



TODAY'S FUEL

Parenting Resources from Kanakuk

Five Smooth Stones was written by Joe White President of Kanakuk Kamps and author of books for teens and parents including; *FUEL: 10-minute devotionals to ignite the faith of parents & teens*, *Wired by God*, *Pure Excitement*, and many others.

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Five Smooth Stones

(Parental Advice During Adolescent Years)

Joe White

Stickers and signs celebrating students' favorite products, activities, music and clubs decorate the hallways of Anthony's public high school in a thriving mid-west suburb. As a bright high school junior, Anthony does well in school and contributes to the success of his high school football team. Anthony is a Christian and is not ashamed of his faith. It gives him the initiative to live free from drugs and alcohol and treat the girls he dates with excellent respect.

Anthony hasn't been in trouble with the principal since he entered high school . . . that is until last springtime when he put a postcard-sized sticker on his locker that pictured Mel Gibson's spectacular movie, "The Passion of the Christ". Anthony was informed by school authorities that he must remove the stick "or else".

Across the country Christian kids get put down, persecuted, bullied and belittled by authorities and peers alike for taking a stand for their faith in the One who have given them life and the courage to live free from the habits and pitfalls of adolescence.

In locker rooms boys get ridiculed for being virgins and for treating girls with respect and not "going for it" on their dates. Girls regularly get ostracized for guarding their hearts and saving their sex for marriage. A high school girl in Louisiana who doesn't drink is the laughingstock of the party as her 'friends' spike the punch with ever clear vodka and get her visibly intoxicated.

Living in a true minority with no rights is a way of life for committed Christian teens. Kids in our summer camps often tell me that they know of no one, or perhaps precious few, who lives for Jesus in private and public life. Pornography, oral sex, and degrading and graphic rap music are not just mainstream - they are the way of life in today's youth culture.

Like dazzling, picturesque roses in a thorny patch, Christian kids from good homes walk gallantly through middle school and high school doors across this nation, somehow navigating their faith in the stormy sea covered with gray clouds of animosity.



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As teachers press atheistic evolution and scrub God out of American history and modern culture, our young heroes of the faith somehow muster their courage and face the modern Roman coliseum of agnostic and secular culture with valor and perseverance reserved for heaven's hall of fame. Many Christian kids fall in the battle. Some are fortunate to survive. A few of the strongest thrive in the controversy and like stars in a dark sky, sparkle so brightly that their peers are influenced to join them in their pursuit of the Savior.

How can we as parents support our adolescent kids for such a mission? How can we prepare our younger children for the cultural storm that awaits them?

Fortunately, God has called us as parents to be our kids' trainers and Jesus does not leave us ill equipped (II Timothy 2:15), without resources (Ephesians 6:12-18) or without His abiding strength (John 14:18-20).

God equips parents to "train up" our kids and prepare them for the battle. As David chose five smooth stones for his victorious duel with Goliath, so God gives us, as parents, five smooth stones to "tuck in our kids' pouches" for their battle with a giant of a youth culture and spiritual and moral turmoil.

Smooth Stone #1: The Word, the Word, the Word.

Meeting my kids at bedtime during their adolescence years was the very best part of my mission as a dad. Every night I was home the world came to a screeching halt at bedtime. My purpose was to "tuck my kids into bed", strengthen our relationship, pray together and memorize and discuss the Bible. In their later teen years, my boys were bigger and stronger than I, but never stopped appreciating our bedtime fellowship and Scripture memory.

Our times were simple. We'd take one verse, hide it in our hearts and talk about its meaning. We memorized key Scriptures that I pulled from my own

personal studies or we would memorize a key chapter over a period of months. Isaiah 55, Psalm 1 and 119 promise that the Word will "stick to their ribs" like hot oatmeal on a cold morning and strongly influence their behavior, their beliefs and their morality.

In the 6:30 a.m. get-ready-for-school chaos we would have a short Bible study from Proverbs at the breakfast table. I had so much fun with it that I wrote two books packed with Bible devotionals for you and your teen that will guide their ship through this stormy middle school and high school sea.

Smooth Stone #2: Prayer

Jesus' words in John 14:13-14 are crystal clear to any parent who wants to see godly kids graduate from high school unscathed by the world. Some turbulent years during my kids' adolescence I would set aside whole days to fast and pray for their greatest needs. Nightly prayers for my kids and with my kids were almost always on the menu for our day.

" . . . Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened." (Luke 11:9-10)

In Luke 11:8 Jesus said, "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs." Jesus is exhorting us to pray repeatedly and redundantly. Fasting puts muscle on prayer and gives prayer greater abilities to tackle your kids' greatest enemies.

Smooth Stone #3: Small Groups for Teaching and Accountability

Small groups are extremely effective for teaching and peer accountability. I had the privilege of meeting



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with my two sons' eight best friends for donuts and Bible study almost every week during the years of middle school and high school to discuss teens' most pressing issues and apply Scripture and prayer to their challenges.

Gary and Norma Smalley say that a small group is a parent's number one priority for their teens. If you can't lead it, facilitate its inception and sustenance and find an adult who has a love for kids and is willing to jump into the huddle. I saw several of my kids' friends trust Christ as Savior during those tumultuous years. We scraped up a lot of messes and, I'm sure, prevented countless pitfalls for our kids and their friends.

Smooth Stone #4: Keep Yourself Trained in the Intellectual and Emotional Issues That Face Your Kids

"Leave the driving to us" is good for a Greyhound, but not for the home. The parent is in the driver's seat and needs to stay prepared to "give a ready defense" (1 Peter 3:15) when your kids ask questions about controversial issues. Be like Radio Shack! "You've got questions, we've got answers!"

In thirty years of working with thousands of kids I have found repeatedly the parents who stay involved in their kids' lives tend to have the best kids by far.

Smooth Stone #5: Keep Your Kids Involved in Peer Fellowship Groups.

Support your church youth group. Para-church groups like Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, Youth for Christ, Student Venture and K-Life are also worthy of your support and your kids' involvement. Some things are optional. Involving your child in at least one good youth group a week is not.

Hebrews 10:25 makes our mission clear when it states, "Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

Equipping the saints (our kids) for the work of service is our highest calling as moms and dads. It is hard work, but it is way worth the effort. A well-coached football team gets to go to the Super Bowl. A well-trained horse gets to run in the Kentucky Derby. A well-trained child humbly receives "the crown of life" and gets to pass the baton of faith with pride to the next generation.