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HOME Where They Belong

Gena Suarez, co-Publisher, The Old Schoolhouse Magazine

I have two teen boys - soon to be three. Levi turns 13 years old this Valentine's Day. Amazing. Three teens in my house. I've entered a new phase; a new chapter in my life is unfolding. And I LOVE it.

When Paul and I were engaged, we went to a pizza place once. We were discussing our future together, in particular, our forthcoming children should the Lord bless us with any. I thought I was so smart, so savvy. I was this 19 year old kid, chomping at the bit to be married and someday become a mom - but I was clueless. I announced to Paul on that pizza date that when our children become teens, that yes, they would be rebellious (like all teens - like ME) but that we would just do our best, and hopefully relate with them.

WRONG. Boy, did Paul set me straight at that very moment. He announced back to ME, that no, our future kids did NOT need to be rebellious and that if we trained them up in the Lord, we could skip all that rebellious nonsense. I looked at my future husband skeptically (what a goof I was). I gave him a, 'Well, we'll seeeeee' look. Sure, dear. You just keep thinking positively.

Guess what. He was right. 100% correct. My older, wiser, soon-to-be husband knew the truth. He knew God's word. He blew off the world's way of thinking and insisted that I must, too. So many years have passed. My word, three teen boys live in my home! My quiet home. My God-honoring home. Are my boys perfect? Oh...far from it. Do they fear the Lord? Do they respect Paul and me? Do they love each other? Do we have their hearts? YES. You want the "secret?" Here it is: Shelter them. They're yours, gifted by God. Train them up in the admonition of the Lord. Keep them near you. Expect obedience, insist on it. Hold them accountable. Give them lots of responsibilities - and plenty of space. But keep your eyeballs fastened tightly to that space. The key is relationship, too. Be interested in them. Let them drone on and on about their latest software application or musical composition (Paul and Luke, respectively, there!). Love them but not as a pansy best friend. Love them with strength and resolve. With seriousness, firmness. They'll thank you for it later, and you will be blessed. God's way (His word) is always the best way.

- Gena

Touching the Next Generation

Nancy Carter, Senior Editor, HomeschoolBlogger.com

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

Many people just expect the high school years to be horrible. In fact, even if you've got pretty good kids, many people seem determined to tell you that it won't stay that way - that your kids are going to be rebellious monsters and treat you like you're an idiot. But I'm seeing something different. I'm seeing a generation of homeschool teens that are showing others that teens can be responsible, respectful, bright, and caring. And their families are giving other families hope.

As Chris Klicka says, many of us were taught to believe as Christians, but to think like the world in the public school setting. But our kids have the benefit of being taught to live and think with a biblical worldview. And that's making a difference already. I remember how seeing homeschooled teens helped me to envision how my children's teen years could be different than my own. And I know other families who have decided to homeschool after meeting some wonderful homeschool teens.

Not only do we as homeschooling moms have the power to reach the next generation with our own children, but our teens can too. Don't give up homeschooling just because you're hitting the high school years. Stay the course, enjoy the fruits of your labor, and light the way for others.

- Nancy

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Jenefer Igarashi, Senior Editor, The Old Schoolhouse Magazine

When I was a young mom, I lived in an apartment building with my husband and two young children (Coie was 5 and Ryann was 1 – the other four were not yet born). There was an old woman who lived next door who liked to come over and visit. She had hardly any teeth and would chew tobacco and mutter about depressing things and generally insult me (and my sister when she'd come over). I felt bad for this woman and for the most part I didn't take anything she said to heart. But one thing that she said, in particular, stuck with me. She was watching my little kids tumble around on the floor and turned to me and said, "When they're little they trample on your feet, and when they're teenagers they'll trample on your heart." I shook my head and told her, "No, they won't. I do not believe teenagers have to go through a 'rebellious' stage." She just laughed and shook her head and told me, "Well, that's what you say now.

We'll see what you say when they're bigger!"

I've lost touch with that old bitter woman. She may be gone altogether now. But she was wrong. All teenagers do not grow up and curse their parents. My teenagers bring more joy, help, laughter and benefit to our home that I could have ever imagined. The world tells us otherwise, but it is a lie. Train your children when they are young, capture their hearts, keep bad influences out (yes, shelter them!), show them who God is and what He has personally saved you from. They will grow up and bless you. I am not alone in this thinking. I know many families (and you probably do too!) who have gracious, helpful, teens who are total blessings. Homeschooling has been a great means to build and sculpt our family. It is not the 'magic answer', but it provides an environment that has helped our family flourish. If you have little children, be encouraged! Life only gets better and better as they get older.

– Jen Ig

Gena Suarez resides in Tennessee where she and her husband, Paul, homeschool their four children: Paul, Luke, Levi and Julia Rachel. They enjoy long country drives while listening to books on CD, hanging out with good friends, and staying up late. Visit her at <http://www.HomeschoolBlogger.com/TOSPublisher>

Jenefer Igarashi lives in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee with her husband, Geoff, and their six children, ages 18 years to 3 years. Jen enjoys writing fiction and has won two awards from "Writer's Digest". The whole family enjoys construction projects, good books, and jumping on their trampoline. Come say hi to Jen on her blog at <http://www.HomeschoolBlogger.com/JenIg>

Nancy Carter, Senior Editor for HomesteadBlogger.com, is a homesteading, homeschooling wife and mother of three sons. She enjoys blogging with the other homesteaders at <http://www.HomesteadBlogger.com/HSBFrontPorch> and writing for The Natural Schoolhouse. Her family enjoys a lifestyle of learning on their farm in Kentucky.