



## HS Youth Group Meetings- December

Youth Group will meet Wed. Dec 10 at 6:30-8pm. Bible Study will be Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> 6:30-8pm. Holiday Party will be Dec 19 at 6pm Remember you're always invited to bring friends!!

## Thank You for Supporting the Puzzle & Book Sale!

A heartfelt thank-you to our Middle School students who did an outstanding job setting up and working the Puzzle and Book Sale during the Handmade Holiday Marketplace. Your hard work, teamwork, and positive energy helped make the event a great success! We're also grateful to everyone who stopped by to shop and support this fundraiser.



## Youth Group Christmas Giving Project

Our High School Youth Group had the joy of adopting a local family this Christmas, purchasing gifts for two seven-year-old children through a community food pantry. The students shopped thoughtfully and generously, choosing items that will help make the season brighter for these little ones. Thank you to our students for helping share the light of Christ in our community this season!



"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12

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## ZION's Tree at Franklin Park

This year, ZION has a tree in Franklin Park. It is decorated with pictures of all the events we have going on at the church. Try to find it as you stroll through the park and see if you made it onto any of the ornaments!

## Christmas Cookie Baking

The Youth will be baking Christmas cookies to sell on December 21. Decorating will take place Dec 17th starting at 6pm. All ages are invited to join in the decorating and any adult helpers would be appreciated too. Cookies will be on sale after services on Dec 21 as a fundraiser for Youth Programming.



## True North Christmas Program

Our annual Sunday School Christmas Program will be Dec 13th during the 5pm service. Come celebrate the birth of Jesus with an unforgettable Christmas program that leads kids on an exciting journey to the heart of the season- with Jesus as their True North. All Sunday School students and MS/HS helpers are expected to arrive by 4pm and meet in Fellowship Hall.

## Holiday Party

On Wednesday, December 17, the MS Confirmation class and HS Youth group will be celebrating the holidays with a small party. Youth are asked to bring a dish to share and a \$10 gift if you want to join in the gift exchange.

## Carwash Cards

Kwik Trip carwash cards make great stocking stuffers! They are always available in the main office and will be available between services on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>. This is an ongoing fundraiser for the Youth Programming.

## SportsYou App

Remember to join the SportsYou app to share information, updates and a calendar of events for the Youth. Parents and students are invited to join. Our group's access code is YMVE8SLB. Contact Kristin with questions.

## Parent's Corner

Every month, I'll share insights on issues that many parents of teenagers face. I hope you find the information helpful and thought-provoking. If there's a specific topic you'd like me to cover, please let me know!

**"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."**

*1 Timothy 4:12*

## December at a Glance

Dec 3- Bible Study

Dec 10- Youth Group & Cookie Decorating

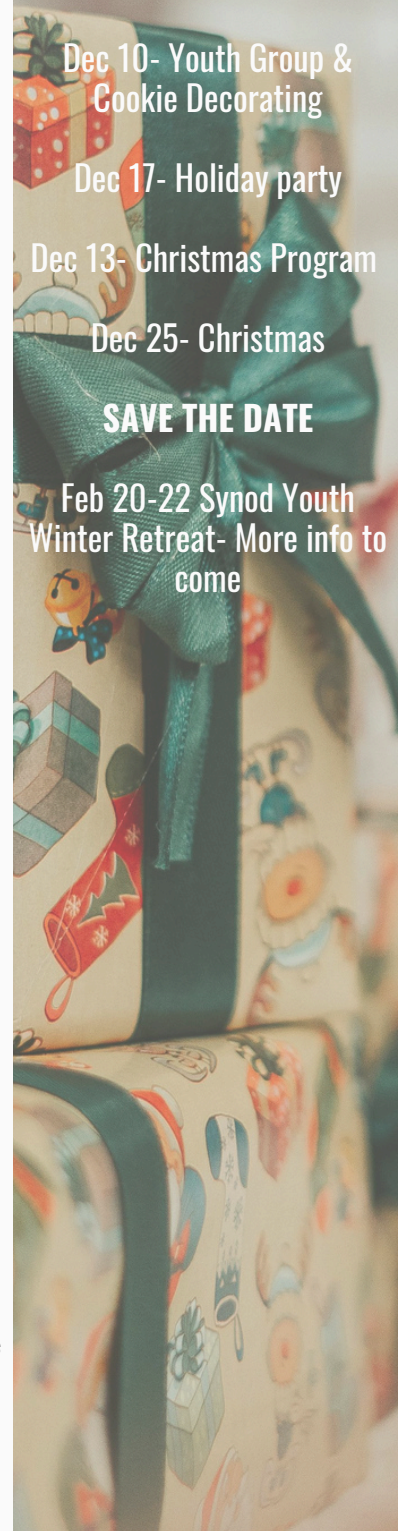
Dec 17- Holiday party

Dec 13- Christmas Program

Dec 25- Christmas

### SAVE THE DATE

Feb 20-22 Synod Youth Winter Retreat- More info to come



# Parent's Corner

## The Gift of the Unexpected in Parenting Connie Leung Nelson | November 13, 2025

I still remember the days before Google Maps. I'd watch my dad consult a physical map whenever he had to drive to a new address. Back in the 90's, a map was a poster folded neatly into a chubby rectangle, usually kept in the glove compartment of the car. But the map only told us how to get there. What the destination would look like was always a total surprise.

Now, in addition to live-updated digital maps for driving directions, we're accustomed to having 24/7 access to images, videos, and articles about the destinations we're visiting. Our ability to get answers about where we're heading conditions us to expect to be able to know what to expect, all the time.

We parents of teenagers know that parenting remains not-so-predictable, though. We set the course by determining to love our kids, disciplining them in the Lord. But our journeys as parents are full of surprises right from the start. Our expectations don't always match reality.

One way we're surprised is when our kids' unique personalities—their likes and dislikes, their dispositions, where their giftings lie, their aspirations—seem to be worlds apart from ours. You never imagined that you, the card-carrying introvert, would raise a child who loves parties and crowds and talks nonstop. Or maybe your teen is obsessed with sports while you couldn't catch a ball to save your life. You and your spouse (jokingly) wonder aloud, "Whose child is this?"

Or, on a more serious note, maybe parenting has turned out profoundly differently from what you expected. Perhaps your child has a disability or struggles with mental health. Maybe you are still waiting for a son or a daughter to wake up to Jesus's love for him or her. Our hearts can hurt for our children for many reasons. Sometimes, mixed in with our yearning for our children's good, is the grief for the loss of that picture of what we thought parenthood would be like at this point in time.

Parents, for the sake of our joy amidst the unexpected parts of parenting, we must remember to ground ourselves in two truths from Scripture.

### Truth #1: Unexpected gifts are still good gifts.

The first thing to remember afresh is that we are blessed to be the parents of our kids. Scripture calls children precious gifts (Ps. 127:3). Each child is uniquely woven by the hand of God, dreamt up by the mind of God (Ps. 139:13). We may not have anticipated being parents to teenagers who struggle where we didn't or have aptitude where we don't. But our parenthood of the teens God has given us is a gift of God's meticulous sovereignty, even if parenting is not what we expected. We can only imagine the ways that God is shaping us and showing us himself through the journey of being parents to our teens, and likewise shaping our teens through having us as their parents.

### Truth #2: Our kids are first and foremost God's children.

The second thing to remember is that while our children are God's gifts to us, in "ownership," our kids are still more profoundly God's than they are ours. As parents, our role is to steward our children for God, for a time. Our stewardship is more gardening than engineering. Our task is to sow seeds, tend and water the buds, and cultivate for growth—not so much designing, manipulating, or generating results. So though we may have formed expectations for our children, our children are not ours to "design" the way we please.

Good gardeners care for, nurture, and cultivate under the authority and direction of the owner. God desires and directs that we love our kids well by training them up in the ways of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). This is our goal as parents because God commands it, and it's our goal because our children's greatest good is to know the depth of God's love for them. God has good purposes and plans for our kids that are beyond our imagination, that we can't possibly know or expect (Ps. 138:8). The fact that the God of all wisdom is orchestrating his plan in our lives is an incredibly good gift to us and our kids.

### Enjoying Our Kids For The Gifts They Are

The question for us parents is then, how can we steward our kids well, enjoying them for the gifts that they are? Here are three ways to love the teens who surprise us:

**Be diligent in noticing the good in your teenagers.** We do well to constantly notice the best in our kids—not necessarily just so we can tell them—but for the sake of enjoying the gift God has given to us. We can take notice that they are good to their friends, when they put in a solid effort, or when they do something hard and persevere. Love hopes all things and believes all things (1 Cor. 13:7), so we guard against thinking patterns or ways of speaking about our kids that are unhelpful. We seek to resist the temptation to compare our child to his/her siblings or peers; comparison can easily devolve into ungraciousness and steal joy. We resolve to focus on the good because our Father is diligent to always see our good (Heb. 6:10). So pray for God to show you how to see and appreciate your teenagers.

**Aim to influence rather than to control and help without judging.** Our teens want our approval and affection. They worry about not being good enough. These fears are stoked when they feel controlled or judged. There will be times when love calls us to do more than encourage them in the right direction (ie. if our teens are at risk of harming themselves or others). But our default stance as stewards should be to lovingly direct and encourage our teenagers, not to control them into being someone they're not. Jesus describes his way of guiding us as the firm and gentle directing of a shepherd with his flock (John 10:14-27). With this picture in mind, pray and ask God to show you the difference between influencing and controlling in each circumstance.

**Pursue teenagers in creative ways.** Your teens may not have your communication style. Their idea of fun and what makes them feel loved could be different from yours. Love them by meeting them where they are. Seek to learn and use their ways of communication, spending time together doing what they like to do, and speaking their love language. Our God relentlessly pursues us, undeterred by our bent to turn away from him (Rom. 5:8). Don't be deterred by your teenager's mood swings or seeming disinterest in connecting with you. Teenagers need us to show them we want connection with them, and this calls for creative pursuit.

### God's Desires for Our Children

Parents, we want good for our children. It's natural to wish for your kid to "inherit" aspects of yourself that you like. It's normal to want them to exceed you in some way and avoid your pitfalls. There is no need to condemn all extra-biblical desires or expectations for our children. We can affirm having unique desires for our kids because this reflects God's heart for his children. God's love for us also includes a specific plan for us, since we are each a unique workmanship of his (Eph. 2:10).

But in the same breath that we bring our wants and expectations before the Lord, we confess that God's desires for our kids will always be better than the best that we can dream up for them. As parents, we make it our prayer that God would give us hearts that hold our own dreams for our children loosely. We pray, instead, that our desire for our kids would be that they become more who he made them to be: people who know that Jesus loves them and died to save them, and desire to follow Jesus all their lives.

Our parenting journey may not be what we expected. There certainly isn't a road map! But we can delight in the Lord (Psa 37:4) by enjoying the good gifts he's given us: our kids, getting to be their parents, and parenthood. We can enjoy these gifts, not because they are as we expected, but because they come from the One who gave the ultimate good gift, Jesus our Savior. What a delight to be able to trust in God's promise to satisfy our souls with "good things," as surely as we can trust in Jesus to save us and our children.