

Framing Values - Part B (3 of 8)

Daniel 1

Introduction

1. We are continuing our Extreme Home Makeover this week. Last week we talked about framing values for our young children. Today, I want to talk about framing values for your teenagers. A teenager is defined as the awkward stage where parents and their children speak different languages. Teens have always had their own lingo, and parents can never quite get it right. Moms and dads, we think we'll be cool by talking like our kids and we just end up sounding like idiots.

2.



(Five Pictures Total)

3. Millennials and teens get a lot of grief today. They feel entitled. They have a hard time making decisions. They want instant gratification. They are not very motivated. Some of this may be deserved, but I also think the case could be made that there is nothing wrong with the younger generation that we haven't done to them. We're the ones who gave them trophies and ribbons for accomplishing nothing. We're the ones who inflated their self-esteem without building it on anything of substance. We're the ones who were helicopter parents who provided them everything and protected them from failure at every turn.

4. The younger generation though is also giving us great signs of hope. They dream really big dreams. They value authenticity. They don't just want to talk about problems, they want to do something. They want to make an impact on a global scale. They are passionate about important causes and they will tackle issues with abandon. They want to work as teams and accomplish things together. Those are some things the body of Christ can and should get behind. Earlier this month, Compassion International, they are the Christian Ministry that sponsors needy children around the world, giving them, food, medicine,

education, and the good news of Jesus Christ; Compassion announced that all available children to be sponsored in four countries, El Salvador, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Indonesia were snatched up by 50,000 millennials at this year's Passion conference. That's awesome. Here's something else that I found from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Americans ages 20 to 34 are less likely to volunteer for charitable causes than those 35 to 64, but did you know that those 16 to 19 are more likely than both?ⁱ That's the kind of thing that will change the world.

5. As we continue our Extreme Home Makeover, I want to share with you how to frame values for our teenagers, not just so they can be good little church members, or good little Americans, but so they can be world changers. We are going to learn today from the greatest teenager ever discussed in the Bible. His name was Daniel and he changed his world.

7. In Daniel, though we do not read about his parents. He was snatched from his parents, taken from his family and sent into exile in Babylon. What we see are the results of his upbringing. We see the character and values his parent instilled in him. The old saying is often true, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." From what we know from history, and archaeology and all that they tell us about Babylonian practice, Daniel was about 15 years old when he was taken. The Daniel of the opening chapters of Daniel was just a high school kid.

8. We see in him the influence of parents who had framed values for this young teenager that produced a young man with great integrity and purity. I am sure every parent wants all of their children as they get into those teenage years and beyond to be young men and young women of integrity and purity and honesty. I want to share with you today from a biblical perspective how to do it.

I. What To Teach Your Teens

1. In this chapter there were four qualities that Daniel displayed that had to have come from his parents that we ought to be passing along and teaching to our own teenagers.

A. Conviction

1. A few years ago, *Readers Digest* commissioned a survey of teenagers. One of the questions they asked was this, "Are your values the same as your parents?" An amazing 76% said their values were basically the same as their parents. You have no choice mom and dad. Your teenager is basically going to adopt, for the most part, the values that you give to them. These aren't the values you say. These are the values you live. Evidently Daniel had been given

some core convictions by his parents that he could hold on to in a time of difficulty and temptation. From the very beginning of his time in Babylon, Daniel was tempted to compromise everything he had learned and everything he had lived from the time he was born.

2. Daniel was now in a pagan land. A land that had no room for God and no time for God. For the first time in his life, Daniel went to a school that did not begin each day with prayer. No longer were the Ten Commandments posted in the classroom. The very idea of God itself was totally rejected.

3. Every effort was being made to indoctrinate Daniel and his friends into a pagan way of thinking and a pagan way of living.

“Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.” (Daniel 1: 3-4, 6-7, NASB)

They changed their names from names that had godly meanings to names that had pagan meanings and then put them into their educational system to do everything they could to change their minds.

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| Daniel - God is my Judge | Belteshazzar - Bel protects his life |
| Hananiah - God is gracious | Shadrach - Command of Aku |
| Mishael - Who belongs to God | Meshach - Babylonian moon god |
| Azariah - Jehovah has helped | Abed-nego - Servant of Nebo |

Yet, Daniel wasn't threatened by these things because he knew who he was and he knew what he believed. The problem began in verse 5.

“The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.” (Daniel 1:5, NASB)

The pressure to fit in was intense. The temptation to just go along to get along had to be strong. But Daniel had strong moral convictions. His parents had instilled in him this powerful sense of what was right and wrong. This wasn't self-righteousness. Daniel didn't see himself as better than everyone else, but

he was convicted in his mind and determined in his heart that he wasn't going to break God's law. Right and wrong were not negotiable.

4. Daniel didn't mind going to their schools because he knew what he really believed. He didn't mind being called by their name, because he knew who he really was. But he knew where to draw the line.

"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank." (Daniel 1:8, NASB)

5. The reason why Daniel refused to eat the meat and drink the wine was this. First of all, much of the food would have been forbidden by the dietary laws that God had given to His people in the Old Testament.

6. Even more importantly, the meat and the wine had been dedicated to pagan idols and in Daniel's mind, to eat this food and drink this wine, would mean that he would be honoring a pagan god and pledging allegiance to that pagan god and Daniel refused to do it.

7. Every day your teenager is going to be hit with the hammer of compromise. The only thing that will stand against it is the wall of convictions that you have placed in their heart. One of the decisions you have to make is - What convictions are you going to pass down to your children? How are you going to guide them in making decisions when they are placed in tempting situations?

8. We began from our girl's earliest days to talk to them about our convictions as Christians. **It begins with the what**. Here is what is right and here is what is wrong. Then, as they get older we must move into **the why**. We didn't just explain what we thought was right wrong. We tried to explain why it was right or wrong. There is a reason we value purity. There is a reason we pursue faithfulness. There is a reason we why we always speak the truth and our words aren't filled with obscenity.

9. By they time they are teenagers you need to move beyond the what, and the why to **the who**. We pursue holiness, because God is a holy God. He says, "Be holy because I am holy." We speak truth because he is a God of truth. We love the unlovely, because he is a God of love. We forgive the sins of others, because God forgave us.

B. Character

1. You are going to see that each of these characteristics flows from the other one. Once your teen decides what convictions they believe, that will determine how they behave. Verse 8 says, *"Daniel resolved in his heart that he would not defile himself."* That's character. The KJV puts it this way, *"Daniel purposed in*

his heart."

Character is all about heart. The heart of your character is the character of your heart. It's who you are when no one is looking and it's who you are where no one looks. You are the person you are today, because of the character you became yesterday. The person you will be tomorrow is determined by the character that you have today.

2. Daniel had a choice and that choice revealed his character, because choices don't make character, choices reveal character.

3. Someone once said, "There is a choice you have to make in everything you do and you must always keep in mind the choice you make, makes you."

4. Let me tell you what I mean by character. Character is the will to do what God says is right, regardless of the consequences or the costs. Character is knowing what you're going to do, before you have to do it. The best way to handle temptation is not to make a decision when you are tempted, but to make a decision of what you will do before you face that temptation. Character is simply doing what is right because it is the right thing to do.

C. Courage

1. Daniel used one of the greatest words you can ever teach your teenager to say, "no." Have the kids say, "No." Know ahead time when and where you will say that word. Having the courage to say, "No" give you incredible freedom. You will never have to be the slave of what someone else wants you to do. Do you know why Daniel could say, "No?" Evidently his parents had taught him first to say, "Yes." He could say "no" to the world, because he had first said, "Yes" to God.

2. Even though this was a good decision, and the right decision the best decision, it was not an easy decision. It took tremendous courage for Daniel to say, "No."

3. Verse 8 tells us,
"So he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself." (Daniel 1:8, NASB)

This was no small thing Daniel was asking. Listen to verse 10.

"And the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the

king." (Daniel 1:10, NASB)

If Daniel's plan goes wrong, not only might it cost Daniel his life, but also the life of the official.

4. To refuse to eat at the king's table was an insult to the king. Furthermore, to refuse a direct order was an act of rebellion that carried the penalty of death. In other words, when Daniel said, "No" he was putting his life on the line.

5. There was an even greater pressure that Daniel faced. It is the greatest pressure any teenager faces and that's peer pressure. It wasn't just Daniel and his three friends. There were hundreds of Jewish teenagers that were there at that time. Daniel was the first and at that point, the only one to say, "No." Can you just imagine the conversation that went on?

6. His friends were saying, "Come on Daniel, everybody is doing it." Daniel said, "No, not everybody is doing it, because I'm not doing it." Somebody else said, "But Daniel, nobody will know." Daniel said, "God will know." Somebody else said, "Daniel, you've got to obey the king." Daniel said, "No, I've got to obey my God."

7. It takes conviction and character to say, "Yes" to God. It takes unbelievable courage to say, "No" to this world. Parents, you have to teach your kids to say, "No", but your teenagers have to learn to say, "No." We can't make them say it. I don't want you to sit there and feel guilty if you've got teenagers who haven't had the courage at the right time to say no. Just model that conviction, that character and that courage in your life. David Bly says, "Your children will become what you are; so be what you want them to be."

D. Courtesy

1. There is another trait in this event that a lot of people miss and that is courtesy. Daniel, even though he stood his ground, didn't do it arrogantly and he didn't do it rudely. He did it courteously.

"But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."
(Daniel 1: 11-13, NASB)

Did you notice what Daniel did? He didn't stage a protest. He didn't firebomb the banquet hall. He didn't threaten the king or the official. He just very quietly and graciously proposed an alternative. He was kind and considerate and

respectful in how he demonstrated the courage of his convictions. There's no reason why Christians have to be loud, and rude, and belligerent with our beliefs.

2. Daniel had been taught to be respectful to authority, even authority he didn't agree with. That is hard for teenagers. It doesn't come naturally. Listen to these words,

Our youth love luxury. They have bad manners. Contempt for authority. They show disrespect for their elders. Youth are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents. Gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.

Do you know who wrote that? Socrates - 400 B.C. Some things never change. In this day of bullying, instant gratification, live streaming doing your nails, flaming others online, an age where everyone's glued to their screen and where boys just text to pick up their dates and girls Instagram to breakup, we need to teach our teens to be courteous, to be kind, to display good manners, to be considerate, to be respectful of authority, even to those we may not agree with.

II. How To Reach Your Teens

1. You can't teach who you can't reach and you can't reach unless you teach. I want to give you three words to remember that I guarantee will help you reach your teenagers.

A. Love Them

1. Above all things your teenager has to know that your love for them is unconditional. They have to know that your love and acceptance of them is not based on good grades, athletic achievement, personal popularity, or perfect conduct.

2. Let me let you in on a little secret. Many of you in this room will be given the opportunity one day to prove to your teen that you love them unconditionally. If that daughter comes in and says, "Mom and Dad, I'm pregnant." Your love is on the line. When the police call and tell you that your son is in jail for driving under the influence, your love is on the line. When your teenagers make bad choices, poor decisions, and wrong moves, your love is on the line.

3. Long after their bad choices, poor decisions, and wrong moves are in the past, that teenager is going to remember one thing, when I needed my mom and dad most, did they stand by me and show me that they loved me?

4. I am not talking about ignoring the foolish choices your kid makes, but at the same time you condemn what a teenager does, you've got to affirm that your love for them and your loyalty to them is unconditional and that you are the first one that is willing to forgive them when they ask.

B. Listen to Them

1. The reason most teens don't talk to their parents is because they don't believe their parents listen. A teenager was asked when he thought of his father what did he see? He said, "A big mouth." When asked what he would like to see, he said, "A big ear."

2. I want you to know that I am guilty here and I plead guilty. The average parent is outstanding at lecturing, but very poor at listening. If you will give kids your ear, they will give you their heart.

3. Learn to listen. Learn not to interrupt. Learn not to jump to conclusions. Learn to give them space and what they want to say and what they need to say. When you learn to do that, you will be teaching your teenagers that when they need to talk to someone, they really can talk to you and they will know that when they talk to you, they are talking to someone who listens.

C. Lead Them

1. Your primary calling when your kids become teenagers is not to be their best buddy; it is still to be their parents. There are a lot of parents who reach those teenage years and they are afraid to set standards. They are afraid to set boundaries, because they are afraid they will offend their teenagers and they will build up walls with their teenagers.

2. Let me close with this whole matter of boundaries and taking a lead role in the lives of your teenagers. Psychologists working with young people discovered an interesting truth several years ago. Contemporary thought assumed that fences on playgrounds made the children feel restricted in their recreation. A consensus was then reached to remove the fences so children wouldn't feel confined.

3. Guess what? The opposite effect occurred. Researchers found that the children became more inhibited with their activities. They tended to huddle towards the middle of the playground and exhibited signs of insecurity. When the fences were replaced, the children played with greater enthusiasm and freedom.

4. Here is the truth. We all need boundaries. We all need something to define

the limits of safety and security. Boundaries don't limit freedom, boundaries give freedom.

5. As long as your teenager is in your home and under your authority, you not only have the right, you have the responsibility, to lead that teenager and to make certain that they lack the opportunity, much less the encouragement to engage in any type of behavior that would be wrong and out of bounds.

8. There is no such thing as a perfect parent, and Jesus was the only perfect teenager. Don't fret if you don't get all this stuff right. Don't give up thinking I've messed it all up. I haven't done this right. Who you are matters more than what you do. Being a good parent isn't about using the right technique or having the best system. It's about having the right heart.

ⁱ Feinauer, JJ (April, 13, 2015) Is There New Evidence That Millennials are Selfish, Uncharitable Parasites? Deseret News: Moneywise. Retrieved January 28, 2017
<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865626310/Is-there-new-evidence-that-millennials-are-selfish-uncharitable-parasites.html?pg=all>