

## Solid Foundations

FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

By Mrs. Iva Nell Rhea



Dr. James Dobson notes three critical tasks that usually take place during the young teen years: the pressure to conform to a larger social group, the struggle to accept or reject instruction and values, and the formation of personal identity.

To grapple with these issues is a God-ordained function of growing up, yet there may be moments of challenge at school and home regarding these elements. In order to successfully take on the demands of adulthood, a student must begin to deal with these important developmental milestones. How can parents and teachers pave the way for



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our young adolescents as they struggle with new aspects of life? How can we help them emerge from the turmoil of their youth with a solid faith, meaningful self-awareness, and strong biblical values? I would like to suggest two ways that parents and teachers can provide a solid foundation for the road ahead.

First, we must be men and women of integrity. The dictionary defines integrity as “firm adherence to a code of moral values” and “the quality of being complete or undivided.” It is easy to compromise and cut corners in our personal “closets” where we think no one will ever see; however, our teenagers’ watchful eyes see more than we know or imagine. Sadly many of our children have learned their parents’ generation’s habit of compromise and compartmentalization. Frequently there is no attempt to hide the duplicity. Mark 12:30 tells believers to love the Lord your God with all you are, have, do, and ever will be. That is consistency, wholeness, completeness... integrity. An integrated life is one where words, thoughts, and actions call out in one accord that Jesus is Lord.

Another way that we can pave the way for the next generation is to prepare them for wise decision-making. Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller in their book *Home Improvement* point out that “children outgrow rules, but they don’t outgrow values.” The ability to make good decisions is strongly tied to values. Too often students hear about rules, but don’t understand the biblical principles behind the rules. Proverbs 3:3 instructs:

*“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.”*

Taking time to talk about the value behind the rule provides children the wisdom they will need when they have the freedom to make their own decisions. It is crucial that our children know “the WHY” behind the rules we have created either at home or in the school environment. Biblical values formed in childhood will guide young adults to wise decision-making. Talking openly about the reasons for the rules takes practice, but it makes an impact that will outlive the rules themselves.

I am honored to work each day with men and women who demonstrate a life of integrity, a life sold-out to the Lordship of Jesus. They reflect their faith as they deal with student discipline, subjects in their classrooms, and relationships with colleagues and parents. They emphasize the WHY as they speak to students about dress code, lunch room behavior, keeping a neat backpack, thoughtless remarks to a classmate, or being a good steward of the talents given from God. The middle school years are a unique challenge, but together we can see an emerging generation of warriors being honed by God.