# Shepherding Teens

(All prophecies are Jesus speaking unless otherwise indicated.)

Caring for teens takes time. It's not an easy task to inspire them, train them, shepherd them, and relate to them. You have to always be one step ahead of them and be there for them. A lot of folks don't want to take this time. The parents are busy and need them to help out in the Home, and many times people feel they don't have time to give them all they need and they just let them do whatever they want. But you have to make the time! It's not optional! If you want your teens to turn out well, you must invest the necessary time. There's no way around it. Being left to themselves continually is one of the worst things for teens, because idleness is the Devil's workshop.

If you want to relate to teens, take time for them, do things with them, think about them, teach them, train them, pray for them, hear from Me about them and for them and with them, love them, have fun with them, and be a sample of My joy of living to them! Pick them up when they fall, forgive them when they stumble, show faith that they can overcome, help them do so, and they will!

The more you can win their confidence, the more they will open up; and the more they open up, the easier it will become to understand and relate to them. You must make the first move. You must become first a friend to them, then a confidant, and finally a shepherd or mentor. [1]

## Teens Need Challenge, Fun, Shepherding, Responsibility, And Friends!

(Dad speaking:) Teens tend to see everything as black and white. They're often very carnal minded and see things more in the flesh than in the spirit. Thus it's hard for them to fully grasp the Lord's love for them if they aren't able to see that love in human form through someone who's letting His love flow through them.

Teens are not going to just up and decide for themselves that they're going to serve the Lord with all of their hearts. They won't just automatically believe that the Lord loves them unconditionally and wants them to love Him in return. Even if they've been brought up all of their lives in the Family, they'll still reach a point in their lives where they'll begin to question their beliefs, the Lord's love for them, their parents and shepherds' love for them, as well as their place and their future life for the Lord.

The Lord has made it this way so that teens will reach a point of decision and choose to love and serve Him for themselves, of their own accord. But they usually won't be able to make this decision without a little bit of help--and sometimes a lot of help--from those around them. It's like they have to be witnessed to all over again. Their pure and simple childlike faith no longer sustains them. The Enemy attacks them with his doubts. It's a time of decision. So they need the love, help, and support of others.

Most teens need frequent and obvious manifestations of the Lord's love in the form of time, attention, help and shepherding. It's not enough to just shepherd them spiritually. They also need to have fun, to enjoy life, to be challenged. The main things they need are challenge, fun, shepherding, responsibility, and friends.

Teens need those who are going to reach out to them, those who are going to reach into their world and help them to make it. To feel the Lord's love, they need to feel it from others. They need to feel love, which is most often manifested in time. They need to do fun things. They need to feel like someone appreciates them. They need to be challenged with a ministry or job. They need to look at life as a joy and pleasure. They need to know that serving the Lord is not just boring and dull, but fun and enjoyable. They need to see a balance. They need shepherding and clear guidelines, yes, but they also need times to relax and let their hair down. They need challenge and enjoyment or they'll get bored.

When teens are bored, it's a vicious cycle. Once they reach a state of boredom, almost everything in their daily life is then boring. If a teen is bored with life in general, then everything in their life is boring. The Word becomes boring, prayer becomes boring, anything spiritual becomes boring, school becomes boring, and they start looking elsewhere for excitement, and they often end up looking in the wrong places. The Enemy starts showing them his so-called excitement, and they jump for it and want to take a peek and see what it's all about. When a teen is rebellious and bored at the same time, that's a recipe for disaster, as these two things combined cause them to look for fun in the clutches of the Enemy.

Teens need excitement in their lives, and if they don't get it from good and wholesome sources, they'll look for it elsewhere. If you can give them excitement in a good and healthy environment, if you can break the boredom cycle, then everything in their life starts to become more of a joy. They start enjoying their Word time, prayer time, and the spiritual things in their life. Sometimes you have to go a little overboard for teens as you try to make their life exciting, but it doesn't have to last forever. It's just for a time as they get over that hump in their life. If they can see that life for the Lord is fun and exciting, if they can make it over that hump, then that's a major battle won.

Teens are often looked upon as a great work force. There's often a tendency to depend on them for their physical help in certain areas of Home life, rather than tapping into their heart and mind to find out what they're really interested in and what would challenge them. Everyone has to do some of the boring chores of life that just need to be done in order to keep a Home running, including teens, but it's important that this isn't what their life is composed of entirely.

Let them focus on the jobs or ministries that they're interested in, that challenge them. If those jobs or ministries aren't available in your Home, then ask the Lord how you can create them, how you can make them happen. Or combo

with another Home in the area and see how you can work it out.

If your teen wants to learn cooking, then see if you can have someone tune into that and teach them how to be a real good cook. If your teen wants to learn to sew, see if you can help make that happen for them. If your teen wants to learn to be a secretary or a computer programmer or a web designer, see how they can be trained, and then give them hands-on experience. Give them the responsibility of making the Home's monthly newsletter, etc.

It can be a lot of work to try and adapt your Home to training your young people and teens, and it will take extra time and sacrifice, but it's well worth it. They'll still have to help out with the different tasks in your Home that must be done to keep it running. But remember, they need challenge, challenge, challenge--and more challenge! If we can't give it to them in the Family, then they're going to go elsewhere to look for it.

Their care, their need for fun, their need for challenge, is all a part of showing them the Lord's love. The Lord wants to give them the best care possible in every area of their lives, both physical and spiritual, and He needs you to help channel that love to them.

Some folks in the Family are bored--not just the teens. Some SGAs are bored. Some of our FGAs are unchallenged and wonder if they're "over the hill" or if the Lord still wants to use them. Well, this is an area of dire need--the care of our teens, this next generation. You want a challenge? This is one of the greatest challenges of all, to win our teens for the Lord! You want a great ministry that will reap great rewards here on Earth as well as in the world to come? Be a helping hand to a teen! Be a friend to a teen. Even if you can't devote your full time to it, do what you can. Like I said in "Change the World," even if you can't change the whole world, change your part of the world. Even if you can't help all of the teens, help whoever you can--whether it's one, two, or three.

Our teens need the Lord's love shown to them in a physical way, through physical people. Love is spelled time and friendship. A friend will go all the way--will even die for their friend if need be. Are you willing to give your life to help our upcoming disciples? Or are they going to fall into the clutches of the Enemy because they don't find in the Family the freedom, challenge and excitement they're seeking? If they don't find what they're looking for here, where will they find it? Nowhere. Well, they might find an imitation of happiness or an illusion of freedom in the System, but that's exactly where the Devil wants them and where he's trying with all his might to pull them.

It's a big tug-of-war in the spirit! The Enemy and all of his demons are on one side of the rope trying to pull it to their side, and the Lord and all of His spirit helpers are on the other side of the rope trying to pull it in their direction. Hanging in the middle of the rope is one of our teens, representative of many of our teens in the Family right now.

Heaven is fighting for his life and service, and so are the forces of Hell. They're pulling with all of their might, and it seems like the Enemy's winning. You may wonder then why the Lord, being all-powerful, doesn't just pull the rope in His direction and save the teens for Him. Well, He can't. He's bound by the rules of the game that forbid Him from using His full power. He's bound by the rules of choice and decision-making.

What Jesus needs is you! He needs your help. He needs all of those who can to get on His side of the rope to pull those teens in the right direction and out of the clutches of the Enemy. With your help the Enemy won't win this tug-of-war for the lives of our teens. As you reach out in love and sacrifice to win these teens to the Lord and the life of service He has for them, we will win the tug-of-war! Heaven will win and the forces of Hell will be defeated. But the tide of this battle for the hearts and souls and lives of our teens depends on you. Not your neighbor or someone else, not that other person in the other Home who is good at working with teens, but you! The tide of this battle depends on you.

What are you going to do to help win this tug-of-war? What are you going to do to help win our teens, to help our teens, to be a friend to our teens, to encourage our teens, to challenge our teens, to shepherd our teens, to love our teens, and most of all, to be Jesus for them--to be His hands, His feet, His all?

What would Jesus do if He were here on Earth today? What would Jesus do to help that teen in your Home? Would He stand to the side and let the Enemy pull him away from the light through boredom, lack of challenge, lack of love for the Word, loneliness, and his many other tricks? No way! If Jesus were there in your Home, He would love that teen. He would befriend that teen. He would sacrifice His time to help that teen, to talk to that teen, to have fun with that teen, to answer that teen's questions. He would do all that He could to help that teen make it.

But Jesus can't physically be there right now in your Home to help your teen, so He needs you. The only way He can help that teen is if He can work through you. Will you let Him work through you? Will you let Him love through you? Will you let Him use you to help that teen make it? That's what He wants from you. He wants you to be His vessel of love.

Even if you don't feel like you're good with teens or that you can be much of a help, the Lord has a job for you. Ask Him what He wants you to do and what He expects of you today, and then pray desperately for His strength to help you do what He shows you. It's so important, because the Lord needs our next generation. He's got great things in store for them. He needs their fire and their fervor and their all. He wants them all! There's not one to spare! [(2)]

Those of you who take up the challenge to invest time as shepherds, friends, mentors, mates, and comrades to your young people will find your lives blessed in supernatural ways. Not only will you joy in the results you will see in the ones you have loved and cared for, but fountains of personal and otherwise unattainable blessings will abound in your hearts and lives because you gave, sacrificed, and weren't too busy to play a part--no matter how large or small--in shaping the future of the Family. [(3)]

(Dad speaking:) During the teen years, their minds revert back to that very impressionable state, like they were when they were very young. The only difference is, this time around they aren't so eager to please their mommy and

daddy or shepherds. They'll do all in their power to make it difficult for you, but deep down inside they still want and need those rules, just like a toddler does. The boundaries are what make them feel safe. If you don't put them up, they'll go to the extreme just to get your attention or to see where you'll draw the line. They're testing your love--determining how much you care for them by the boundaries you set.

Of course, if you overdo and go to the opposite extreme and lay down too many rules and regulations, restricting your teenager's every move, it can have just as many negative effects in their training as if you didn't put down any. But many Family parents are tending toward the former--failing to set down the boundaries clearly enough, not holding the standard steadfast, as it should be held.

Obviously it's a fine balance and you must be Spirit-led. That's the most important thing to remember when handling young teens. If you're stuck in a rut in your interactions with them, they will feel you boxing them in.

They generally will react and behave the way you treat them. If you talk down to them and treat them like children, they'll behave like children. If you treat them over-strictly, expecting too much maturity for their age, they'll feel overwhelmed, and likely make an effort to "be good," but they'll turn around and rebel behind your back.

So the key is to move with the Lord's Spirit. Their thoughts and attitudes are twisting, turning, and changing every day. Their minds and hearts, not to mention their bodies, are growing by leaps and bounds every day. One day they might be struggling with a simple spiritual concept, and the next day something clicks and they're able to grasp it completely. For this reason, the way you interact with them has to be constantly updated. Don't be stuck on yesterday's plan. Be open to the Lord's leading for the new day.

They don't want to be treated like children, yet at the same time you can't expect adult maturity and behavior from them. There's an in-between. There's a balance. This is how you will win their respect and trust--not by giving them everything they want, or letting them run wild in hopes that they'll get their "yah-yahs" out. They're in need of direction at this point in their lives--not overbearing, restrictive, breathing-down-your-neck kind of shepherding, but trusting, loving-yet-firm, flexible, Spirit-led shepherding, with clear boundaries. [4]

## Be Negotiators

Teenagers have this inbuilt mentality that fights against rules and restrictions. They're rebels at heart. I made them to be this way so that they would want to grow up and take responsibility for themselves and gain a desire to make their own choices. Yet this natural rebellion must be channeled, because otherwise it can also ruin them. It can make them cantankerous, crabby, difficult to get along with, and in their teen years they can develop nasty habits of poor human relations and lack of respect for others that will then last them a lifetime.

They need to be taught, they need to be instructed, and yet at the same time given sufficient freedom to make their own choices about whatever is appropriate to make choices about at their age. Often they want to make choices that are not yet theirs to make, because they don't have the wisdom, the maturity, the experience, or the sense of responsibility. Still, I put that desire within them, because otherwise they would remain children forever, content to just do what their parents say and never wanting to think or plan or decide for themselves.

You have to realize the inherent nature of teenagers and why they rebel before you can do anything to help them overcome it. You have to understand that it's an inbuilt mechanism and that it's very useful if channeled right. It's not that you want to "break" them, to change their personalities, to make them "yes people" or agreeable to everyone and everything. You can't, even if you try! What you do want to do, though, is teach them to be reasonable.

As parents and shepherds, you need to learn the art of negotiating. If you've seen any of those movies about hostage negotiators, you'll get a better idea of the kind of negotiating that is needed with teenagers sometimes. They can be about as volatile, unpredictable and unreasonable as a kidnapper--though of course not as dangerous.

The combination of their natural rebellion, the intense emotions of those years, the Enemy's attacks, and the worldly input they receive combines to make them act really "way out there" at times. It's almost like they speak another language, come from a different culture, or even a different planet! You have to keep that in mind.

You have to remember that what they want out of life at this immature stage is often completely different than what you want out of life. The way they see things may be completely different than the way you see them. What to you is a very good reason for doing something may not be a valid reason at all to them. Basically what you need is supernatural wisdom to know where they're at, what's in their heart and mind, so that you can establish points in common. From there you can have fruitful communications and reasonable negotiations.

Granted, there are times when you just have to put your foot down and say, "Do this because it's the right thing to do," and be real parent-like about it. That is your God-given right. And it is your duty, in fact, to make sure that they're behaving in a godly fashion, and especially not doing anything that would be hurtful or harmful to others. There isn't always time or room for negotiations; some things are simply not negotiable.

On the other hand, while the bottom line is not negotiable, some things are worth having discussions and negotiations about, so that they can come to an understanding of where you're coming from, and you can understand their side and see if parts of the plan can be modified. At least you're talking, you're communicating, you're hearing their side, you're understanding their viewpoint, and in the process I can and will inspire you with ideas of things to say or do to help them understand, or things you can do to make it easier for them while still sticking to your convictions.

Firmness and guidelines are essential at this age and phase of life. They have to be reasonable guidelines and you have to really pray about them, because while there are certain basic codes of behavior that should be required of

every human, some teens need more or less restrictions.

One thing that helps is to not make rules about areas that aren't problems or issues. Don't create new issues--you'll have enough real ones already! For example, if your child doesn't have a problem with listening to System music, don't come up with a big rule of "no System music in the house," because that'll probably just make them want to go and get all of it they can!

Don't try to cover all your bases by coming up with rules and guidelines that would cover every possible scenario or misbehavior. Try to keep your rules as simple and minimal as possible, and then if things come up that require more rules or guidelines, pray about them and make them then. You're going to have to have rules and guidelines, but the simpler and more concise they are the better.

Shoot straight and make it completely clear what you expect. Try to give them as much reasoning and explanation as possible for everything that you require of them. But if they don't agree and negotiation doesn't make them see the light, well, you still have to follow through. It's a lot more difficult, of course, when they haven't agreed to it, but it still must be done.

In some cases, it may be helpful if you can get your teen to sign some sort of contract or written agreement--especially if they're one of the more rebellious or quarrelsome types. You'll have to pray about the specific terms of the contract with your particular teenager, but it could be something to the effect of: "Once you're 16 you may leave this Home or you may leave the Family. However, as long as you are under our care and we are feeding, clothing, housing, and providing for you, you will agree to abide by a few house rules, which are the following…" Then both parents and teenager would sign this. Of course, there is already the provisional contract for senior teens of 16 and 17, but in many cases you parents may want to sign some type of similar contract with your younger teens.

It's ideal if people obey from the heart, but sometimes that just doesn't work with teenagers, at least not right off the bat. But if you can at least get them to agree to do such and such by agreeing that you're only going to require it for a certain time, you can in some cases make it easier for them to turn around. If they yield and make the right decisions, they will eventually start to stay within godly bounds because they know it makes them happy and it makes for a good life. But they don't have that wisdom and experience to begin with, and you sometimes have to enforce the rules until they come to understand that the rules are for their benefit.

See, if they think that they're going to have to listen to you "forever," they'll just hate it more and more. But if they realize that at a certain point you're prepared to let them go their way, and they truly believe that what you're asking or requiring of them is for their own good, they'll be more willing to follow. They may still be quite reluctant, but at least they'll be in a "negotiable" state, and as they follow, there's a good chance that they'll turn around and start to want to do the right things, if you're handling them with love and giving them responsibility as you go. (5)

Do all you can to give them the Word. Do all you can to pour the Word into them and to help them give the Word to others--whether it be to their peers, to those they witness to, to their younger brothers and sisters--however you can encourage them to get the Word in and out. That will be their salvation.

By seeing My Word work not only in their own lives but in the lives of others, they will realize that it is a powerful force, that it is living, that it is not dead words on a page or ancient writings of man, but it is My Spirit and it works miracles! So pray to find their key, and then proceed day by day to give them the Word, even if you do not see the results immediately.

If these outside influences are continuing to pull them further and further away from My Word, show them this clearly. Present it to them lovingly and ask them to make the choice. Hear from Me with them, read My Word together, and find the answers therein.

Do not curb and restrict all their activities, for they will feel rebellious. But show them how certain activities are bringing forth bad fruit, not only in their lives, but in the lives of their younger brothers and sisters; in the lives of those they should be ministering to; and ultimately in the lives of the souls which they should be saving, but whom they're not going to reach as they should because of their sample.

My dear parents and shepherds, this is not a one-step solution. There are many steps, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, following Me, seeking Me and continuing to give the Word even when it looks like it's failing, even when it looks like it is not accomplishing the purpose. You have My promise that My Word never returns void!

That is their foundation, sure and steadfast, which will remain through all eternity. Like the helmet, My Word is never given in vain. It is there to stay, even though they may close their conscience off to it, put it from their minds, and rebel in their hearts. Yet is My foundation firmly there, and one day they will come back to it and find it sure and steadfast.

So continue to give it to them day by day, brick by brick. Continue to build, and continue to check with Me, the Master Foreman. Use the tools that I have given you; hear from Me so that you can know by faith that you are proceeding correctly in each situation.

Then do not be discouraged, My dear ones. Do not be weary from your many days of work. Rest each night and commit all to Me, and the next morning as you wake, pray for faith to continue.

It is in My hands to work the miracles. These children are Mine. They are Mine more than yours, and I love them and care for them and will keep them forever. Not one Word shall fail of all the things which I have promised you, and once again these children will return unto Me and unto you and will accomplish the destiny for which I created them. Only be faithful now to build brick upon brick, stone upon stone, so that their foundation will be sure and steadfast. (6)

## Find the Key!

(Dad speaking:) Every young person's heart has a unique key--a unique and separate code that will unlock the door of their heart. You as their parents, shepherds or friends, must seek the Lord as to what that is. It doesn't stop there. Once you have found the key to their hearts, you must use it wisely and not exploit it for your own advantages. Then you must ask the Lord to touch their lives in the way that He knows best. Only the Lord knows what your junior teen's code is--but He'll show you as you ask Him, and then watch your teen, and let the Lord reveal to you what makes them tick, what makes them happy, what you can do to help them grow.

Once you do your part and continue to follow through on what He's shown you, then it's up to them. I know it might sound a bit frustrating to realize that you don't control the outcome after all you've done and been for them, but it really does come down to them eventually. That is the freedom of choice. That's what it's all about: Doing your part until it's their turn to decide for themselves. When it really comes down to it, it's a personal choice that your young person has to make. It comes down to them and God, their decision and their responsibility. No one else is to blame. (7)

## Knowing When and How to Discipline

It will take desperate prayer, unconditional love and faith and determination to see them through--and a strong hand and firm discipline if necessary, which is a part of love. You might also see some setbacks along the way. The kids will have days of some progress and days of some setbacks. Look at some of our adults--it's taken them literally years to come around.

Young people need sympathy and understanding, unconditional love and prayer. The parents and shepherds need to pray and ask God for wisdom as to when to give what. Discipline is love. That's one thing you never could accuse me of--that I couldn't control my kids, even when they were teenagers. My kids loved me as well as feared me, just like we do with God--we love Him as well as fear Him.

In many of these cases the kids are putting the shepherds to the test. They're playing the Devil's advocate in some ways, to see if the shepherds are going to practice what they preach. They've seen a lot of double standards, so they're putting you to the test to see what's up, what you're going to do. It's a combination of many things.

The kids are testing things out, which is normal and natural at this age. So this needs to be considered and this is why you have to pray. If they play around too long, harboring doubts, for example, if it gets to the point of no return, they might have to learn the hard way.

The Devil's right in there fighting long and hard and furiously to defeat our kids. Only with the Lord's divine intervention are you going to know what to do and when to do it; when to apply loving discipline and a firm hand and when to give love and understanding and bend a little; when to apply the rod of correction and when to pick them up and hold them tight in your arms, or when to do both.

I'm not talking here about tolerating any foolish behavior and certainly not any harmful shenanigans that will cause hurt to others. This is why the shepherds have to pray every day to know when and how to apply the discipline the Lord wants.

If the young people resist what the Lord is trying to do in their lives today, if they insist on yielding to the Devil and if they're going to be bad boys and girls, they might have to go out from among us and learn their lessons the hard way!

This is what the shepherds need to decide and why they have to keep praying. Only the Lord knows the heart of these kids, and through prayer He's able to show you shepherds and parents what's needed and when--when to hold on and when to let go. Pray for wisdom and discernment. (8)

As shepherds you must have wisdom and restraint and not go jumping all over someone for every comment that happens to raise a few eyebrows. Especially in shepherding young people, you should have a certain expectation that every now and then they will say something for shock value, or they will slip in their commitment to focus more on the Word and will be heard to promote something unedifying in a public area of the Home. That probably wouldn't turn out to be a big issue for you as a shepherd, and you may not even follow up on it unless you hear of it happening again, or unless the comment made seems very serious. (9)

I'm sad to say that many kids who are doing poorly, or who have even left the Family altogether, feel that their parents lost faith for them. Then they lost faith for themselves. They needed their parents to hold on to them, no matter what. But when the parents let go, then the kids felt like I had let go, and they gave up.

Everyone needs someone in their life that understands them, loves them unconditionally, and never gives up on them. Love has creative power, and My love never gives up, never stops trying.

I beg you parents and shepherds, let Me break your hearts for these young ones that bring out the worst in you. You feel so righteous; you appear to be so obedient and good by comparison to the obvious and blatant sins of the young ones. In many cases, it is that very sin of self-righteousness that is impeding the spiritual growth of the children and teens in your care. They need you; they need your unconditional love, acceptance and support. They need you as a role model, a mentor, and a friend. They need to know that you love them and that you will never stop loving them.

Sometimes even if you don't understand why a young person is reacting a certain way, or you feel that that JETT

or teen is not living up to their potential or training and they're letting you down, that doesn't give you an excuse to let them down. As the parents and shepherds, I hold you responsible to let things pass without getting upset and certainly without giving up and showing a lack of faith or even contempt for the child. You are the adult; they are the children. You are strong spiritually and experienced in life. You should be able to sort things out with Me, so that you can unload any of your hurt, frustration, impatience or self-righteous pride before you interact with the young people who depend on you.

You need such strong faith and love that you're there for them, even when they've lost faith for themselves. No matter how hopeless they feel about themselves, even when they hate themselves, you need to demonstrate unchanging, constant, warm support and love!

You will find yourselves in situations where young people will feel they can't make it. Now that the standard of the Word has become much clearer, and the challenge of the "Conviction versus Compromise" series and the Feast messages have shown what I expect of the children of David, there will be young people who will lack faith that they can make it. Maybe they will even confess that they have doubts about some aspect of the Word, Mama and Peter, the Endtime, or Family doctrine. They might love the Family and desire to continue living in a Family Home, but they might be torn up inside, because they feel they're no longer worthy of that, because they feel like hypocrites. They'll feel their faith is not strong enough, and therefore they can't be My disciple.

The key in these situations is to see their desire. Beneath the declarations of their doubts and battles are they really saying, "I believe; can't you help my unbelief?" Are they finally coming clean about the battles they've had, possibly for a long time, wondering if there is any place for them, knowing that "to whom shall I go; you alone have the words of eternal life"? Are they looking to you with their last bit of hope, wondering how you'll react, hoping against hope that you'll have the faith to see them through, to help them over these obstacles and to answer their questions and give them what they need?

Dear loves, remember that the hearts of these young ones are tender and moldable. Even if they seem very strong in their feelings, even if they seem totally decided, once they've gotten things off their heart, if you pray desperately and don't prejudge the situation, you might be surprised at the will to believe in their hearts that is uncovered with time. Many young people are weighed down with unconfessed battles and sins. They have kept things inside for too long. But when they finally do get things out in the open, compelled by the conviction of the Holy Spirit brought about by the New Wine, then they have the chance to be strengthened.

Don't give up prematurely. Don't overreact and get upset. Don't be self-righteous and say, "I knew it all along!" Love, pray, understand, weep, support, and never give up! (10)

(Dad speaking:) Please have patience with the young people! Some just take longer than others to come around. Ask the Lord for a look inside their heart, to see if their heart is generally in the right place or not. If so, then pray and love them through. It's your responsibility as parents and shepherds to know the state of your flock. You don't want to be entertaining the Enemy in your midst, so you have to be able to discern the difference--whether it's simply the Enemy attacking, or a teenage phase your son or daughter or another young person is going through, or whether they're purposely making wrong choices and are headed out, and are just contaminating and polluting others in the process.

How can you know the state of your flocks? By asking the Lord, of course! What may look to you like a rotten apple could just be a desperately needy young person who's hoping for some shepherding and help. With a little love, prayer and determination, they could have a turnaround and you could find yourself with a solid and committed disciple on your hands. It's happened before, folks! Don't fail any of these young people by neglecting to hear the Lord's voice and receive His instruction for them personally. Amen? (11)

The saying is true, that trust is the basis of any relationship. I would that you would base your relationship with these young people on trust--that you should trust them and that they should trust you. For if you trust them in these little things, it shall increase their desire to trust you for the bigger things, for the duties that they will be called upon to perform, for the new revelations that they will be called upon to receive and to implement and to shepherd others on.

I am calling these to be bellwethers to the flock, bellwethers to their peers. In order to be bellwethers, they must follow the shepherd very closely, wherever he goes. They must stay very close to the shepherd in complete trust. They must trust that the shepherd knows where he is going. They must trust that when the shepherd turns to the right, it is the right way to go. Or when the shepherd turns to the left, that it is correct. They must not lean to their own understanding, analyzing, drawing their own conclusions, but they must trust that the shepherd is led of Me. For indeed, My queen and My king, who are their shepherds, are led of Me. And the greater amount of trust that they have in you, the better samples they will be, the better bellwethers to My flock.

Trust engenders more trust. So as you trust them in this thing, it shall engender their trust for you. Therefore make it clear to them that you are trusting them and that you are counting on them to not violate this trust.

For some it will be a test. For if you cannot trust them with these little things, how will you then trust them with the weightier matters of state? This will be your first step in building up their trust--your trust in them and their trust in you. (12)

Many of them (young people) stand at the threshold of the big old world, wondering which way to walk, which path to embark upon, and they feel quite lost. Some feel very hopeless, some are in despair. Some are very foolish and naïve, and some are full of fear and apprehension. They see ahead of them a great, great forest, and they know that each step that they will take is an unsure step and they know not which path to embark upon.

But there, on the horizon, is the shepherd standing next to the sheep. Though the shepherd's heart is aching and breaking for that one to enter back into the fold, to come back in where it is safe and warm, and where he can care for it and continue to lead and guide, yet he stands there beside this sheep, honoring and respecting his majesty of choice.

He sits down with him at the edge of this large forest. The shepherd pulls out a map and lays it in front of My dear wayward sheep. On this map are many instructions. The shepherd has been through the forest before, and has carefully marked each path that the sheep might walk on.

He has marked where each pit is, where each trap is, and he has carefully marked with bright colors where the enemy lurks. These dangers are the first thing he points out. "These are the things to watch out for. These are the things that I want to guard you from falling into and falling prey to. Do not go down these paths, for if you do, you will be consumed. But here, look carefully at the map. For here are several paths for you to choose from.

"I am your shepherd and I know you. I know your strengths and your weaknesses. I know enough about you that I am able to help you in choosing which path to walk. Though the final choices will be yours, I will counsel you and let you know which ones I think might be best suited for you.

"As we sit here at the edge of this vast forest, let us discuss for a while just what might work out the best for you. Through the gifts and talents that the Lord has given you, you can learn how to minister in your own special way. There is a purpose and meaning for your life. You've been given a precious heritage of faith, and you'll be expected by the Lord to make use of all that you've been given by striving to do good toward others, whatever your lifestyle or profession.

"Please, as you embark upon this trip into the forest, remember this: You were called and chosen. I ask you to not forget this. I will give you precious gifts from within the fold--gifts that you can take with you and use as the need arises, if you're willing to do so.

"I give you a bag that contains certain items that you will need to make your way. Firstly, there's a book, which as you open it, will give you instruction, even along the path that you have chosen. This book, which you have been taught from since your youth, contains answers, solutions, wisdom, and sound advice. Within this bag I have also placed a notebook of special memoirs. When you're lonely and when you feel in despair, open this and remember that you are dearly loved and cared for. Also within this bag is a compass. When you wonder which way to turn, it will guide you as to what is right or wrong. It always points 'north,' upward, to the path of truth and love.

"Upon your head has been placed a helmet, which will keep you connected to your Heavenly Shepherd. You can never lose this helmet, for it symbolizes your salvation and your eternal attachment to the One Who loves you above all others, and Who will never let go of you. And we, like Him, will love you always and never let go of you.

"Upon your feet I place special shoes. These shoes have been especially designed for the path that you will now walk upon. They're built for this rough and rugged terrain. Armed with this preparation, you'll be able to find sure footing, and will be able to sense if you're beginning to turn down a path that will lead to harm.

"Lastly, I place a special treasure within your hand. This is a priceless jewel, an elaborate transparent crystalline gem, which you can tuck deep within your heart. When you're in desperate need, when there's nowhere to turn, when there's no one with an answer, when you have not the wherewithal to fight, take this crystal from your bosom and it will provide the answer that you need. It's magical, and when you use it, it will help lift you from the low place or the place of confusion where you find yourself.

"Take these gifts with you now as you embark upon your journey. I love you, and we of the fold love you very, very dearly, and we want the best for you, as you go out and learn through experience.

"One thing that we and the Lord would ask of you is that you respect us, that you respect that we love you, and that you respect the gifts and training that we have given you. Hold on to them, for they are your heritage. Despise them not, for they will help you and they will see you through.

"You are not on your own. Though you embark on your own, you are not your own and you are not on your own. You still belong to Him. He's still the One Who is fashioning you. He's the One Who will bring you through your many experiences. He's the One Who will continue to teach you, lead you, and train you. He's the One Who has a perfect plan for you, no matter which path you embark upon.

"We will help you, but please help us and help yourself by saying, 'Yes, I will keep these things. These are my birthright and my heritage. I will respect them, and I will use them to the best of my ability.'"

The Book is My Word, their foundation of faith; the memoirs are the memories and thoughts and promises of love from their Family and friends. The compass is their conscience and the voice of My Holy Spirit in their heart. The helmet is their salvation, their eternal attachment to Me. The shoes upon their feet are the "preparation of the Gospel of peace"--including the practical preparation that you have given them to prepare to walk outside the fold, on their own. The last special treasure, the crystal, signifies spiritual communication. The gift of prophecy and of hearing My voice is still available to them, if they will open themselves up to receive it, and if they are desperate and hungry. [13]

Fear not, for not one that has been given to Me by My Heavenly Father will be lost. Neither will these ones who I have given you to love, care for, shepherd and parent be lost, either to Me or to you. They are Mine forever, and they are yours forever. Though they may stray from the fold, though they may wander through barren deserts, and even though they may find themselves trapped within the deepest pits of the System, they will in time be brought to feel My love and care, and see My hand work in their lives once again.

They will be Mine for eternity. Their souls are Mine, for I have bought and paid for them. Their spirits are Mine,

and have been washed and sanctified with My blood. Their hearts are Mine, and within them are planted seeds of faith and truth that will never die. If they will take even the smallest step in My direction, if they will let the voice of My Spirit within their hearts--even if they only admit to it being their conscience--guide them and direct their actions, and cause them to do loving, honest, helpful deeds, they will be rewarded and blessed accordingly.

Many of your youth will try out a variety of things for a time, and some of those things may be far from your liking or preference, and fall far short of My highest will. Yet rest assured that your love for them and your faithfulness to manifest that love by reaching out to communicate, to understand, and to do what is in your power to assist them will bring forth fruit.

Your love for them is a manifestation of My love for them, and as they feel and know that you love them, and yet see that your convictions and dedication remain steadfast and sure, they will love and respect you more, and Me as well. They may still travel their own path, but at least they will have an active link to Me and My Spirit, rather than attempting to fully disconnect the antenna and go totally on their own. If they will let Me into their lives, and if they let you into their lives--and they will if you will be patient, wise, and show them unconditional love--then their lives will be far better than if they had to go it alone.

I will work in their hearts to do what you cannot do if you will do what you can. You can show them you care in many ways, and manifest your love in word, in deed, and in prayer. My love works miracles; it changes hearts, it guides lives, and it makes life worth living. Whatever path they've chosen, help them see that their life is worth living, and they in turn will be motivated to make it so, and make the most of it. As they travel down the path of right and good, it's a path much closer to My highest path than the other options that would take them farther afield and downhill. The higher and closer path can easily lead back to the path of full-time service, if at any time they will open their hearts and accept their high calling once again. [14]


1. Jewels on Junior Teens, Part 1 #3439:34, 35, 54
2. Jewels on Junior Teens, Part 2 #3440:109-129
3. International Board News 2003 #3476:71
4. Jewels on Junior Teens, Part 1 #3439:61-66
5. Jewels on Junior Teens, Part 1 #3439:68-82
6. Shepherding Our Children and Young People! #3191:83-91
7. Jewels on Junior Teens, Part 2 #3440:96, 97
8. Shepherding Our Children and Young People! #3191:58-65
9. Shooting Straight, Part 18 #3592:55
10. Solutions for Shepherds, Parents and Everyone! #3389:43-51
11. Hold on to the Reins! #3239:82, 83
12. The Summit '96 Letters! Part 2 #3065:115-118
13. They'll Always Be Mine! Part 2 #3300:224-239
14. They'll Always Be Mine! Part 2 #3300:316-320