

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today.

Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders”

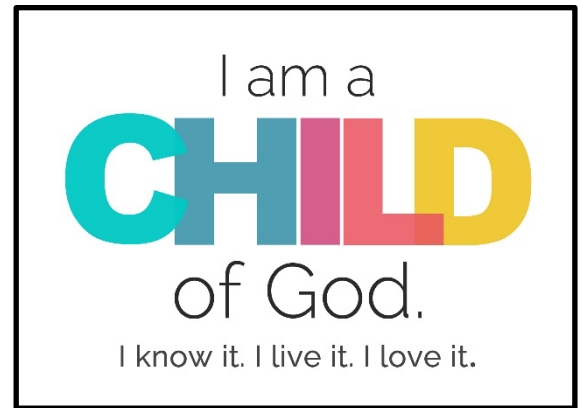
Deuteronomy 6:4-8.



A Publication of St. John Neumann's

**Parent
Ministry**

As parents, there are a lot of things that you are trying to teach your kids as they grow up. There are things you want them to know, things you are hoping they will learn how to do, and things that you pray they will come to believe. During the teenage years, a lot is going on in them as they sort out a lot of questions that come into their minds. They are in this phase of life when they are really trying to figure out who they are. They are trying to land on their identity. They may sometimes see themselves as an athlete, or a student, a gamer – or they may see themselves as a “screwup.” If you’re not quite sure how your teenager views themselves, give this a try... One night at dinner or, while you’re in the car, or any time you feel like you might get an engaged response, ask them to fill in the blank of this sentence. ‘I am_____.’



I would encourage you as a parent to make sure you are paying attention to this journey that your teenager is on and help them land on an identity that is healthy and one that will sustain them for the rest of their lives. The identity I hope your teen embraces is this. I want them to say, “I am a child of God.” Don’t you!?

Here are a few suggestions for you as you seek to help your teenager embrace their identity in Christ:



First, you have to model having an identity in Christ.

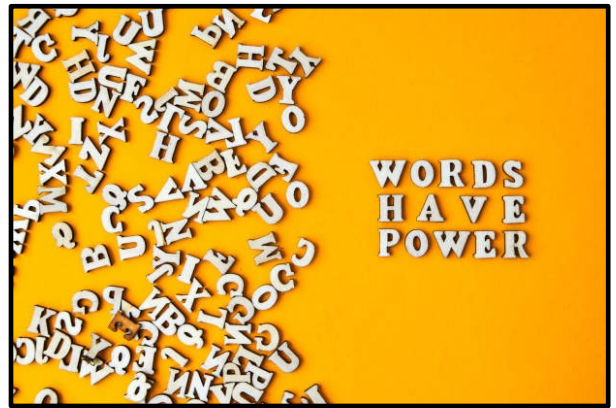
Your teenager is watching you. This generation values authenticity in a big way. They can see right through someone when they say one thing but do another. If you want your teenager to know and trust God, then it will go a long way if you know and trust God. If you want them to believe that they are a child of God and live for Him, then you need to believe you are a child of God and do your best to live for Him. Modeling matters, and you, as parents, need to be modeling the things

you want your kids to embrace. Are you going to mess up and fall short? Absolutely. But when you do, we can model asking for forgiveness and living in the grace that God provides.

Next, if you want to influence the identity your teenager embraces, then you have to have a relationship with them that gives you the influence you need to help them sort all of this out. I know that relationships with your teenagers can be difficult and strained for a variety of reasons. But I would encourage you to work hard to have a real, loving, close, deep relationship with your teenager so that you can lead and guide them in the way they should go. I can’t tell you exactly how to build a close relationship with your teen, but I can tell you

that it's a lot of work. It takes sacrifice, humility, discernment, and time, and it often requires you to be the adult in the situation, controlling your emotions and working to bridge the relational gaps that you see emerging. When it comes to how your teenager is building their identity, your relationship with them matters, so make it a priority.

Use your words to tell them about their identity in Christ. Don't be weird about it, but quote scripture and remind your teenager about what God says about them. Now, this kind of goes back to the first thing I encouraged you to do. For you to share God's truth with your teenager, you have to know God's truth yourself. Tell your teens that they are approved, fully accepted, and fully loved by God. Tell them that they were created for a bigger purpose. Tell them that God is always with them, that He will never leave them or forsake them. Plant in them the seeds of scripture that will form their identity and point them towards God.



Surround them with people who will affirm their identity in Christ. You want people in your teenager's lives who are pushing in the same direction you are. If you want your teens to truly embrace their identity in Christ, you must surround them with people who affirm that identity. They are around people every day that will pull them away from this preferred path. Many friends, coaches, teachers, and co-workers will push them away from their faith and true identity, so we need other voices in their lives that will point them toward the abundant life we so desperately want for them.

If you want your teenager to embrace their identity in Christ, put people around them to help them do that. Encourage their participation in our parish's Youth Ministry, service opportunities at St. John Neumann and in the community, and family friends are all great ways to connect your kids to others who will encourage them in their faith. Making this happen for your kids can take work, but I promise you it is worth it!



Here's the last thing I would encourage you to do as you hope for your teenager to embrace an identity that is founded on their relationship with God. Pray. Pray for them to land on that identity. Pray for the truth of God and the words of scripture to take root. Pray for the voices of the world to pale in comparison to the voice of God and pray your teenager can find peace in who they are as they navigate the world. I hope this week's OPM email has been

helpful and encouraging to you! Know that I am praying for you! **JGC**