

THE INSIDE RUNNING

The biggest challenge confronting Christian parents is how do I bring my children through to adulthood with a solid foundation of faith?

At Promise Keepers we have seen lives and relationships dramatically changed as fathers and sons focus together on the things of God.

We asked Karl to write of his experience because he and his wife Kate have tackled this head-on and they are living it out in a powerful way.

The one thing we can be sure of is that our children will be different from each other and need different approaches. I have learnt that the more children you have, the greater the range of differences you will encounter. How we build and maintain strong relationships is key. Relationship is the platform for everything else.

It's good to rejoice and enjoy the positives that can help you get through the challenging times. In those times, all we can do is pray that God keeps His hand on them, then do the best we can.

I appreciate inspiring examples of down-to-earth guys like Karl who show us that with a plan and motivation, it can all come together!

With gratitude



John Subritzky



Intentional Parenting

July 2015

by Karl Madsen

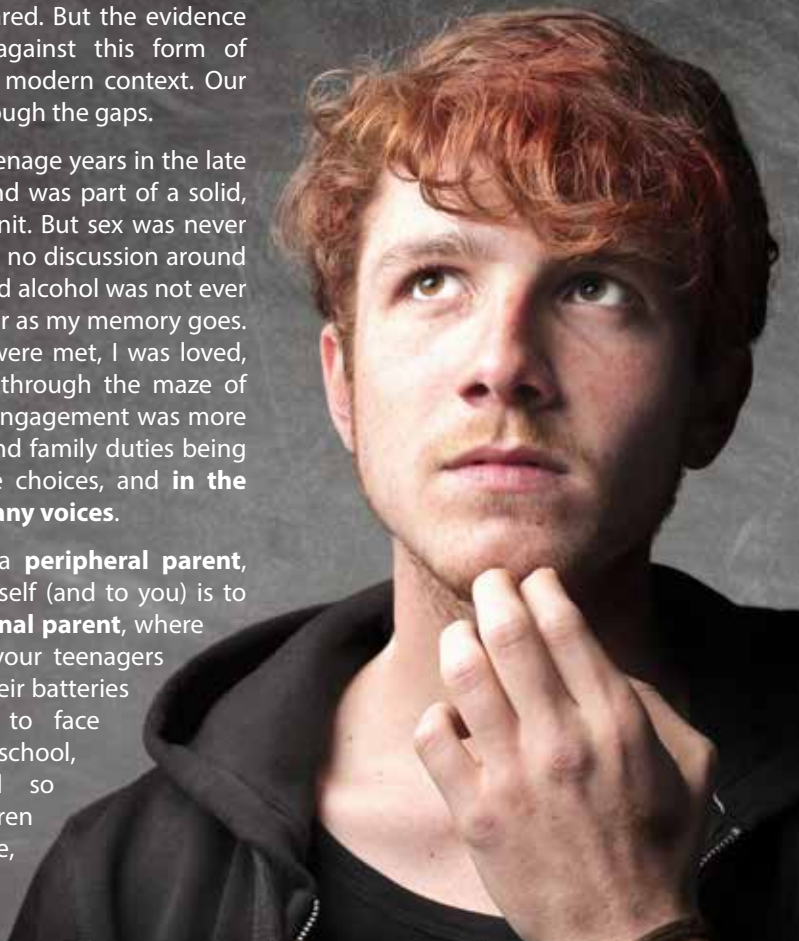
Peripheral parenting seems to be occurring in epidemic proportions. Mothers and fathers alike are hanging around the outskirts of their teenagers' lives, too worried about the potential loss of relationship should they ask too many questions or outline their expectations in regards to socialising, sex, substance use and abuse, study and sleep patterns, family values... the list goes on. Skirting around life issues is not a form of trust – it is simply abdicating from the role of parenting, and failing to responsibly coach our teens into adult behavioural patterns.

Much of the problem may stem from the fact that we were inadequately parented ourselves. For most of us, parental neglect - or lack of intimate involvement in our lives - was the norm. We were left to make our own decisions as young adults based upon values we had 'accidentally-on-purpose' bumped into during our childhood years. This may have been adequate for many of us in a different era, when common sense was common and values were shared. But the evidence is highly stacked against this form of parenting style in a modern context. Our youth are falling through the gaps.

I for one lived my teenage years in the late 70s and early 80s and was part of a solid, upstanding family unit. But sex was never spoken of, there was no discussion around gay relationships, and alcohol was not ever really discussed as far as my memory goes. My physical needs were met, I was loved, but never coached through the maze of teenage emotions. Engagement was more often than not around family duties being met rather than life choices, and **in the silence there are many voices.**

Rather than being a **peripheral parent**, my challenge to myself (and to you) is to become an **intentional parent**, where home is the place your teenagers come to recharge their batteries before going out to face a new assault at school, work, parties and so forth. As your children begin to mature, **they need to be**

plugged into a source of power and inspiration more than ever. Every day they are being bombarded with a smorgasbord of choices from 'what do I need to do to fit in and survive at school?' to 'should I reply to that girl's text message that she thinks I'm hot?' to 'how do I react to the boy in my class who told us all he was bi-sexual and had already slept with 3 boys and 3 girls so far this year?'





Having four sons and one daughter (three teenagers and two young adults - all living at home), I can assure you that the above encounters are real, and I could list many, many more. So how do we expect our teenagers to cope when some of these questions send our own minds reeling?

Do we really expect them to answer these issues on their own? Or perhaps we expect their educators to pick up on some of these things in health and wellbeing classes, trusting that their teaching stance will fit with our own view of sexuality and adolescent development. Or maybe we're glad that they are in a sports team, where the coach works them hard, teaches them discipline and we presume that these techniques will spill over into every area of our kids' lives, giving them added maturity when making decisions. We may send them to youth group or church in the hope that they will catch on to some good moral teaching and apply it to their lives.

In themselves these strategies are good, but not enough, and sometimes can become part of the problem itself - e.g. when kids are modelled excessive drinking in the rugby club, or rejected by a friend group at church.

This brings me back to the concept of peripheral parenting. We seem to be so focussed on increasing the level of independence and trust towards our teens (and they are pushing for it), that we confuse their bid for freedom with the thought that our parenting is done - unless of course they ask us for help. Ha! We all know usually the only time a teenager asks for help is when they need money for something, or can't find a clean school shirt. If you're a really fortunate parent, they'll call you when they've crashed the

car, their friend is having suicidal thoughts or they don't want to drive with someone who's been drinking to excess.

We feel them push back as they fight for an expression of self, wrongly reading it as parental rejection.

What if they need something from you but can't clearly communicate it or even understand it? Their feelings create a

paradox - they need freedom to express self, but they also need connection, and let's face it, so do we. This is a healthy tension if understood.

We need to be first to offer connection by **intentional action focused on intimacy**. So how do we create intimacy? Firstly, it's shaped through the lens of **understanding the individual** - meeting their emotional, spiritual need. Author Gary D Chapman's book *The 5 Love Languages* is a great place to start.

The question: do you really know the kids you're raising? **Have you fostered a loving bond so deep that you know their thoughts or feelings?**

You wouldn't expect a marriage to be meaningful or to last without this level of knowledge, so why any other relationship?

Intentional parenting is not only about being an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, but also a fence at the top, providing boundaries and instructions on how to do life better. But - we can only achieve this in the context of a loving relationship.

It is easy in the short term to be a peripheral parent, but the cost can be very high. **Intentional, relational parenting takes guts and backbone, time and time again, but the fruit of the labour is exceptionally sweet.**

We feel them push back as they fight for an expression of self, wrongly reading it as parental rejection



PROMISE #4

A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.

Next Issue: **GOD OF THE UNIVERSE**

REGISTER TODAY!

GO STRONGER...

GO HIGHER...

GO FURTHER...



Men's Events

CHRISTCHURCH 21-22 August | WELLINGTON 11-12 September | AUCKLAND 2-3 October

ph: 09 300 7337 | PO Box 163083, Lynfield, Auckland 1443, NZ
www.promisekeepers.org.nz | pk@promisekeepers.org.nz