

# THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

## Before the Hormones Hit

Don't waste the incredible opportunity you have during the "golden years" to prepare your children for adolescence.

By Dennis and Barbara Rainey

If there ever can be such a thing as pure pleasure in parenting, preadolescence is it. The terrible twos are a fading memory. Your child now dresses and feeds himself—even takes a shower without nagging. You and your child have conversations where he expresses his thoughts and wishes. And best of all, he admires you!

We call this oasis of tranquility, when the child is nine to twelve, the "golden years," a time as blissful as a lazy boat ride down the river on a pleasant summer afternoon.

Sure, you know adolescence is just around the bend, and there may be some rapids ahead, but for now parenting is good.

It took a unique experience before we fully realized the incredible opportunity parents have during those golden years to prepare their children for adolescence. There's almost no current, the river is as placid as a sheet, there's no waterfall creating a roar that makes hearing one another difficult. It's a great time to talk calmly about what lies ahead.

When our oldest child, Ashley, was about twelve, we were drifting blissfully down the river called preadolescence. We were enjoying our relationship with her immensely. Maybe this teenage thing was something that happened to other, perhaps less-skilled, parents, we thought.

Our naive river cruise was interrupted when we volunteered to teach a sixth-grade Sunday school class. From the very first Barbara and I sensed they were ready for some meat, not the macaroni and cheese we might have stirred up for them. They seemed primed to have their convictions challenged, shaped, and tested—to really grapple with truth at a profound level. So we plunged in, at the same time paying close attention to learn what our students' issues were.

## A Sixth-grade Survey

Over time the curriculum evolved into discussions of issues like peer pressure, drinking, drugs, smoking, and sex. It was astounding how sharp these sixth graders were in understanding truth and making applications, even though they were not emotionally and relationally mature.

A huge boost to our understanding of these preteens came the first time we did a survey. We asked a provocative question: “If you could ask your parents any question, but I would ask it for you and then give you the answer later, what would it be?”

One year we received these responses (remember, these are from eleven and twelve-year-olds):

*“If I become pregnant before marriage, what would your reaction be?”*

*“Did you have sex before you were married?”*

*“How old will I be before I can kiss?”*

*“What qualities should the person I marry have?”*

Four students requested that we ask their parents: *“How old were you when you first had sex and who was it with?”*

Another time we asked in what areas they felt peer pressure. These were children living in middle-class suburban families, and many of them attended Christian schools. Here are some of their answers: Making fun of other people, music, cigarettes, cursing, clothing, sex, drugs, alcohol, stealing, cheating, and

much more.

Our guess is that 99.9 percent of all parents look at their child at eleven or twelve and don’t have the foggiest idea that he or she is beginning to grapple with adult issues. Preadolescents don’t know how to connect all the dots—they may only understand the basic facts on sex, for example. But their own sex drive is emerging, and they are sensing a new, often frightening, need to be accepted and appreciated by the opposite sex. Life is in full gear. Determinative life choices are about to be made.

This is no time for parents to curl up on the couch for a nap. They face a 12 to 24 month window of opportunity in the fifth and sixth-grade years to prepare the child for the rapids of junior high.

## Navigating through the Turbulent Waters of Adolescence

Many parents believe that the truly significant, foundational choices are made when a child is well into the teen years. Our “research” in the laboratory of our sixth-grade Sunday school class, in ministry with youth and families since 1971, and in years of field testing in the Rainey home leads us to believe the most pivotal choices are made during the age span of about eleven to fifteen. Wrong choices can tragically alter the course of a child’s life.

Is there a proven way for parents to steer children safely through the turbulent waters of adolescence?

We've learned there isn't a single strategy that will guarantee no rapids in your child-rearing stream. Just like the cycle of the seasons in nature, certain attitudes and behaviors seem to appear on cue during the preteen and teenage years. But if you know where your child is, and what will happen next, you can be prepared to meet the needs of your child, as well as be better able to maintain your equilibrium as a mom or dad.

During this time you need to seize the opportunity to do two things. First, secure your relationship with your child. As we watched one wave after another of our sixth graders in the class move on, we observed a pattern: If the parents were not engaged and involved on the important issues in their child's life, those youngsters were more at risk.

Some time in the early teens, a spiritual erosion can occur, and often there is an emotional drift towards isolation. The teenager naturally pushes away from his parents, and if the parent allows his child to push him out of his life, the child will end up in a vulnerable place: overly influenced by peers. On the other side, involved parents, the ones who taught the standards and values we reinforced on Sunday, tended to see good choices and pleasing results in their children.

That's why it is so important to start talking about the big issues in the ten to twelve-year-old age frame and to establish good relational connections. Then, as you actually face the issues later, the

communication lines will be in place and you will be able to review information discussed before.

Second, aggressively begin to shape the child's convictions before adolescence hits in full force. To take this step, you probably will need to begin by discussing what convictions and standards you want to pass on to your child. We are amazed at how many moms and dads have never had a focused conversation on what the specific boundaries and standards will be for their child during the preadolescent and teen years. Have you and your spouse talked about dating, driving, jobs, grades, curfews, friends, and after school activities? We promise this: If you don't nail down your own convictions ahead of time, your teenager and his peer group will establish their own!

Most adults won't go out and start a sixth-grade Sunday school class, although we couldn't offer a better suggestion for obtaining a real education on preadolescents. But every parent can implement a strategy to help their child prepare for the trip through adolescence. Your approach may be as basic as a weekly breakfast with your child where you connect and communicate about the critical traps of adolescence.

Whatever you do, we guarantee one thing: It will be one of the best investments ever made in the future success of your child.

Taken From:

<https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/parenting/ages-and-stages/tweens/before-the-hormones-hit/?spMailingID=13540294&spUserID=MTY2Njc5MjU1MTEsS0&spJobID=1401688330&spReportId=MTQwMTY4ODMzMAS2>

# FUNNIES

Each Friday night after work, Bubba would fire up his outdoor grill and cook venison steak. But all of Bubba's neighbors were Catholic, and since it was Lent, they were forbidden from eating red meat on Friday.

The delicious aroma from the grilled venison steaks was causing such a problem for the Catholic faithful that they finally talked to their priest.

The priest came to visit Bubba and suggested that he become a Catholic.

After several classes and much study, Bubba attended Mass. The priest sprinkled holy water over him and said, "You were born a Baptist and raised as a Baptist, but now you are Catholic."

Bubba's neighbors were greatly relieved, until Friday night arrived and the wonderful aroma of grilled venison filled the neighborhood. The priest was called immediately by the neighbors.

As the priest rushed into Bubba's yard, clutching a rosary and prepared to scold him, he stopped and watched in amazement.

There stood Bubba, clutching a small bottle of holy water, which he carefully sprinkled over the grilling meat while chanting, "You wuz born a deer, you wuz raised a deer, but now you are a catfish."

## For Thinkers Only

- What if my dog only brings back my ball because he thinks I like throwing it?

- Every time you clean something, you just make something else dirty.
- If poison expires, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?
- Which letter is silent in the word "Scent," the S or the C?
- Why is the letter W, in English, called double U? Shouldn't it be called double V?
- Maybe oxygen is slowly killing you and it just takes 75-100 years to fully work.
- The word "swims" upside-down is still "swims".
- Intentionally losing a game of rock, paper, and scissors is just as hard as trying to win.
- 100 years ago everyone owned a horse and only the rich had cars. Today everyone has cars and only the rich own horses.
- Your future self is watching you right now through memories.
- If you replace "W" with "T" in "What, Where and When", you get the answer to each of them.
- Many animals probably need glasses, but nobody knows it.
- If you rip a hole in a net, there are actually fewer holes in it than there were before.
- If 2/22/22 falls on a Tuesday, we'll just call it "2's Day". (It does fall on a Tuesday)