

TEENS OF FAITH

Faith Memorial Church

Dear Parents,

Thank you for all the hard work you put in to being parents. I know that it is sometimes a thankless job that can have little immediate reward. The payoff comes in little bits and pieces and sometimes in ways you may hear nothing about. Although your teen is faced with countless moral choices each day, take comfort in knowing you are providing him or her with the standard from which to make these decisions. It is your unconditional love that allows your teenager to feel worth and value in what is an increasingly demanding and divisive world. You provide shelter and safety and a sense that everything is going to be okay at the end of the day.

I compare raising a teenager to a roller coaster in which the parent is the designer, the operator, and a fellow rider. As the designer, you have spent many years thinking about how to send your coaster riders on an exhilarating, but very short ride. You want them to not just exit the ride, but to walk away saying, "wow, what a great experience"! When something inevitably goes wrong, there are safety zones along the track that the attentive operator can activate to adjust speed or even stop the coaster entirely. There are many warning signs and safety precautions that you have strategically placed to protect the rider, but let's face it, some riders are going to do stupid stuff. Even though you have tried to think of everything, it is still a somewhat unpredictable and dangerous thrill ride that you chose to build.

The funny thing is that you are also a fellow rider on this roller coaster called adolescence. Through all the white-knuckled and fun-filled moments and all the screaming and sickness, you are there to provide the best care and protection that you can. More important than having loving caregivers during this adolescent journey, teenagers need a personal relationship with the Lord. Being connected to their Creator in these turbulent years gives them a compass for the present, lenses through which to see and make sense of the world, and a spiritual foundation that everything else will be built upon. In his book *Teenology*, Jim Burns writes that as parents,

...we set the spiritual pace for our kids, for good or for bad. In his excellent book on teen spirituality, Soul Searching, Christian Smith states, "Most teenagers and their parents may not realize it, but a lot of research in the sociology of religion suggests that the most important social influence in shaping young people's religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught by their parents." When you think about it, it makes sense. Teens with parents who attend church regularly will also be inclined to attend church regularly. With a healthy faith modeled from home, kids will naturally develop more of a faith mindset... The primary task of spiritual training comes from home, with the church having a very important role of coming alongside the family, not in place of the family.

The Teens of Faith ministry here at Faith Memorial Church exists to: 1) encourage and equip the spiritual life of the family, 2) provide meaningful gathering points for teens to fellowship and worship together, and 3) prepare our youth to share the gospel with their friends. Two ways that Faith Memorial Church "comes alongside" the family is in Sunday morning family worship and Wednesday evening children and

teen specific gatherings. These are unique times used by God to highlight and solidify what is being done in the walls of the home. Our attendance at Blitz has been the best it has been in over a decade. My prayer is that this same excitement among our youth families extends into our Sunday morning family worship involvement as well.

I thank God each week for the spiritual momentum that is happening among our teen group. We have a growing number of students excited to serve the Lord and to see what He might have planned for both their immediate and distant futures. I love our Blitz Wednesday night gatherings and the trips we take from time to time. We are making memories that will last a lifetime. With that said, there are two very important announcements pertaining to this Wednesday night and our biggest event of the year. So, if you are still reading, here they are:

The HOLINESS SUMMIT ends this Wednesday night, Oct. 17th. We have been having special services each night Sunday through Wednesday. Instead of the regular groups, like BLITZ, that would typically meet on Wednesday night, EVERYONE is encouraged to come together at 7pm in the main sanctuary for a closing celebration. My hope is that ALL the regular Wednesday night teens and many parents will attend. FOOD (Lasagna) will be served at 6pm in Benner.

ALSO

TEEN FALL RETREAT is only a few weeks away. To take advantage of the lower price, simply fill out the enclosed Medical/Registration form and return it with a \$30 payment on or before Oct. 24. Check out last year's highlight video at Faithm.ch. I don't want any of our teens to miss out on this flagship event. Please let me know if financial help is needed. Fall Retreat is a blast! Most of our teens go each year, so encourage your teenager to make plans to attend.

Thank you, parents! Know that you are loved and are prayed for often.