



## Don't ever quit -- even if your teen hates you



Mark Gregston - Guest Columnist - 6/17/2009 7:40:00 AM



I have seen many parents wonder what in the world happened to their family. They seemingly woke up one morning to a teen who completely changed overnight. Their loving, kind and thoughtful kid is now a person they no longer recognize. It's easy for them to feel they are

not prepared for all of this – but who is?

No matter how good a parent you are, there are forces at work in our culture trying to send your kid spinning off in a direction that you could never imagine. The teen culture is bent on undermining the values you have tried so hard to instill into their lives.

Should you ever wonder if your teen's troubles have something to do with what you did or didn't do as a parent, remember this truth: There are no guarantees or perfect formulas in parenting! Every parent struggles with one adolescent or another. If you haven't, you probably will.

Most of the kids who have ever come to live with us and be counseled here at *Heartlight* were from great Christian homes, with loving and caring parents. Some are from the families of well-known Christian leaders. They were just as shocked as you are that their child took a turn away from them, from God, and from everything they hold dear.

So, it's a mistake to believe that Christian families are safe. Christian kids are just as susceptible as any other. But I can guarantee you that God loves your family as much as you do, and more -- and there is hope. There is a way through the difficult teen years, and there are tools that we have developed to deal with difficult teens. While it can be hard work, it is worth it.

Perhaps you're going through a difficult time with your child and you're trying to find the meaning of "what just happened?" Or you wonder if you'll ever make it to the other side. Or maybe you see something coming and you want to prepare yourself. In all of this, I say, "Don't quit!"

- Don't quit -- when your efforts to intervene in your teen's terrible choices fail.
- Don't quit -- when family time disappears, and your teen turns his back on your relationship.
- Don't quit -- when your teen stays out without permission, and you have no idea where they are or what to do next.
- Don't quit -- when you draw the line and say "Honey, we're not going to live like

this anymore."

- Don't quit – when you enforce consequences for improper behavior and your teen is upset.
- Don't quit – when your teen says they hate you or threatens to run away.

What do I mean by saying, "Don't quit"? I mean, don't give up your parental role. Don't try to befriend your teen instead of parenting them, and don't ever give in to their disrespectful or self-destructive behaviors. It's hard being in the leadership role, but that's exactly where you need to be -- for in the absence of leadership, there is anarchy.

*In the midst of your darkness, God will come in the light of time with a promise of His presence and companionship.*

Whatever your situation, you need to understand that God is still there...He hasn't abandoned you. When there is confusion and darkness, God is still there. He promises to turn your "ashes into beauty," "sadness into joy," and "mourning into dancing." These are not empty promises. They are truths about God that reflect His power, and they reveal His ability to help those facing difficult times. They are for parents of teens who are struggling through things they never thought they would.

Your relationship with your teen several years from now and for the rest of their life may be affected by how you handle their struggles right now -- so don't quit, and don't forsake your relationship or your love for them, no matter how they act. Ask God for help, rest in His presence, and again, don't ever, ever quit. And if you're ever tempted to quit, please call me. I'll help you work through it.



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