

5 Reasons I Didn't Rebel As A Teenager

Hello. My name is Rebecca Gregoire, and I was the perfect teenager. Obviously I'm saying that as a joke, but by most standards, I truly was pretty perfect. I never drank, never smoked, never partied, never dated, never even swore (honestly, I didn't swear until I was 18). I may have been moody, but I always had a good job, and was extremely involved in church and volunteered in multiple organizations. I didn't rebel at all — I walked the straight and narrow all through high school, and am continuing to do so now that I'm living on my own.

I'm not saying all this to try and make myself look great — I'm saying it to make a point. I'm saying it to destroy a myth that has been hovering over Christians for way too long. Teenagers do not have to rebel. I am living, breathing proof of that statement.

Before I continue, let me tell you something else about myself. [I am not demure in any sense of the word](#). I don't like listening to authority, and I often get frustrated when I'm told what to do, or how to do it. I like to question everything. I'm naturally extremely proud, a challenger of authority, and extremely stubborn.

Why am I telling you this? To prove that I'm not "naturally predisposed to submit." I'm actually the complete opposite. Whether or not teenagers rebel isn't contingent on their natural personality, and kids aren't "guaranteed" to rebel. Obviously teenagers aren't guaranteed to not rebel, either, but there are things you can do that make it less likely. My family had [two children who were complete opposites](#), and neither of us had a rebellious stage. So it has to be something about the family, not our natural dispositions.

So why do teenagers rebel? And why do some teenagers never rebel? I've tried to pinpoint what kinds of things my parents did that helped my sister and me not rebel (though, of course, there are never guarantees that a teen won't rebel), and here's what I've come up with:

First, my parents instilled in me a sense of family honor (Ephesians 6:2-3). Often teenagers feel distant from their families, like they're part of it by blood, but that's it. In my family it was never like that. My mom and dad would make decisions on their own, of course, but they always talked everything over with my sister and me. Even things that we weren't directly impacted by — we'd discuss everything over the dinner table.

My family is the kind of family where everyone is involved — it's a team experience. A result of this is that I received a huge sense of family pride, dignity, and honor.

Family honor has been lost in our culture. We are so focused on ourselves, and have become extremely selfish. And I think a lot of that is that parents put their children's wants over the family's needs. In our family, Katie and I never went without. But we didn't get everything we wanted — I wanted an Xbox when all my friends were getting one, but because that would cut out of major family time my parents said no. A small

example, I know, but it shows the worldview my family had. No matter what, family comes first.

When your mindset shifts from “me” to “we”, your behaviors and actions aren’t just going to affect you — you begin to see how you affect other people. What I do in my free time reflects on my family, whether good or bad. And for me, that was a huge incentive to be responsible and make my parents proud.

Second, my parents were extremely encouraging, but also demanding (Colossians 3:21). There needs to be a middle ground. So many parents I see are all about the encouragement. Their kids can’t do any wrong, and they just constantly pour love and affection and butterflies and rainbows into their children’s life. And then other parents are the opposite — they don’t pay any attention to their kids unless they do something wrong and then they blow up. Or, even if they don’t explode, they only ever criticize their children.

My parents had a happy medium. We weren’t coddled, but we weren’t picked on either. My parents chose their battles, and also encouraged us when encouragement was necessary, but didn’t lie and tell us we were great at something when we weren’t. For instance, my parents never would have told me that I should go for a career in gymnastics, because I am not flexible in the least. We always knew where our parents stood, and through that, we always knew that they were honest and had a better understanding of who we were.

Third, my family talks about everything (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Open communication was big in our family. My mom and dad always made sure not only that they had time to talk to us, but that they had a specific time and place to do it, too. When I was younger, we talked before or after reading bedtime stories, or at the dinner table when we were eating together. When we got older, that spot moved to the hot tub we had in our backyard and car trips to and from the grocery store, friends’ houses, etc.

The biggest part, though, was that we didn’t just talk about school and work. We talked about whatever was going on in our lives — what I was thinking about a new blog post idea, how Katie was doing with her skating, or what movie we really wanted to see — anything that came to mind, including the scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). Our parents became our confidants, and that built a level of trust.

Moreover, our parents shared things with us, too. Now, don’t get me wrong, there is definitely a line here. But in our family, my parents simply humanized themselves to us. My dad would tell us about his favorite movies growing up, my mom would ask our opinions on [knitting](#) patterns.

This built a partnership between us (Psalm 127:3-5). A partnership where one was the parent and one was the child, of course, but nonetheless, a relationship where the actions of one person directly affected the other. Because of that relationship, I never felt like I needed to rebel to be heard, to be understood, or to get my way. I knew that if my parents said no, it was for a reason (Proverbs 3:12).

Fourth, we were never expected to rebel as teenagers (Philippians 2:15). My parents never encouraged any idea of teenage-hood rebellion. They never joked about us rolling our eyes, acting exasperated, or having attitude at all. Rather, they actually made us think that teenagers and the whole rebellion process was stupid and unnecessary. I always figured that I would grow up straight from child to adult, with no “silly teenage stage” in-between. You may think that this is no fun, or that kids need their time to be silly and make mistakes.

But what kind of message does that send the teenager? If kids expect that when they hit 13 they'll start wanting to go to parties, or go out with boys, or watch inappropriate movies, then they will grow up to fulfill those expectations. On the contrary, if they are raised to believe that those are all optional, and actually unnecessary and somewhat frivolous, they won't want to disappoint or seem silly, and so are more likely to make positive choices and act like an adult. This doesn't mean that we miss out on a childhood, or miss out on teenage years — it just means that we use them for training for adulthood, and have fewer regrets when we're through it all.

Also in this category is that we had very few rules. My parents never needed them, because they didn't expect us to break them. When parents have a lot of rules it always seems to me like they're trying to control their kids, and if you have to control them, you've lost the battle already. My parents always assumed we'd pick up on their values and make good decisions. Through our close relationship, heart-to-heart talks, and — when necessary — confrontations, we learned their expectations, they learned our points of view, and our family worked together instead of parents trying to reign in their children (Proverbs 19:18). Now, I only think this worked because we grew up in such a structured, close, and trust-filled family, but that was big for me. I never felt stifled, so I never felt a need to rebel.

Fifth, God was the center of our home (Matthew 6:33). Our home never revolved around work, sports, school, or activities. It didn't even revolve around other people — it always hinged on God and His plan for our family. Growing up in that kind of environment shaped my view of my actions, choices, and the effect I had on others. When you're used to basing everything on God's will, suddenly the parties don't seem as important. It isn't as tempting to lie about who you're hanging out with. Smoking, drinking, and the like just doesn't really have any appeal, because they don't help with your ultimate goal — to become a person God will use for great things.

So many times I see families who drop everything for good grades, or who don't go to church if it's a busy week at work, or who choose [extracurricular activities](#) over youth Bible studies and the like. My family, however, was the opposite. If we were tired, too bad. Get in the car, we're going to church, because that's what God's called us to. If mom and dad had a hard time with work, we went to church because that's a place of rest. If I was struggling with school and needed the day to study I didn't have that choice, because it was my decision not to study earlier. We learned that life will never get less busy as we grow older, so we were taught as children that God comes first in

everything (1 Chronicles 16:29). And my choices were shaped because of that worldview.

I honestly don't think there's any one way to make sure your children don't rebel. Every child is different, and every family contains unique people. But all I know is that for me, this worked. In my family, the trust, communication, and centrality of God in our home made my teenage years one of partnership with my parents rather than a constant battle. So don't give up hope — the teenage years don't have to be war!

Adapted from Rebecca Gregoire