

Back to school woes

Dan Nelson - pastor

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Pencils, paper and textbooks stuffed into backpacks. New clothes, fresh haircuts, and worried looks on people's faces. Class schedules, new teachers, and old friends ...

The school bell rings as you are getting out of the car. Your heart jumps in sudden fear that you are late. Glancing at the clock on the stereo in the dashboard you quickly settle into the reminder that it was only the five-minute warning. Saying goodbye to our mom, she wishes you well and you turn to face your doom or destiny. It is the first day of school and summer is officially over. A weird brew of anticipation and excitement mixed with apprehension and adventure is stirring in the pit of your stomach. Your mouth suddenly feels dry as you take the first few steps toward the hustle and bustle, which has already begun, on campus. You recognize somebody far up ahead of you, backpack in tow, clearly going somewhere. Hundreds of thoughts flash through your mind like lightning, each requiring snap decisions. Should I callout to my friend or run to catch up with him? What will he think? What if I drop my books? Where is the drinking fountain? Do I have time to stop by my locker? Don't be late. How do I look? I wish I didn't have to get a haircut. You try to brush away the myriad of distractions, take a deep breath, and press forward. As you walk through the crowd you feel a bit euphoric, almost mesmerized, like you are watching everything happening in a movie in slow motion. You arrive in class and find your way to a seat, a bit disengaged and feeling blank, wondering how you got there. The screech of the bell wakes you from your stupor and you realize that somehow you made it through the first five minutes and there is no turning back.

A bit dramatic, you may think. I don't think I even came close, nor would I have enough space without writing an entire novel, to describing the multidimensional dilemmas that many young people face almost every moment of every day in their regular dramas we call their social education. I hope my opening narrative sparked a memory of yours, however, from your school experience that really allows a flood of remembrance that breeds compassion and understanding toward what our kids go through regularly in their learning to interact. Peer pressures can be strong. Priorities can flip-flop moment by moment. The desire to be liked can drive behaviors, dress and attitudes. And tragically, clear guidance can be fleeting.

Our children need to be given direction, training and help. They need you in order to make the right decisions. If you allow your child to make the decisions that you should have made for them, chances are they will make the wrong ones. If you do not counsel them on the choices that they must make for themselves, then they are alone when they should have your support. Did you know that one of the primary drivers motivating teenagers is their need to feel trusted? They say and do many things to encourage you to trust them to make the right decisions. But many teenagers are not being taught to be worthy of trust. So the parents are in

relational conflict with their children. The teen is making bad doesn't know what to do. We reap what we sow.

We live in the age of the disengaged parent. Make no mistake; if we allow television to raise our children, this is where they will get their values. If video games replace family interaction and myspace.com is the place our teens go to for social affirmation, we will pay the price for the cheap substitute for what should have happened in the family. We shouldn't be surprised when they won't listen to advice from someone who wasn't there for them.

Please allow me to write openly to you. The reason many parents feel lost in their role is because they refuse to go to their source of wisdom, the author of marriage, family and parenting, God himself. The Bible is full of answers if only every parent would devour the Scriptures like it was their favorite sport or TV program and as though it mattered for life success (because it does). Child and teenage rebellion doesn't have to happen. Families don't have to break down. It could be different. Jesus came to bring hope to people; all of us.

As we start another school year with apprehensions and uncertainties, hopes and dreams for the very best for our children, let's look to God for our source of wisdom and help, strength and answers. May God bless every parent with his spirit to guide them as we call upon him, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Ojai Valley News