

(SAMPLE CHAPTER)

Bridge Teen

**BIBLICALLY BRIDGING
THE GAP BETWEEN
CHILDHOOD AND
ADOLESCENCE**

GUS BROMAN



INTRODUCTION

"Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends Your works to another; they tell of Your mighty acts."

PSALM 145:3-4

ONE GENERATION TELLING God's redemptive story to another. Isn't this one of the essential duties we have as Christian dads? With all the challenges that parenting can throw our way, ultimately what we strive to do is build a solid, biblical foundation of God's Truth in the lives of our sons. But they grow up fast and it's easy to miss the opportunities.

Wasn't it yesterday you were buying your son's diapers once a week? And now you are buying him jeans once a month. As our kids grow, their needs, thoughts and desires change. Even though we went through this growth ourselves, we don't always see our child getting older until he's standing right in front of us with a pimply face and deeper voice. Along with the physical growth, his world and its expectations are changing. Wouldn't it help if he were better prepared for these changes and challenges? What if you were able to create and implement experiences that teach, direct and resonate with him?

What Is Bridge To Teen?

Bridge to Teen is a tool that offers a framework for a Christian father to biblically and intentionally connect with his son prior to adolescence—ideally

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the year between ages 12 and 13. Bridge to Teen is not a program. Instead, it is a concise plan that is meaningful because it is uniquely tailored to fit your pre-teen's interests.

Bridge to Teen lays out eight important growth areas for your son as he gets ready for the next stage of life. These growth areas are:

Academic	Physical
Domestic	Sexual
Emotional	Social
Financial	Spiritual

As a Christian father you know these areas are important and you know you should cover them with your pre-teen. But how? This is where Bridge to Teen offers some guidance.

Each of these eight growth areas has a separate section in this book. Each area is briefly explained noting its importance in your son's development. Each growth area begins with a key Scripture passage that relates its biblical significance. Then ideas are offered for memorable experiences, talks, adventures, service projects, etc. that you can complete with your son. For instance, under Domestic, your son is encouraged to learn how to do the family laundry and cook a meal. Under Social, he can take his mom on a date where he pays and uses his best manners. Under Spiritual, you can teach your son the significance and importance of taking Communion. Under Physical, you and your son are challenged to complete an overnight adventure such as a biking or hiking trip. This adventure then presents a perfect opportunity for you to discuss important items that fall under the Sexual and Emotional growth areas. Many of the activities are designed to overlap and interconnect. All of the suggested activities in this book are meant to create a springboard for other ideas that will resonate the most with your son.

Checklists are provided to help ensure that you are covering the important topics with your son. But checking them off doesn't mean that topic is forever "done." The idea is that your son will continue to ponder it and come back to you with questions later on.

In addition, we created a Bridge to Teen Chart (see pages 18 and 19 or www.bridgetoteen.com/chart) to serve as a visual reminder of what activities you have completed and what you will continue to accomplish together during that year between age 12 and 13. This helpful chart can be accessed and printed from www.bridgetoteen.com/chart. Your son will enjoy following his progress on this chart and checking off his completed activities.

We suggest getting a 3-ring binder to store the Bridge to Teen Chart and any photos that you take along the way. This binder (referred to as the Bridge to Teen Memory Book) will remain a wonderful documentation of what you both learned and experienced on this journey. It will be a tangible and accessible reminder and serve as a great resource for you to show other parents as well.

What Is The Challenge?

The expectations placed on a man today is far different than it was 30 plus years ago. I was raised in the 1970s. My father and most other fathers I knew were the primary breadwinners, while the moms handled the full-time care of the home and children. Fast forward to today and the dramatic increase in the number of women working outside the home has understandably blurred the lines between the once “traditional” roles of men and women. In today’s culture, a man is expected to work full time, do the household repairs, care for the yard and the children, help with the laundry, and assist in the kitchen. Both wives and husbands are busy; both mothers and fathers are stretched and tired. So the challenge remains, how do we as fathers find the time and energy to prepare our sons to become men while we are faced with our own daily schedules and expectations?

The Lord blessed my wife and me with three boys. As I watch them mature, I am flooded with memories on what it was like to travel through adolescence. I remember the conversations that boys had in the locker room, in the back seat of the bus, and up in the tree forts. As these memories rush into my mind, I have concluded that most, if not

all, of these conversations with my peers were riddled with myth and fiction. As a father, I want my sons to feel comfortable having these conversations with me. I want to be the first person to discuss with my sons topics of spirituality, sexuality, dating, emotional well-being, and so on. I want my boys to be prepared and filled with Truth before their peers and the world start to “fill in the blanks.”

My wife and I desire to be intentional in how we raise our boys, so together we sought answers from Christian books and other resources. Many offered invaluable insights into the uniqueness of boys but most

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seemed overwhelming, time consuming, and difficult to implement. We wanted to do more than just read a book and vaguely apply some principles to our parenting. Therefore, we were led to take bits and pieces of what we learned

and formulate an idea, a plan, a framework for communication. We desired something that was relevant, tangible and realistic to complete with our pre-teen son. This effort was the beginning of Bridge to Teen. With God leading the way, we prayerfully developed a plan that can easily fit into parents’ busy lives and a pre-teen boy’s unique place in development.

What Makes Bridge To Teen Unique?

It Promises Not To Overwhelm – Bridge to Teen simply provides focus and purpose to the activities and interactions you probably already have with your son. Going to a ball game, playing golf, or going camping is fun and important. Bridge to Teen, however, offers simple ideas to help take these activities to the next level. It provides ideas for how to make the most of these times together and not miss out on opportunities for learning and discussion.

It Is Intentional But Not Insurmountable – Bridge to Teen doesn’t require weekly gathering times or overwhelming homework. It is designed to take place over a span of a year, so there is no rush. The activities you do together can overlap, connect, or be spaced far apart. Having sufficient

time between experiences is encouraged as this gives both you and your son opportunities to reflect, plan, and look forward to what is ahead.

It Offers Conversation Starters – One of the most common complaints among parents of teenage sons is, “He doesn’t tell me anything.” Most parents want to communicate effectively with their son, but where does one start and how? It can be a challenge to talk about simple, everyday things with our sons, much less discuss subjects of sex, drugs and friendships. Each section of Bridge to Teen provides open-ended questions and discussion starters that relate to each of the eight growth areas. These questions are designed to spark engaging, yet non-threatening conversations.

Bridge to Teen promises not to overwhelm

It Includes Mom – Just as God has made boys unique in their gifts and structure, He has made our wives unique as well. Without mom’s involvement, boys miss out on the gift that God has placed right in their own home. Mom’s involvement is particularly important as your son goes through the Social and Sexual growth areas. You will quickly discover that your wife adds invaluable insights to the journey and it is extremely rewarding to see her connect with your son in ways you cannot. There is nothing more rewarding than working together with your wife to understand how your son is uniquely and wonderfully made.

It Encourages The Influence Of Other Men – There will be and should be points in Bridge to Teen where you rely on the participation and help of other influential men. Being a good parent and father means being wise enough to tap into the people resources God has put in our lives. As important as it is for a boy to have a Christ-like example in the home, it is equally important for him to see other Christian men modeling the same biblical principles. It is important for our sons to see us reach out to depend on others and ask for help.

It Provides A Feeling Of Accomplishment – If a problem or difficulty ensues, men have a tendency to want to jump in and “fix” the situation. Men offer solutions. Has there ever been a time when your wife

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explained a problem and you were ready and willing to offer the solution and resolve the problem? In reality, your wife didn't want an answer. Instead, she wanted you to simply listen and understand the difficulty. Well guys, here is your chance to actually DO something. You have an opportunity to build a bridge to your son prior to his teenage years, but the time flies by so don't miss it! With Bridge to Teen you have been offered a tool that covers the topics that will affect his worldview for the remainder of his life. Assume this important responsibility as the dad, take action, and start grooming your son for the next important stage. Just think of the joy you will have on his college graduation or on his wedding day knowing that you did everything you could to raise your son to be a Christ-like man. With the Lord's help, you can do it!

What Is The Reality?

When pre-adolescent boys were asked "What do you like about growing up?" they answered: "I get to do more stuff; I can do things by myself; I get to do the stuff that my brothers do; I like being able to help my dad by lifting heavy stuff. I couldn't do that when I was two." These are pretty poignant answers. As adults, we sometimes forget what it was like being a kid. Do you remember that insatiable desire to be older than what we were? Growing up as the youngest sibling, I was always hanging out with older kids. I remember being a preschooler and seeing that huge yellow bus come to pick up my sisters. I would dream of the day when I could ride on that bus. Finally that day came, but it wasn't long before I was dreaming of middle school when I could choose my classes and play sports for the school. Finally I was in middle school, and I couldn't wait for high school...then I couldn't wait to get my driver's license....then I was eagerly waiting for high school to be done so I could go off to college..... The reality is, your son wants to grow up. Will you fight his desire.... or will you embrace it?

What's In A Name?

The meaning behind the “bridge” in Bridge to Teen is twofold. The first is *functional*. You are bridging the gap for your son from childhood to adolescence through activities and discussions that fall under crucial areas of growth. You have a concise plan that helps you visually cover important topics your son needs exposure to. When all activities are complete and all areas are covered, you have an actual Celebration for your son—perhaps on his 13th birthday. Throughout the year prior to turning 13, your son not only collects memories but acquires tangible items that he can look back on later in life reminding him of what he has learned and what he has experienced.

The second meaning behind the “bridge” is *relational*. A wonderful connection of trust and memories is built between you and your son. This connection will hopefully result in him feeling comfortable coming to you later on with life’s inevitable difficulties. The “bridge” that is built won’t be complete, but it will be stable enough for your son to feel free to “pass over” again. As our sons get older and the pressures and expectations around them increase, we want them to first and foremost run to their Heavenly Father. But we want them to come to us too. We have lived through the change from childhood to adolescence and beyond. We have a front row seat to the challenges of being male in our culture today. So, fathers, we have an important job to do.

Where To Start?

“Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends Your works to another; they tell of Your mighty acts.”

PSALM 145:3-4

As parents we are disciple-makers. We have a job to do. The Lord has things He wants us to teach our sons and the window of opportunity to teach them really isn’t that big. This passage expresses this parental opportunity when it claims that we are one generation telling

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the mighty works of God to a younger generation. Our children are a gift from the Lord, but ultimately they are first and foremost His. From the moment our child is born we enter into the slow process of letting him go. At times it is hard seeing our baby grow up. And the looming teenage years can seem frightening. Maybe this fear is a result of us remembering how we were as teens? Maybe we are scared because we have witnessed a communication gap between our older friends and their teens? Maybe we are fearful of the gap slowly developing between us and our own kids? To fight this fear, a reliance on God is first and foremost the answer. The place to start is with prayer. Pray, pray, pray and pray some more. Commit your child to the Lord, admit your fear and ask for His help and direction. Search the Scriptures and use God's Word as your compass through this teen journey.

Bridge to Teen is not the place to start this journey. Instead, start in the loving, capable hands of your Father God who made you and your son and knows you both intimately. Bridge to Teen is, however, a practical, easy, relevant tool that offers simple ideas on how to biblically bridge the gap between childhood and adolescence.

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Purchase book at
www.BridgetoTeen.com