



Deeply Rooted in Each Other

KICK-START WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PARENTS

- There are no perfect families, so give yourself a break and believe that God can work with your family story--whether it's a constant drama, a gut-splitting comedy, a royal tragedy, or a pretty ho-hum Reader's Digest version of family.
- "I was wrong" and "Please forgive me" are two of the most important sentences family members can learn to say to each other.
- Make time for playing together and sharing food together. Feeling good has a powerful effect on our relationships.

FRAMING UP OUR PURPOSE

When we think of a family tree, we think about all the different branches of people and stories that we can trace. But what if we help our teens think of their family tree as the fruit of an unseen root system? It's a tricky picture to paint, because every generation is a branch off of another generation. But every generation also has the potential to put down deep, enduring roots for the next generation. The whole idea is to be able to see where our family is rooted and to recognize when and if we need to be replanted in healthier relationships with each other. See if these ideas can help you communicate and work out a family story that is growing toward God's best for all of you.

God calls us to be deeply rooted in Him and with each other.

"Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing." --1 Peter 3:8, 9

Everyone plays a role in the family. There are birth-order tendencies, gender differences, and personality traits that all come into play. Family is a micro-community that has macro impact on how we see and respond to our world. Here are some questions that might help you and your teen (or your whole family) identify how to be more deeply rooted in each other.

- What's my job in the spiritual community of my family?
- How will I do that job well in my relationships with siblings and parents?
- What does it mean to be called to live a certain way?
- How can that make a difference in my family?
- Deep roots produce strength, fruit, and shelter for generations.



"Thus were the visions of my head on my bed: I saw, and behold, a tree in the middle of the earth; and its height was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and its height reached to the sky, and its sight to the end of all the earth. The leaves of it were beautiful, and its fruit much, and in it was food for all: the animals of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the sky lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it." --Daniel 4:10-12

The tree that Daniel sees in his dream is a magnificent sight. It is strong and beautiful.

But what makes it a remarkable tree is not just what it looks like but also what it produces: fruit, shelter, and a place to come together. That is such a wonderful picture of a strong family. You can use this verse to ask your teen to evaluate your family tree. What does your family tree have in common with this picture of a magnificent tree? What doesn't your family tree reflect in this scripture? What small or big things could help your family produce the kind of fruit and shelter that this tree provides?

Deeply rooted families can withstand the powerful storms that come.

"...For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call to himself." --Acts 2:39

"Has his loving kindness vanished forever? Does his promise fail for generations?" --Psalm 77:8

"For Yahweh is good. His loving kindness endures forever, his faithfulness to all generations." --Psalm 100:5

We've already established that no family tree is the perfect family tree. God understands that sometimes we mess up the family system. He

understands that sometimes someone else messes it up for us. Part of our deep-rootedness is to actively trust that God wants to bless our siblings, grandkids, great-nephews, long-lost 3rd cousins twice removed, and everyone else in our families through the

promise He first gives to us. Those we love may be far off, but God still knows where they are, and His arm of grace extends that far. We may have endured some terrible storms and felt ourselves bent almost as far as we can bend without breaking, but we can hold onto the promise that his lovingkindness keeps us from being uprooted.

Many of those kinds of storms can happen during the turbulent adolescent years. Tangible encounters with grace, forgiveness, healthy conflict, and restoration will help your teen eventually trust these promises. It's also important to allow grief and disappointment to run their course. Just because we believe that God has not abandoned us during our storms doesn't mean we can't admit that it certainly feels like He has vanished during those times.

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IDEAS FOR GROWING DEEP ROOTS IN OUR FAMILY

- Do family reviews. Reminisce about fun; retell stories that bring a smile.
- Sibling rivalry is obviously normal, but you still play a role in refereeing teachable moments.
- Encourage your teen to make a coupon book of activities and treats they are willing to redeem for a younger sibling.
- Eat dinner together often. This is a lost family art in our busy lives.
- Cook with your teen, and let them pick the recipe to tackle.
- Work in the yard together planting and cultivating; create a garden together.
- Show up for each others' big stuff. There's nothing like a family cheering section!
- Do a family mission trip together instead of a theme park vacation.



11th Grade: Guide for Planning your Family Tree Dinner

Your influence lasts three to four generations.

That means you are a spiritual patriarch or matriarch all the way down to your great-great-grandchildren.

That means that what you do today as a parent matters. It also means that you have a responsibility to your teenager to help them understand where they come from.

The story of our family is the story of us. It is what we belong to, and it has a say in who we are. One of the best ways you can help your 11th grader discover their identity is to lead them to discover their family heritage.

Whether the story of your family is a page turning novel or a comedy sketch or even if it reads like a police report, your teenager needs to hear the good, the bad, and the ugly of your family.

As parents in your home, you also develop the mission statement for your family. Does your teenager know the mission of your family? Do you know it? How does faith fit into that mission? What a great time to write the mission and story of your family and teach it to your 11th grader!

When your 11th grader is given the Family Interview Questions that your student ministry has provided, they will be sent out like a reporter from a newspaper. Their mission

consists of learning the heart of their family members and sharing their story with the rest of the family.

Here are some tips to help you plan a wonderful Family Tree Dinner with your family:

Download the "Family Interview Questions" resource and assign your 11th grader the task of contacting and interviewing at least three family members outside of the immediate

family. They will need to write down the answers so they can share them during the Family Tree Dinner.

Prior to the Family Tree Dinner, sit down with your 11th grader and let them share with you what they learned in their family member

interviews. Help them "edit" their interviews so that they can be shared publicly in front of other family members. They may have learned some things that would not be healthy to share in that environment.

During the time prior to the Family Tree Dinner, when it is just you and your teenager, you can discuss with them any negative things they might have discovered. You also might take advantage of this time to talk to them about "family secrets" or stuff from the past that you have been waiting for them to be old enough to understand before you shared the information with them. That is not fun, but it is a part of them learning the story of their family.

Invite family members to join you for this dinner, where your 11th grader can share what they have learned in the interviews with family members.

If you have family members that live out of town, consider using videoconference technology or, at least, let them listen via speaker phone. Just be sure to give them the opportunity to be a part of the gathering, if they would like.

Another idea for out-of-town family members is to record the event with a video camera and send a copy of it to them.

Finally, invite out-of-town family members to write a note that can be read at the dinner, so that they can participate in sharing with your teenager the story of their family tree.

You can begin the Family Tree Dinner by giving your very own "State of the Family Address," where you remind your family of who they are and what their mission is. If you aren't comfortable speaking in front of people, just write it down and then read it out loud.

Another element to the evening is to let your 11th grader share the results of their family interviews.

Please work with your teenager to ensure that what they share at the Family Tree Dinner is positive and that they avoid sharing embarrassing information that they have learned.

After your teenager shares what they learned in

the interviews, you can open the floor to other family members to share their own memories, encourage your 11th grader, or simply share their heart. This has the potential to be a

powerful moment in the life of your family and in the life of your 11th grader.

Take time to present to your 11th grader a family heirloom. This may be something significant that was passed down to you from your ancestors. However, if you do not have a family heirloom that was given to you, then you have a great opportunity to start this tradition in your family.

If you are looking for ideas for a family heirloom to pass down, it might help to answer these questions: What do I own that has special meaning to me? What can I give that is durable enough to last for many years? What would be a great symbol for the mission of our family? What symbol can I give that would demonstrate my family's emphasis on faith? What budget do I have for a family heirloom?

You might want to go to your older family members and ask them for ideas concerning the family heirloom. They might surprise you with something that you didn't even know existed.

Consider closing the Family Tree Dinner with a prayer time.



What's Going on With My 11th Grader?

By the time your teenager reaches the 11th grade year, they are living like a mini-adult. But they still need your guidance. To help you with that, here is a look at what is happening in the world of your 11th grader.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Boys and girls have fully developed physically into their adult bodies.
- Sexual desire is awakened, and the temptation to be sexually active is common.
- Stress is a very real physical struggle as they work, perform in school, and prepare for the future.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The 11th grader may:

- Begin to be very sentimental as they anticipate life change
- Experience calmer moods than in previous years
- Have a desire for more control over aspects of their life
- Exhibit impulsive behavior with friends and peers
- Not respond to adult lectures, feeling they know better what is going on than the adult does
- Be more capable of taking care of others



RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Integrating both physical and emotional intimacy into relationships begins.
- Friends that share beliefs, values, and interests are sought.
- Less time may be spent with family, while more time may be spent with peers.
- Peers influence them to try risky behaviors, such as experimenting with alcohol, tobacco, etc.
- The relationship with parents is more of a support system.
- They begin to feel freedom to express themselves as individuals.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- In regards to faith, they value the annual traditions of their student ministry, church, and family.
- They can handle the responsibility of most service positions in the church.
- They have a greater interest in serving others and in making a difference in the world.
- There is more planning and preparation for the future.
- Role models are developed that inspire them either toward or away from faith.
- Their capacity for self-discipline increases.
- They begin to imagine what life would be like as an adult away from their parents, and they begin deciding whether or not their faith will be a part of that.
- There is a temptation to “have their fun now” and be responsible later.