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A Letter for the High School Years

JULY 24, 2023 • WRITTEN BY MISSIE BRANCH

Sincerely

Dear Mom,

I see you. These teenage years are not for the faint of heart, even if your baby is an angel. It takes courage to face the driving lessons, ever-changing technologies, social media struggles, prom dates, graduations, costs associated with feeding and clothing growing frames, braces, hormones, senior photos, activities, curfews, and the list of “last times.” You are stronger than you even know!!

With this season comes many emotions. You will be wise to process your own as you assist your teens through theirs. They are recognizing that they are no longer “little kids” and need guidance as they learn to express emotion appropriately. This is the season to be with them in their anxiety and to be willing to talk about some of your own. As mom, you may need to help your teenagers learn to process grief and to lean into the gratitude that it can produce. Work hard to honor their experiences, reminding them of their life stories as you thoughtfully share and honor your own.

I personally had to work through many different emotions in this stage of mothering. I remember the low-level anxiety of realizing how quickly the time

had flown. The feelings of fear that the time left to be the “day-to-day” mom my kids needed was fleeting. The twinge of guilt wondering if I had said enough, done enough, or prayed enough. The worry that I hadn’t made all the right choices as I looked at the young adults developing right before my eyes. The frustration of wishing I could make their life’s important choices for them. I also remember having to acknowledge that I was grieving the end of my years of childbearing as I was surrounded by so many new moms around me. I remember, and I see you.

Through those roller-coaster years, I wish I had been more committed to making our home a place of shalom. Home should provide us with peace and safety. But in our home, I didn’t always remember to treat each of my children as an individual. This is necessary for each of them to see home as their own place of refuge. Being a teenager can be disorienting—transitioning from the carefree fun of childhood while not yet free enough to be considered an adult. Home should be the spot where our kids’ questions are safe, their feelings are allowed to be shared, and their doubts are welcomed to be processed, as we know that the world is working to enlist them into its own agenda.



Please mom—be diligent to embrace the joy in this season. It's so easy to forget that when you are caught up in the routine of everyday life. Enjoy the increasing bits of freedom that you get to experience as your teens embrace their growing independence. Savor the sweet victories, celebrate every display of kindness, relish each smart choice they make, and honor every sincere apology. Teach your teens to love others by both watching and helping you cheerfully serve people in your family, community, and church. Teach them to show honor to elders, to respect others, and to recognize authority as God-given. Take interest in friends and fun activities in their world. Be willing to learn about the things that your teens love to create more opportunities to be connected. Quality is as important as quantity, so enjoy the time you can get and capitalize on it. Remember you are a mom: the Maker of Moments!

Looking back on those high school years, I'm glad that I challenged each of my children to cultivate their own faith. We were committed to not giving them a spiritual pass because they lived in our home. We believed that our responsibility was to train all four of them to go out into the world and operate as productive, engaged servant leaders who would glorify the Lord with their lives. Your prayer for your teens should be that they develop an understanding of their faith that is not connected to yours.

In all of this, God sees you. Parenting your child through their teenage years is a part of the work that he has given you. [Micah 6:8](#) reminds us of what God requires—"to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God." This is our call while parenting teens as much as it is in ministry or at work. Doing this beautiful work successfully requires responsibility and intentionality to lead them well. As parents, we are stewards of the Lord's treasures. Whether you are the mom of an easygoing Nobel-prize-winning peacemaker or a headstrong future lawyer, remember: your precious children are a gift to you and, more importantly, a gift to the world. We have never owned our kids, and we can't keep them to ourselves.

Micah teaches us to model an authentic Christianity that is far from perfect and clearly dependent. Practically, it's learning to exercise a self-controlled lifestyle. It's editing our words so that we do not say or do things that will distract our teens from Christ. It means stepping back in humility and waiting on the Lord to see who our kids are becoming. It's growing to be a patient caregiver, an engaged

teacher, an invested cheerleader, and a committed prayer warrior. The Lord is invested in the highs of your mountaintops and the lows of your valleys. Look to him for the strength for your journey.

God has a design for all relationships—including the ones between you and your teens. It is healthy when you can learn from each other, but you are responsible for training them. They are still maturing into young adulthood and what they think isn't always true. Remember that no mom in any generation before us has had to learn to parent children who have as much access to technology and information as ours do today. None of us have all the answers, but I want to encourage you that God sees you and offers you grace. Ask the Lord for his wisdom to parent your teens as you navigate these new challenges.

Mom, you are a leader, and your home is your area of influence. Use this sway to build trust. You will never regret having invested in your own spiritual growth as a means to invest in your teens'. The good news is this "parenting teens gig" is not all up to us. That is both humbling and refreshing. As a mom who had four teenagers in the home at one time, I have rested in these two truths: God's grace is more than abundant, and he loves my children even more than me. Your role as mom is ever evolving, but, like your walk with Christ, though you may not know what is coming next, you can trust that God is able to use it. Who your teens are now is not who they will be. Your job is to remind them of who they can be as they grow in connection to him.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in a cursive script that reads "Missie". The signature is written in dark ink and has a fluid, personal feel.

Missie Branch

Capturing the Moment:

Below are a few prompts from the author for activities that might be especially meaningful in this season or memories that she appreciates now, looking back. We hope these serve as a helpful springboard as you prayerfully consider how to “number your days” ([Ps. 90:12](#)) and make the most of the moments God gives:

Personal Proverbs. Study the book of Proverbs with your teen. When it is over, have them write their own proverbs to put in a time capsule to look back on in the future. You can add proverbs that you have written as well.

Bilingual Bible Verses. Challenge yourself and your teen by learning favorite verses in another language. American Sign Language is fun, but any language that interests you both will help keep you motivated.

Creative Conversations. Create a notebook for each child that you use to write notes and ask and answer questions. This allows them the opportunity to be honest without the pressure of an emotional moment. I have started by asking my kids about their relationships and allowed the conversations to grow from there. We leave the notebooks on each other’s pillow when done and try to respond within two days. You know your teen and your schedule; tweak this to fit what works for you.



Missie Branch

Missie Branch serves as Asst. Dean of Students to Women and Director of Graduate Life at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in NC. She is also currently a student there, completing her graduate degree in Ethics, Theology, and Culture. Missie is married to Duce Branch and together they have four

children. She is passionate about women seeing themselves as theologians and disciples first. Missie is a contributing author to **The Whole Woman: Ministering to Her Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength** and the co-host of the **Women & Work Podcast**. Currently, Missie is serving as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Lifeway Christian Resources.

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