

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY



WE'RE TEACHING THIS

What makes you happy? Or what *would* make you happy? That's probably an easy question. Everyone's got something. We all daydream about a trouble-free life made possible by *something*: a car, a house, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a spring break trip, or just a pile of money. We all have something that could fill in the blank, I'd be happy if _____. And, we all spend time going after those things. Thinking about them. Planning for them. Hoping for them. Maybe even praying for them because, on some level or another, we all want to be happy. But isn't it true that even when we get what we want,

we aren't happy for long? Pretty soon, we start daydreaming about something new. If happiness is the goal, why is it so hard to hang on to? And what do we do when the very things we *think* will make us happy end up making us miserable? In this series, we begin to ask the question, what makes you happy? And, one thing we'll find is that Jesus cares a lot about our happiness. Not only that, through His words, we'll discover that where we find happiness may be different than we thought—having to do less with a *what*, and more with a *Who* and, maybe even a who or two.

THINK ABOUT THIS

By Sandra Stanley

"Who in the world told my kids they could have a life of their own?" I remember regularly thinking this while our kids were teenagers. Just when we hit an awesome parenting stride (and by awesome I mean I was pretty much in control of their schedules and daily details, and made sure none of it actually conflicted with MY important plans), they started individuating and making plans of their own.

As parents, this is the season in our teenagers' lives where we begin to battle two conflicting emotions: the urge to take back control and the desire to become buddies. Both usually originate from legitimate motives. For the former, we don't want them to fail and we believe we hold the keys to preventing that. For the latter, we want them to like us

during a chunk of years when they possibly won't. Both are tempting. But ultimately, both are a disservice to them.

Since our kids are entering a new season of life, a new parenting approach has to be considered. For their sake, we need to loosen the tight reigns of the training years and move to the sidelines for coaching. **Coaches don't the leave the field.** They don't get distracted with other stuff. They watch carefully, call some plays, and pull their players off of the field from time to time. They have no immediate goals of keeping their players happy. Mostly, they encourage their players to run the plays and respond to situations according to the training they've received.

Transitioning to the coaching role wasn't intuitive for me. Disciplining and training had become ingrained. For me, the switch was easier when I began to think about it, and my kids, in terms of *being for them*. I wanted them to know, "I'm *for* your physical safety, I'm *for* your emotional health, I'm *for* your relational success, I'm *for* your mental and spiritual development, I'm *for* you making it to the end of these middle school years, or high school years, with as few regrets as possible. You're the player, but I'm not afraid to pull you aside for tweaks, corrections, and sometimes sitting out a game. I'm *for* you. I know you can do this, and I'm here to help when you need it."

Resisting the urge to control and not caving to the desire to prematurely make friendship a priority brings health to a family. Coaching our kids through those middle and high school years, in spite of a few regrets here and there, is the stuff rich relationships are made of later. In hindsight, I've been pleasantly surprised. My kids gaining "a life of their own" has truly broadened and enriched mine!

From *Parenting Teenagers Part 3: A Life of Their Own*. For more from Sandra, check out SandraStanley.com.

*To connect to a wider community of parents,
check out www.parentcue.org.*

TRY THIS

What would it look like in your family for you to move to a coaching role with your kids? Think about it. Maybe coaching your family right now means you step back to the sideline and let them make some decisions on their own. Or maybe the opposite is true. Maybe it's time for you to move back onto the field and coach them actively at this phase where they need you the most.

This week, choose one area where you kid is ready to grow and make a game plan for them to step into independence in that area. It could be with cell phones or chores or curfews or dating or money or just about anything else. But take the time to decide with them what steps they need to make in order to gain more freedom in an area where they want it most.

If they want more freedom with money, help them make a budget. More freedom with cell phones? Have them show you they can handle the responsibility that comes with it. You get the idea. Then let them know...

- 1. I am for you in this area.** I want you to win with money, with your cell phone, with your dating life. The goal for me, as your parent, is that you gain more freedom and more happiness over time.
- 2. There are steps you must take.** Because I'm *for* you, you won't be given total freedom over night. But here are the specific steps you can take today to get to the next level of freedom tomorrow.
- 3. There will be course corrections.** Each time you make wise choices, you'll get more of what you want, but we know you're learning and you may make mistakes. When you do, we'll have to change the plan a bit, meaning each time you make dangerous or unwise choices, you will lose some freedom for a while.