



LIFE NEWS

PARTNERS IN THE CHAOS OF PARENTING

parksidevisalia.org



by Jeremiah Shawver
Youth Pastor

Lenita Fix writes in the introduction of *The Beautiful Chaos of Parenting Teens*:

"You remember them. Years ago, they came – those zombie-like creatures who approached you out of nowhere. Dark circles accentuated drooping eyes and parched lips. Shoulders sagging, these 'walking dead' types leered at your babies, toddlers, and preschoolers in tow and hissed, 'Enjoy these years. One day, you'll have teenagers.'

You laughed it off. 'No, no, you don't understand. We just want to leave the house without diaper bags, strollers, and five changes of clothing. We'd like our kids to learn to put their shoes on all by themselves.' Cackling, they croaked, 'Just. You. Wait.' And they limped back into the shadows.

Then it happened. One day you woke up as the parent of tweens - or teenagers. No one told you what these years would *really* be like. No one told you that no matter what choice you make, according to your teen, it's all wrong. No one told you your child would say things like, 'I don't really need a parent anymore' as they run out, the door slamming behind them. No one mentioned you would do all the things 'effective' parents of teens aren't supposed to do. In fact, you'll do all the things you said you'd never do. You'll give lectures standing with your

hands on your hips. You'll lose your temper and say things like, 'How many times have we been over this?'"

Lenita Fix is a youth minister and parent of three now adult children. She continues in this work to describe the parenting of teenagers as beautiful chaos, giving advice and suggestions on ways parents can work better with their adolescents. Amid the chaos that is parenting, we can often feel that we are alone, flailing in a sea of difficult decisions with nowhere to turn for help. This is true in every era of parenting but especially as our kids make the transition from child to adult.

One of my goals is for the parents of teens at Parkside to not feel this way, and that the parents of teens would feel equipped and ready for the challenges of Jr. High and Highschool. I want to create an environment in which people can partner together amidst the chaos. This can happen in one-on-one meetings, connecting parents together who have been in similar situations and providing parenting seminars to give parents tools to be more godly parents.

We will have one of these opportunities in April and May. From April 16 to May 21, every Sunday morning from 9:00 AM to 9:50 AM, we will have a **"Parenting Teens"** class. The goal is to cover some of the difficult topics facing parents

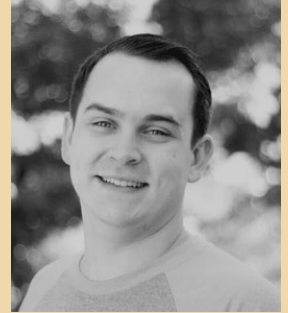
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of teens today. We will be covering topics such as technology, identity issues, mental health, discipline, and preparing for the future.

Before coming to Parkside, I spent three years working at a group home in Louisville, KY. Every month we had to complete several hours of training in different areas as we cared for mainly teenagers in the foster care system. Some of the training was extremely practical, like First aid and CPR training. Some training provided the "tools" for our tool-belt. One goal of hosting this class is to give parents a few more tools as they parent their teens. One of those tools is a community of parents working through the same beautiful chaos together.

As we have pursued youth ministry, Lisa and I have had many opportunities to do parenting training. We started taking these opportunities when Ivy was around 18 months old. Why? As Lenita Fix notes, we will have teens before we know it. If you are reading this and have small children or elementary-age kids, I would love for you to use this opportunity to be as prepared as possible for the teenager you will soon have.

As I prepare materials to go over with parents, one of my hopes is not simply that people will show up. Instead, my hope is we will be ready to help one another. As we learn together, we will be able to share our lives and start discussions which will allow us to better disciple the next generation.



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A promotional graphic for a 'Parenting Teens Class'. The background is a vibrant red with yellow and orange diagonal stripes and comic book-style halftone patterns. On the left and right sides, there are black silhouettes of a woman and a man in superhero-like poses. In the center, the text reads: 'SUNDAYS 9AM', 'APRIL 16 - MAY 21', 'IN EC 7', and 'PARENTING TEENS CLASS' in large, bold, white letters. Below this, in a smaller, italicized font, it says: 'Join us as we discuss the issues of technology, discipline, sexual identity and more.' and 'Our focus is on teens but parents with children of all ages are welcome.'

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APRIL 16 - MAY 21
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**PARENTING
TEENS CLASS**

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