:6 and reflect on how these promises might help you be faithful in prayer, even when it doesn't look like anything is happening.

Bonus Material:

How's the Scripture memory going?

If you're ready for a new verse, try **Romans 12:12**. That's an easy reference to remember (12:12!) and this charge is particularly valuable as we pray for our teens:

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:12 NIV

Poised for Prayer

As you think about your teen's connection to other Christians in a church or youth group community, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 40-42 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV

Chapter 4: Praying for Dating Relationships

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What (or who) has contributed to your perspective on what teenage dating should look like? If there are older parents in your sphere, what do you think they have done well when it comes to establishing rules or boundaries in this area? Do you think there is a once-size-fits-all approach to teens and dating?

2. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Read that verse in several different Bible translations (BibleGateway.com is a good online resource) and compare the wording.

- What truths or warnings stand out to you?

- What do you think the writer of Proverbs is getting at here?

3. Consider the list of commonsense parenting wisdom outlined on pages 50-52.

- Which of these practices have you put into place?

- Are there other guidelines or strategies you would add?

Bonus Material:

If you have not already done so, talk with your teen about the importance of honor. If your teen is in a romantic relationship, ask both of them what they think it means to “be devoted to one another in love” and to “honor one another” above themselves.

Will this conversation be awkward? Maybe. Will it be worth it? Yes.

This is where having a friend to pray with can be super helpful. Watchman Nee, the Chinese Christian writer, said: **“Our prayers lay the track down which God’s power can come. Like a might locomotive, his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails.”** Before you talk with your teen, ask your prayer partner to go before you, laying the track for God’s power to move!

Poised for Prayer

As you think about your teen’s dating relationships, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 53-55 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.
Proverbs 4:23 NIV

Chapter 5: Praying for Your Teen's Relationship with You

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Author Paul Tripp says that the teen years are often hard for parents because “they expose the wrong thoughts and desires of our *own* hearts”—things like self-righteousness, impatience, and a desire for our kids to succeed so that we will look good. (p. 57)

- Do you agree? Can you identify any of these desires or attitudes in your own parenting style?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any places where these thought patterns might be creating or contributing to any conflict between you and your teen.

2. In Colossians 3:20, Paul admonishes children to obey their parents in everything, since that pleases God. In Colossians 3:21, he turns the spotlight on parents, letting us know how God wants us to behave.

- Use BibleGateway.com or another resource to compare verse 21 in several different translations:

NIV:

PHILLIPS:

MSG:

AMP:

ESV:

- In your own words, what point is Paul trying to make in Colossians 3:21?

3. How does Leslie's story (p. 58-60) challenge or encourage you, especially when it comes to needing to be "in control" as a parent? Can you think of a time when you have trusted God with a decision that did not make sense to you? What happened?

4. There are more than 50 verses about honoring your father and mother in the Bible. Why do you think God cares so much about this particular relationship?

Poised for Prayer

As you think about the relationship you have with your teens, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 63-65 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.
Parents, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Colossians 3:20-21 NIV

PART 2: PRAYING FOR YOUR TEEN'S CHARACTER

Chapter 6: Praying for Honesty and Integrity

For Reflection and Discussion

1. We recognize “Do not lie” as one of the Ten Commandments, but at the end of the Bible, God lumps lying together with murder, sex trafficking, sorcery, and other vile practices, consigning those who do these things to the “fiery lake of burning sulfur.”⁴

- Why do you think God takes lying so seriously?
- How do verses like John 8:44 and John 14:6 add to your understanding?

2. As the prophet Jeremiah regards the moral and spiritual condition of his people, he seems heartbroken. Read Jeremiah 9:4-6.

- How do people become liars, according to v. 5?
- What are the effects of lying on our relationships with God and with one another?

⁴ Revelation 21:8.

3. As you think about your own parenting and the lies Satan has tried to get you to believe—*your teen is a mess...you've blown it as a parent...nothing will ever change*—how does Peggy's story (p. 72-76) challenge or encourage you?

- What specific lies has Satan told you?

- Satan may be the father of lies, but Jesus came to give us a full and free life. What do verses like John 10:10 and John 8:36 reveal about how the enemy works? What do they tell you about God's power—and his desire—to set your family free?

Poised for Prayer

As you think about the need for your teen's character to be marked by honesty and integrity, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 78-80 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

The Lord detests lying lips,
but he delights in those who tell the truth.

Proverbs 12:22 NLT

Chapter 7:

Praying for an Others-Centered Outlook

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “Serving others frees our teens from the burden of self-absorption.” (p. 82)

- In what ways might selfishness or self-absorption represent a burden?
- What would it look like in your family to get “out of your comfort zone” and serve others?

2. Read Philippians 2:1-11.

- Where do selflessness and humility originate?
- What two things (see v. 3) can get in the way of valuing others above ourselves?
- As you consider Christ’s humility, can you identify three things in vv. 5-8 that he did for us? How might we do these same things today? What would following Christ’s example look like in the life of a teenager?

3. Michelle's family traditions (p. 83-86) include writing goals and prayer requests on January 1 and then revisiting these lists twelve months later to welcome the New Year. Do you have any similar markers in your home? Even if you have not recorded anything, are there evidences of God's provision that you can point to as you look back over the past year?

Bonus Material:

A heart for service is a natural outgrowth of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. **Galatians 5:22-23** lists the traits he will develop in us (and in our teens!) as we give him access to our hearts: *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

That might feel like a mouthful at first, but the fruit of the Spirit are easier to learn when you remember 1-2-3. The first three attributes are ONE syllable; the second three are TWO syllables, and the third are THREE:

- 1 – Love, Joy, Peace
- 2 – Patience, Kindness, Goodness
- 3 – Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control

Add this one to your Scripture Memory Bank at the back of this study guide:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

(Galatians 5:22-23 NLT)

Poised for Prayer

As you think about cultivating others-centeredness instead of self-centeredness in your teen, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 88-90 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own
interests, but each of you to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4 NIV

Chapter 8:

Praying for a Humble, Teachable Heart

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Read Hebrews 13:17.

- What attitude are we supposed to have toward leaders and those in authority?
- What does God expect of them?
- In what ways might obedience to teachers, coaches, and other authority figures be advantageous to our teen? (Try to think beyond obvious answers like “staying out of trouble” or “having the teacher like you” as you consider the benefits that can come with submitting to authority figures.)

2. “I think God uses people like coaches—or parents or teachers or bosses—to help us practice accepting things we may not understand.” (p. 92)

- Where have you seen this dynamic in action in your teen’s life? How is accepting things we may not understand a mark of humility? What role does that play in having a teachable heart?

- Read Isaiah 55:8-9. How do these verses shape your perspective on the importance of being humble and teachable? How would embracing these verses equip your teen to find peace and joy, even in the face of disappointment or when life does not seem fair?

3. When the time came to build a temple for God, King David and all of his officials gave generously and wholeheartedly toward the work. Read David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-16.

- What is David's attitude toward wealth, honor, and strength? Do you share his viewpoint?
- How might embracing David's perspective help foster humility as a character trait?

4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and trace the progression from having a teachable heart to being prepared to do good work.

Poised for Prayer

As you think about developing a humble, teachable heart in your teen, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 99-101 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Remind people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

Titus 3:1-2 NIV

Chapter 9:

Praying through Anger to Composure

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “Is it a sin to get angry?” (p. 102) What do you think?

2. Consider the story of Peter, one of the most impulsive characters in the Bible. Peter was a guy “who cursed and swore, who thought he could rebuke the Lord, and who whipped out his sword and sliced off a soldier’s ear when the Pharisees came to arrest Jesus.” (p. 107) Peter was brash and bold—and yet Jesus called him the “rock” on which he would build his church.⁵

Read Acts 2:1 – 4:20. (Yes, that’s most of three chapters...take your time!)

- How would you describe Peter

...at Pentecost (Act 2)

...at the temple (Act 3)

...before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4)

⁵ See Matthew 16:18

- How might Peter’s inherent boldness, passion, and even anger—as described in the gospel narratives—have contributed to his usefulness in the early church? How does his transformation encourage you as you pray for your teen?

3. There will be times when we do not know why our teen is angry, or what factors might be contributing to a lack of self-control.

- How does the promise in 1 Chronicles 28:9 encourage you?

- Do you think God can show you how to pray, even when you don’t know what your teen is thinking or why they are angry? Take a few moments to quiet your heart before the Holy Spirit, asking him to guide your thoughts as you pray for your teen.

Poised for Prayer

As you think about moving your teen from anger and impulsiveness to composure and self-control, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 110-112 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Better to be patient than powerful;
better to have self-control than to conquer a city.

Proverbs 16:32 NLT

Chapter 10:

Praying for Compassion and Kindness

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “Don’t wait for a crisis to prompt you to pray for your teen; ask God to work in the everyday things.” (p. 114)

- What has been your pattern as you pray for your teen? Do you typically pray as a reaction to a problem or need, or do you pray pro-actively for attributes like compassion and kindness?
- What does Marlae’s story (p. 114-116) reveal about God’s timeline when it comes to answering our prayers?

2. Scripture contains hundreds of references to God’s kindness and compassion. When we ask God to cultivate these traits in our teens, what impact might that have on their relationships? How do the following verses expand your vision for who God is and what he can do in your teen’s life as you pray?

- Psalm 103:8
- Lamentations 3:21-23
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
- Eph. 4:32

3. “Faith enables us to pray with confidence—even when we can’t see God working—because our prayers are based not on what God has done but on who he is.” (p. 117)

- How might trusting in who God is (instead of in what he has done) equip you to pray when your prayers go unanswered, or when the answer is not what you wanted?

- As you consider the attributes of God detailed on pps. 117-118, which of his character traits resonates most right now, specifically as you consider the circumstances and relationships in your teen’s life?

Bonus Material

Ephesians 4:32 is a short but power-packed verse. Even if you just know the first seven words—Be kind and compassionate to one another—you will have a ready anchor for your prayers. Try adding this one to your Scripture Memory Bank!

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

Poised for Prayer

As you ask God to cultivate kindness and compassion in your teen, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 119-120 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Be kind and compassionate to one another.

Ephesians 4:32 NIV

PART 3: PRAYING FOR YOUR TEEN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

Chapter 11: Praying for Your Teen Driver

For Reflection and Discussion

1. God loves teenagers—and he uses them mightily! Skim one or more of the following stories:

- Daniel and his friends in Babylon (Daniel 6)
- Esther in the king's palace (Esther 3-8)
- David as he faced Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

- What do these passages reveal about God's ability to protect our teens in hostile or dangerous environments?

- We don't know anything about Daniel's parents, but what can we learn from Esther's uncle Mordecai or David's father Jesse when it comes to trusting God to care for our teens when we cannot be there to watch or protect them?

2. "The teen years show us, as perhaps never before, that our parental influence is limited." (p. 128)

- Do you agree? What has been your experience with feeling like your teens are out of your reach, physically or emotionally?

- Do you struggle with letting go of your teen, or with not being able to be “in control” of where they are or who they’re with? If so, what have you found to be helpful?

3. God never promises to keep us (or our teens) out of danger; rather, he says he will be with us in hard and scary places.

- Read 43:2. How might embracing this verse move you from worry or fear to a place of peace?

- Can you think of a time when you know God’s presence was with your teen? What happened?

Poised for Prayer

As you ask God to keep your teens safe on the road (or wherever they go), choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 130-131 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

Psalm 91:11 NIV

Chapter 12: Praying for Healing from Eating Disorders and Negative Body Image

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Romans 12:1-2 speaks to a change that happens from the inside out as we offer our bodies to God and trust him to renew our minds. How do you think this transformation happens? Do you believe such change is possible for your teen?

2. Debra shared that her daughter's journey toward healing included bouts with anxiety and depression: "Things got better—and then worse." (p. 136) That is a familiar progression in the lives of many biblical characters; King David gives voice to his own sense of helplessness and the tension between anguish and assurance in Psalm 31.

- Which verses or phrases in Psalm 31 reflect your experience (or your teen's)?
- What aspects of God's nature does David lean on to strengthen his faith?
- How does the raw honesty in David's words (which were later echoed by Jonah, Jeremiah, and Jesus in their own times of agony or anguish) encourage you to persevere in prayer for your teen?

3. Proverbs 18:21 (“The tongue has the power of life and death”) points to the power of our words. Choose two or three of the following affirmations and their supporting scriptures and commit to speaking (and praying) them over your teen:

- You are God’s masterpiece, uniquely designed for a good purpose. (Ephesians 2:10)
- God will never fail you or abandon you. (Deuteronomy 31:8)
- God’s love inside you is greater than anything that comes against your body. (1 John 4:4)
- You are safe. (2 Thessalonians 3:33)
- You can take heart and have courage, even if transformation takes time. (Psalm 27:14)
- God thinks you’re wonderful. (Psalm 139:13-14)

Poised for Prayer

As you trust God with your teen’s identity and self-image, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 139-141 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

We are God’s masterpiece.
Ephesians 2:10 NLT

Chapter 13:

Praying against Self-Harm and Suicide

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents, and it can be easy to be overcome by worry, fear, or a sense of our own powerlessness to help our teen. What comfort do you find in the following promises:

- Psalm 147:3-5
- Isaiah 49:15-16
- Psalm 91:4

2. Romans 8:26 (NLT) says, “The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.”

- Where do you feel weak when it comes to knowing how to help or pray for your teen?
- Quiet your heart and take a few moments to picture the Holy Spirit praying for your teen. What assurances come to mind?

3. God knows our darkest thoughts and feelings, and the Bible highlights several characters who wrestled with depression, a sense of failure or hopelessness, and even a desire to die.⁶

Psalm 116:1-9 and Psalm 13 offer a template for pouring our heart out to the Lord. Read one or both of these psalms and use them as the basis for your own lament, bringing your teen before God as you trust his mercy and grace:

Bonus Material

One of the hardest parts about trusting God with our teens' emotional, mental, and physical health is often our own bewilderment and confusion. We might not know what our teens are thinking, or even what is happening in their lives.

Psalm 147:5 offers a powerful promise of reassurance. Add this one to your Scripture Memory Bank as a verse you can rely on in the face of your own human limitations.

His understanding has no limit. (Psalm 147:5)

⁶ See, for example, Elijah (1 Kings 19:4); Job (Job 3:11); and Jonah (Jonah 4:3).

Poised for Prayer

As you ask God to protect your teens and accomplish his redemptive purposes in their lives, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 148-150 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

The Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

Deuteronomy 14:2 NIV

Chapter 14:

Praying through Anxiety and Depression

For Reflection and Discussion

1. The Bible is very honest about things like fear, loneliness, anxiety, grief, and depression. Consider the stories of David, Naomi, and Elijah (p. 152).

- Can you identify anything that sustained them during their seasons of suffering?

- God provided for David, Naomi, and Elijah in three different ways: David got a perspective shift as he focused on God instead of his circumstances; Naomi received help from Ruth and Boaz; and God ministered to Elijah with rest, as well as some much-needed food and drink. Which of these provisions—a perspective shift, companionship and care, or material rest and refreshment—would be most helpful to your teen?

2. “Our struggles are often God’s entry points as he invites us to depend on his power.” (p. 156)

- Have you ever experienced a time when your struggle (or your teen’s situation) revealed God’s power or his presence?

- As you pray for your teen, what do you sense God teaching you in the process?

- For additional context, see Romans 5:1-5 and meditate on the progression from suffering to hope.

3. Parenting a teen who struggles with anxiety and/or depressing can be heartbreaking; you may feel powerless to help them. How does John's memory of his mother's prayers (p. 157) expand your perspective?

4. Therapists offer a variety of tools to help our teens cope with anxiety and depression, ranging from breathing exercises to specific activities or movement designed to release tension. Scripture meditation is another proven technique.

Look up the following verses. Pick one to write out and then say it—out loud—five time, letting the words sink into your soul and renew your mind.

- 2 Timothy 1:7
- Philippians 4:6-7
- John 16:33
- Psalm 46:10
- Isaiah 41:10

If your teen is open to using Scripture as a way to push back against negative thoughts or emotions, consider sharing one of these verses with them, or even texting them a different Bible promise every day to help calm anxiety and let them know they are not alone.

Poised for Prayer

As you trust God to provide freedom from anxiety and depression in your teen's life, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 159-161 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Chapter 15: Praying for Your Teen Rebel

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “Don’t talk to your kids about God as much as you talk to God about your kids.” (p. 162)
How might this piece of parenting wisdom—which has long been one of my favorites—be particularly relevant during the teen years?

2. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” That’s 3 John 4, and if you know what it’s like to watch a child walk away from the Lord or make destructive life choices, you might agree that the reverse is also true: There is no greater heartache than to hear that our children are walking in rebellion.

When that happens, it can help to know that God gets it. Read Hosea 1:1-11 and record what this passage reveals about:

- God’s heart toward his children
- Our waywardness
- God’s power and desire to redeem rebellion and draw us home

3. In John 10:10, Jesus says we have an enemy—Satan—who comes “only to steal and kill and destroy.” How does the truth of these words re-shape your understanding of what is really going on when it feels like you are in a battle against your teen?

4. While there is no “formula” for protecting your family and winning the battle for your teen’s heart, consider the three steps outlined on pages 169-170: *Pursue, Love, Pray*. Practically speaking, would it look like to put these principles into action in your relationship with your teen? How might you...

- Pursue

- Love

- Pray

Poised for Prayer

As you trust God to work in the life of your teenage rebel, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 171-173 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

“My wayward children,” says the Lord, “come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts.”

Jeremiah 3:22 NLT

PART 4: PRAYING FOR YOUR TEEN'S VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

Chapter 16: Praying about Technology and Social Media

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “Technology is the number one reason parents say that raising teens today is more complicated (and difficult) than it was in the past.” (p. 178) Do you agree? What specific fears or challenges do you face when it comes to your kids and technology and/or social media?

2. Read Nehemiah 4 and consider how Nehemiah responded to the enemies’ insults and attacks. What would it look like for you to approach your family’s technology use by doing the same things he did? (See p. 183.)

- *Post a guard:* What limits or boundaries have you established (or can you establish)?

- *Make a plan:* What steps can your family take together to put technology in its “proper place”?

- *Pray.* Nehemiah’s example highlights the necessity of fighting—praying—alongside other parents. Is there another parent or family in your neighborhood or church who would be willing to partner with you in this battle?

3. Author Andy Crouch writes that we are meant not just for “thin, virtual connections but for visceral, real connections to one another.” Take stock of your teens’ relationships with friends and family members.

- Can you point to real-life connections that strengthen their character, helping them grow in things like wisdom and compassion?

- What might you do to strengthen these bonds so that relationships will flourish and grow? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you his vision for your teens’ friendships and be open to what he might prompt you to do, or how he might nudge you to pray.

4. Fill in the blanks and make Nehemiah 4:14 your rallying cry:

“_____ the Lord, who is great and awesome, and _____ for your _____, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

Bonus Material

Our teens aren’t the only ones who may find themselves grappling with the “easy everything” access technology affords. **Psalm 101:3** can be taken as a commitment as well as a prayer prompt, and it’s a good one to add to your Scripture Memory Bank (if only so that the Holy Spirit can bring it mind as a safeguard against watching something worthless or vile!).

I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.

(Psalm 101:3 ESV)

Poised for Prayer

As you fight for your families in the area of technology and social media use, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 185-187 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.

Psalm 101:3 ESV

Chapter 17:

Praying for Protection from Drinking

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Which of the challenges detailed in Marla and Isabelle's story resonates with you?

___ Other parents who don't share your perspective about teens and alcohol use

___ A teen who professes to be a Christian but wants to please peers more than God

___ A teen who lies about alcohol use

___ The idea that alcohol is a temptation for teens everywhere

___ Conflict with your teen

___ Something else:

2. Which part of their story did you find most encouraging?

3. Have you ever had an experience like Marla did (p. 193) where you opened your Bible and found a verse that seemed to speak directly to your need or concern? If so, how did that make you feel? If not, ask the Holy Spirit to help you discover God's promises for your teen, and then be alert to his voice as read your Bible.

4. Read Luke 15:11-32.

- What parenting lessons can we learn from the earthly father in this story?

- Do you relate more to the wayward son in this story, or to the older son who obeyed his father—and felt resentful when his brother returned?

- Can you identify at least three attributes of our Heavenly Father that are revealed in this parable? List them below, and then write a short prayer to thank God for the way he has loved you.

Poised for Prayer

As you ask God to protect your teen from the lure of alcohol, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 198-200 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.
Proverbs 20:1 NIV

Chapter 18: Praying for Sexual Purity

For Reflection and Discussion

1. How comfortable (or uncomfortable) are you when it comes to talking with your teen about sex? What have been your expectations in terms of the choices your teen will make? Where do you see them setting boundaries, if any, and who are their primary influencers in this area?

2. “Shame entered the world when sin did and it has been working to disconnect us from God ever since.” (p. 207-208)

- Where have you personally experienced the power shame has to keep us from flourishing in connection to Christ?
- Why do you think the Genesis writer highlighted the fact that Adam and Eve “felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25)?
- How might the first and last verses of Romans 8 encourage someone who struggles to break free from the shadow of shame?

3. Have you prayed for your teen's attitudes about sex? If your teen has been sexually active, how might these verses help you see things from God's perspective as you pray:

- Romans 2:4
- Lamentations 3:22-23
- 1 John 1:9

Bonus Material

Romans 8 is brimming with powerful truths and encouragement. Choose the first or last verse to add to your Scripture Memory Bank. Here they are in an abbreviated version from the New Living Translation:

"There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1)

"Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God." (Romans 8:39)

Poised for Prayer

As you pray about your teen's attitudes about sex, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 210-212 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit,
who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;
you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Chapter 19:

Praying for Protection from Drugs

For Reflection and Discussion

1. “God is bigger and more powerful than any addiction.” (p. 217) How does the truth of that statement encourage you?

2. Janie talked about needing people who would “stand in the gap” on her family’s behalf. That’s a reference to Ezekiel 22:30; what do you think that phrase really means? Can you think of someone for whom you can stand in the gap? Someone who would do that for you?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 (in the Message translation if you can).
 - What was happening to Paul and his companions?

 - How did they feel?

 - God delivered Paul and his friends, but what role does he say the Corinthians played? How does their example challenge or motivate you?

- When God clues us in to a problem in our teen's life, it is never to get us to panic. Instead, it is to prompt us to pray. How does the 2 Corinthians passage add to your understanding of God's heart to rescue our teens?

4. Teen drug use is a form of bondage, but our kids are not the only ones who suffer. We may find ourselves in a prison of shame and confusion, one where we believe lies that say we've failed as a parent, that God has abandoned us, or that there is no hope for our teen.

Take another look at the promises listed at the bottom of p. 219. Which of these verses do you need to believe today? Write it here:

Poised for Prayer

As you pray about substance abuse and ask God to protect your teen from the lure of drugs, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 221-223 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey?
You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to
obey God, which leads to righteous living.

Romans 6:16 NLT

Chapter 20: Praying for Sin to Be Exposed

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you ever prayed for your kids to get caught? If so, what happened?

2. “Concealing sin never ends well, but confession leads to mercy.” (p. 225) How do you think this principle (found in Proverbs 28:13) works in real life?

3. What do the following three verses say about sin? How do they encourage or challenge you as you pray for your teen? What are the implications for parents as we seek to teach, correct and train our children? What truths do we need to be sure our kids know?
 - Romans 3:23

 - James 3:2

 - Isaiah 53:6

4. Read Genesis 50:20. Can you think of a time in your family's life when God took something that looked hopeless or harmful and used it to accomplish something good?

Poised for Prayer

As you ask God to bring sin to light in your teen's life, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 231-233 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

You may be sure that your sin will find you out.

Numbers 32:23 NIV

PART 5: PRAYING ABOUT EVERYTHING

Chapter 21: Praying about Choice of Music

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What impact do you think a teen's taste in music has on his or her worldview? Has it been your experience that music can dictate attitudes or behavior?

2. Read Philippians 1:9-11.

- What role does love play in discernment?

- What does God promise to those who discern "what is best"?

3. How can you tell if music is "good" or "bad"? In addition to the "litmus test" questions offered on page 243, use Philippians 4:8 to help flesh out your answer.

4. What can you do to encourage your teens to develop their own litmus test?

Note: Before you talk with your kids about their choices in music, do what Paul did and ask God to “open a door” for the message (see Colossians 4:3) and trust God to let you know when to have that conversation.

Poised for Prayer

As you trust God to help your teens choose music that glorifies him and promotes true, noble, and admirable thought patterns like those described in Philippians 4:8, choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 244-246 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

It is better to head the rebuke of a wise person than to listen to the song of fools.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 NIV

Chapter 22: Praying about Your Teen's Attire

For Reflection and Discussion

1. As you think and pray about your teens' attire, what is your top concern? What is theirs?

- Affordability
- Modesty/appropriateness
- Fitting in with peers
- Something else:

2. "The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives." (Psalm 37:22 NLT)

How does this verse motivate or encourage you to pray about something as seemingly insignificant as clothing? Do you think God cares what we wear?

3. How might our teen's clothing choices (or ours!) be a way to live out the relationship wisdom highlighted in Philippians 2:3-4?

4. Read Luke 12:22-28.

- What do these verses reveal about our human longings or concerns?
- What do they tell us about God's perspective on our clothing?
- What do they promise that he will do?

Poised for Prayer

As you pray about your teen's attire—everything from their worries about "fitting in" to the need to dress modestly and/or find clothing that fits your family's budget—choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 256-258 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment... Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

1 Peter 3:3-4 NIV

Chapter 23: Praying for Your Teen Athlete

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What details from Kenzie and Duncan's story stand out to you? Has your teen experienced defeat or injury in a way that revealed something about God or his love?

2. "Athletics...can be a crucible for our teens' character and a proving ground for their faith." (p. 265) Where have you seen this dynamic in action in your kids' lives or the lives of their teammates?

3. What attributes of Christ's character might be helpful to ask God to form in your teen, particularly as it relates to participation in athletics? Here are a few ideas; what other traits can you add?

- Attentiveness
- Decisiveness
- Dependability
- Endurance
-
-
-
-

4. Our teens aren't the only ones whose character can be shaped by sports. How has God used your experience as the parent on the sidelines to refine your character?

Bonus Material

As the old adage goes, we should be “humble in victory and gracious in defeat.”

Think about what that might look like in your teen's life, and add **1 Peter 5:5** to your Scripture Memory Bank:

*God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.
(1 Peter 5:5)*

Chapter 24: Praying about Your Teen's Future

For Reflection and Discussion

1. "God's job is to call them; our job is simply to equip them for whatever he has planned." (p. 272)

- What particular skills or perspectives might your teen need in order to be ready for whatever God calls them to do?

- How 2 Timothy 3:16-17 add to your understanding of what it means to be equipped for every good thing God has in store?

2. What character traits or attributes would you like God to form in your child's eventual spouse?

Note: Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what to pray for, and allow him to continue to guide your prayers as your teen matures. What a joy it is to work "hand in hand with God" (as pastor Jack Hayford put it) "toward the realization of his redemptive purposes on earth." (p. 271)

3. Whether we're praying for our teens' education, career path, ministry opportunities, marriage, or anything else, perhaps the best prayer we can pray for their future is that God's presence will go with them. What do these verses promise about the presence of God:

- Joshua 1:9
- Isaiah 43:1-2
- Psalm 16:11

Bonus Material

I don't know where you are today or what decision your family is facing, but I am confident of this: *God loves your teen and has a wonderful plan for their life.* As you partner with God to accomplish his good purposes through your prayers, let your teens know that. Let them know God is for them—and that you are too.

One of my favorite blessings comes from **Numbers 6:24-26**. We spoke these words over our children time and again as they grew:

The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

Borrow this one for your own family, or choose a blessing from the prayers on pages 278-280 and add it to your Scripture Memory Bank. Speak these words over your kids at the breakfast table, as they head out the door, or by their bedside at night. And even when they are not home, go into their bedrooms and speak blessings. As Proverbs 18:21 says, *Words give life!*

The LORD bless you and keep you!

Poised for Prayer

As you trust God with your teen’s future—their education, career, marriage, and more—choose two or three verses from the prompts on pages 278-280 and weave them into a prayer. Write your own prayer here or in your prayer journal, and plan to return to it in the weeks to come to see how God is answering your request.

Heavenly Father...

“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”—
the things God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV

Scripture Memory Bank

Just like money in the bank enables you to meet needs, so having scriptures in your “memory bank” can equip you to respond quickly and effectively to any concern with your prayers.

Use these pages to record the verses you memorize. I find it helpful to write each verse on an index card and post it someplace where I will see it often—and I ask the Holy Spirit to be my Helper, teaching me and reminding me of every word.⁷

REFERENCE

VERSE

⁷ See John 14:26.

REFERENCE

VERSE
