



WE'RE TEACHING THIS

Have you ever thought about how many times a day you switch things on or off? The lights. Your alarm. Your hair dryer. Your phone. The TV. But have you ever thought about your faith as having an on or off switch, too? Sometimes it's really hard to keep our faith switched "on" all the time. No matter how big our faith in God is, sometimes we all face things that make it difficult to have faith in God. Sometimes those things can become so big that they actually "turn off" our faith. Kind of like a switch. Guilt. Doubt. Judgment. Even

our feelings. All of these things have the ability, in some way, to switch off our faith. But what if they didn't have to? What if these things had the ability to switch "on" our faith instead? In this series, we'll take a look at the life of Peter—a man who is known today as having great faith in God—because when Peter wrestled with guilt, doubt, judgment, and even his own feelings, he found a way to let each of those things switch his faith "on" instead of switching it "off."

THINK ABOUT THIS

By Carey Nieuwhof

So, let's just start by saying I'm not the most mechanically inclined person. But somehow that doesn't exempt me from owning a garage filled with small engines: a snowblower, lawnmower, leaf blower, weed trimmer, and the like.

My technique for starting these machines is always the same: push the buttons and pull hard on the pull-cord. When that works, I'm off and running. When it doesn't, I try the exact same things again. Then, I give up or call my friend John who fixes these kinds of things to tell him they're broken.

More often than I'd like to admit, my friend John has come over only to tell me that my lawn mower wasn't actually broken. I just needed a new approach. Sometimes I need to remember to adjust the choke, or try priming it again, or

even to leave it because I flooded it. And then...like magic, it started because I tried something new.

Teenagers are a bit like that.

When they don't respond at age 15 to the things they responded to at age 10, we're tempted to just try harder. But saying the same things more loudly, or trying the same tactics again and again won't always turn things around.

After all, the teen years take away some of a parent's favorite opportunities to connect, like bedtime stories and pick ups from school. So what do you do? **Change your strategy.**

If you want to get through to your teenager, here are some

ways to connect that are unique to the teen years:

BE AROUND

Sometimes parents are tempted to buy their kids affection or attention. Losing your 13 year old? It's easy to think you can win their heart with a new iPhone.

As a parent, never substitute a present for your presence.

In fact, one of the greatest gifts you can give your teenager is your presence—simply being around.

It's the unscripted moments that will often produce the greatest conversations. A parent who's always in the kitchen or around the house is just far more likely to have meaningful interactions with their kids.

No one expects it, but parenting a teenager may actually take more time than parenting a toddler.

Even if your kids don't feel like talking to you, they're glad you're around. So be around.

EAT TOGETHER

As your kids get older, it's easier to let them fend for themselves at supper. Don't. Plan family meals. And eat them *together*.

Even though I led a busy church throughout my kids teen years, wrote, traveled, and my wife worked, we almost always had supper together five nights a week when my kids were in high school. Why? Because we made it a priority.

Sometimes the meals were 10 minutes long (I have sons, after all...), but they were an anchor point for our family. We prayed together. We talked. And still today at 24 and 20, my kids

love to get together for family meals.

LEVERAGE DRIVE TIME

Some of the very best conversations I've had (and still have) with my sons happen when we're driving somewhere.

Being beside each other in the car is a lot less intimidating than sitting down for a "talk." It's actually easier to be vulnerable and honest when you've got an hour on the road together with little more to do than chat than it is if you're trying to make a conversation elsewhere.

Whenever my kids needed a ride somewhere, I was anxious to take them. And eventually, I let them drive me places. Whatever it took to get us in the car together, I did.

TAKE A DAY OFF WITH THEM

Throughout high school, I'd invite my sons to take a day off school. I'd take a day off work and we'd spend the day together.

And I get it. This feels so wrong. School is important, after all. But sometimes a day off is just what is needed to reactivate a relationship with your teenager.

What we did on those days mattered way less than the fact that we just took some time to be together. Sometimes it was shopping. Sometimes it was a road trip. Sometimes we just got ice cream and talked about life. The goal wasn't to accomplish anything in particular other than letting my kids know the most important thing on my calendar was them.

One day, all you'll have left with your kids is relationship. So take time to build the relationship. And when it feels like it isn't working, try a new strategy.

TRY THIS

Breaking a pattern is sometimes the hardest thing we can do. And that is especially true in parenting. We fall into patterns and habits of connecting with our kids, but as they grow some of those techniques won't work as well as we used to. And, sometimes starting a new habit is exactly what we need to reactivate a relationship with our kids at this phase.

This week, commit to focus on one of the four strategies that Carey talked about above.

- Be Around
- Eat Together

- Leverage Drive Time
- Take a Day Off With Them

Commit to focusing on bonding with your student in this way, and then **set a recurring reminder on your calendar to do it.**

Maybe for you that means scheduling time to just be at home with no to-do list or maybe it's scheduling a family dinner. Maybe it's planning to take your student on a road trip.

Whatever it is, plan for it and make it a priority. Your son or daughter will notice and it may just activate your relationship with them in a whole new way.