

The 12-Keys to Ministering to a Teenage Girl Effectively

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1. Demonstrate what it looks like to be a true follower of Christ.

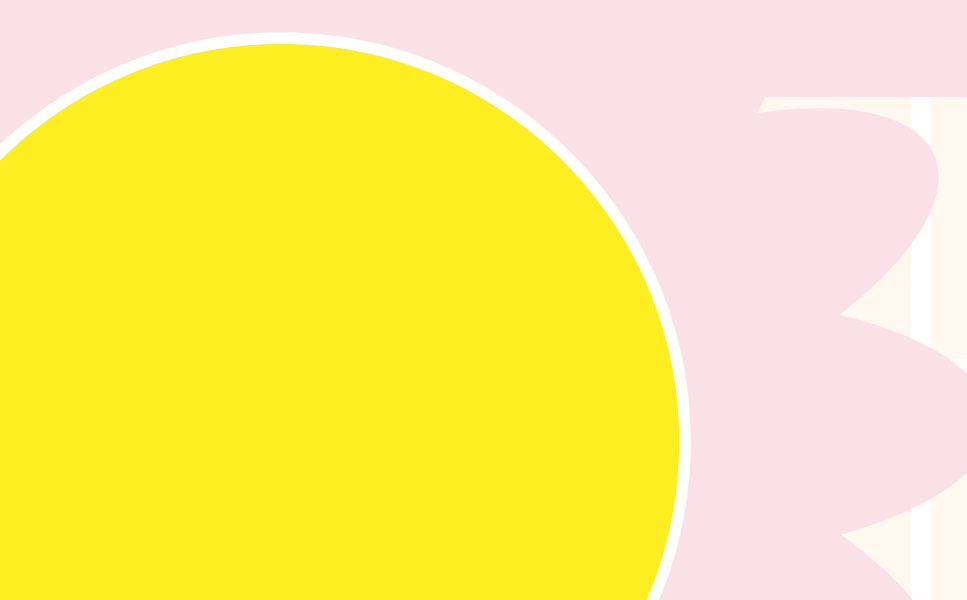
This does not mean we are perfect. In fact, it means quite the opposite. This means that we are real about our imperfections, honest about our shortcomings, and straightforward about our need for a Savior. When the girls around us see that we are just as in need of a Savior, as they are, this Christ-follower thing doesn't seem quite so intimidating. Now, although this means we are not perfect, it also means that we are called to a higher standard. As leaders to teenage girls, we must live a life above reproach. Again, not perfection. But, a consistent pursuit of Christ-like living through the power of the Spirit.

2. Guide her by the Word of God.

Girls' ministry can often turn into what looks like hours of counseling sessions with Dr. Phil. Your job as a girls' ministry leader is not to solve all of their problems. You do not have to be a certified counselor - and don't act like you are one. You are to disciple young women through the guidance of the Word of God. His Word is our compass for living. Direct them with and through the relevant, unchanging Word of God.

3. Empathy is key.

When empathy is not your reigning heartbeat in ministry, you will miss out on opportunities to demonstrate the comfort of Christ. Sometimes their problems might seem so small to us, but to them these problems are earth shattering. Empathize with them. Channel your 15-year-old emotions, and remember what it felt like to have your heart broken, to feel left out, to be bullied, to feel peer-pressured. When teenagers feel understood, their barriers begin to fall, and your access to minister to their malleable hearts opens wide.





4. Listen and be present.

This point goes hand-in-hand with my last point. Through your empathetic and understanding heart, and your willingness to listen and be fully-engaged and present, you build a trust with the teenage girls around you that is powerful and invaluable. As women, we all have probably said at one point or another, “You don’t have to fix my problems. I just want to be heard.” We all just want someone to listen to us. I do a lot of listening as a Girls’ Minister. I am often noting ways to advise throughout the conversation, but I wait for the appropriate time to give that advice. Many times, girls don’t need to hear what I have to say, they know the Truth, they know the right thing to do, they already feel the conviction, they just want to be heard. They just want to be understood. They just want to feel like someone cares. You are that person. Give the girls your time. Show them that you want to hear what is going on in their lives. You want to listen. Being available, being present, and listening is powerful.

5. Intercede on her behalf.

Oftentimes, while listening to girls, I am simultaneously praying for them. “Lord, open her eyes to see this from Your perspective...Father, release her from the chains of this burden that clearly have her enslaved...Savior, rescue this sweet girl from the darkness of this sin...Creator, show her the value of her life.” Pray for the girls in your life. Plead to God on their behalf. I have seen the mighty power of prayer alter the pathway of many girls’ lives to realign them with God’s heart for their lives. He is faithful. Pray.

6. Do not hold on to her burdens.

As a girls’ ministry leader, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the burdens of your girls. This does NO ONE any good. Learn to place your girls in the hands of the Almighty God. There is no safer place to be. Hand them over to Jesus. Trust Him with their lives.





7. Share life with her.

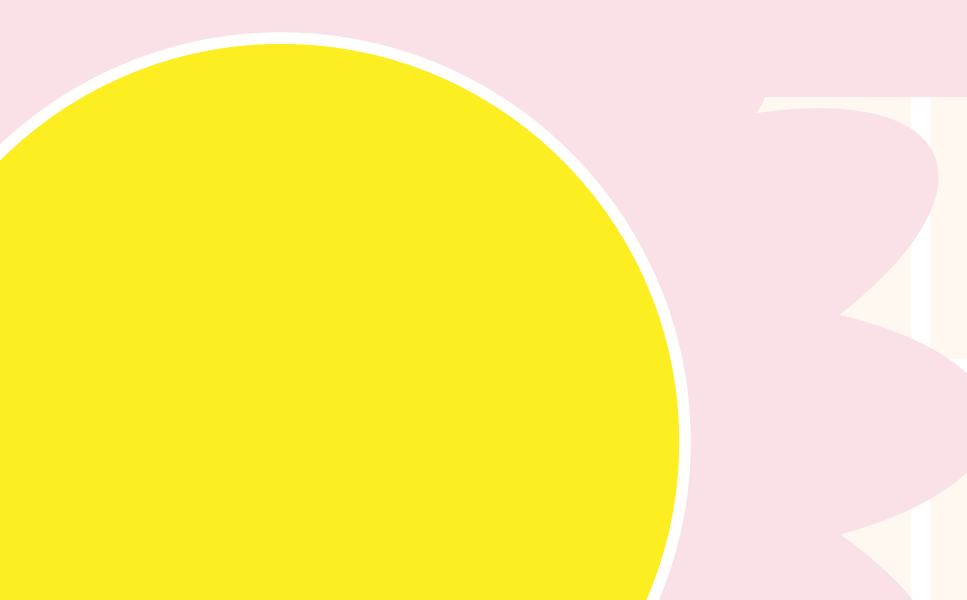
Invite them into your home. Have them over to watch movies. Have them over for a fun meal. Laugh with them. Joke with them. Cry with them. Do life with them. Go to a coffee shop with them. Go to their athletic events. Go to their choir concerts. Go to their musicals. Go to their academic competitions. Let them text you any time, day or night. (Yes, make appropriate boundaries, but be available.) Spend time with them outside of church. Show them that you are invested in every area of their lives.

8. Your job is NOT to convict her of her sin.

You are not the Holy Spirit. Keep your girls accountable, yes. But, do not become discouraged when they are not convicted of sin. Once again, hand each girl over to God. Trust Him with their lives. Intercede on her behalf. Leave the rest to Him. As much as you want to CHANGE them, you cannot. Only He can. Stay diligent. Do not become discouraged. Press on.

9. Speak truth over her life.

Tell her who she is in Christ. Tell her all that you see in her. Time and time again, I see girls begin to live up to these truths: "I see you as a leader...You are wise beyond your years...You are kind and compassionate...You influence others...People are drawn to you, be the person who includes others...You radiate joy." When we speak these truths into their lives, they begin to believe that these things are really true, and they start to live up to the truth. The Enemy is speaking lies into their ears. Combat those lies, by speaking Truth into them.





10. Don't be shocked by her struggles.

What is your response when a girl tells you she's addicted to pornography? When she tells you she got drunk the night before and slept with a guy she didn't even know? When she tells you she smoked marijuana? When she tells you about the self-harm she has done? When she tells you she's bulimic? Please, do not act shocked. Do not act disgusted. Inside you may be screaming, "Noooo!!!" But, look her in the eyes and tell her, "I love you. We're going to walk through this together. There is hope. There is healing. There is forgiveness in Jesus Christ." Acting shocked, acting disgusted will only close her off. Your first response must be love. Overwhelming, unconditional love.

11. Equip, don't entertain.

It is our God-given duty to help fan into flames a faith that is alive and active. Our girls should serve, lead, and continue to grow. If we do not teach our girls the spiritual disciplines while they are under our care, we have failed. We are not here to entertain. Hopefully, we'll have a lot of fun along the way, but our job is to equip young followers of Christ. Give them opportunities to serve and to lead, to use their spiritual gifts, and to disciple younger girls. I fear that many of our youth fall away because we've merely entertained them, instead of equipping them.

12. Partner with parents.

One of my greatest joys in youth ministry is partnering with parents. I love being a parent's advocate. Partner with parents as you minister to their children. Keep parents informed about new trends, pressures, and temptations. Make sure parents know that you are on their side. They are their child's number one spiritual advisors. You are there to partner with them and back them as they seek to build their children into disciples of Christ. Work alongside the most important and influential people in these teenage girls' lives - their parents.

