



Parent's Guide to Giving the First

# CELL PHONE

Proven Ideas To Set Your Family Up For Success

From the Student Ministry of your Church



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# CHAPTER ONE

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IT'S MORE THAN A PHONE

# It's More Than A Phone

I am old enough to remember when you carried a cell phone in a bag. They weighed like 35 pounds and people carried them around like they were carrying a bag of gold. Only rich people used cell phones back then. The reception was horrible and it was way more of a status symbol than a useful tool.

My, have times changed! To call the devices we use today a “phone” is kind of an insult. It functions much more like a mini-computer in our pocket. It can send pictures, texts, and surf the web. It can call just about anywhere in the world, send emails, and update Facebook. And you are about to give one to your teenager! WOW...what are you thinking?

## IT'S A LIFE SKILL...

I am actually crazy enough to believe that wonderful parents give their teenagers cell phones. If the main goal of parenting teenagers is to prepare them for adulthood, then what better life skill to teach them than the healthy way to use a cell phone.

Just think of how crucial this device is to your life. You can multiply that by a thousand to see how essential it will be to the adult version of your teenager.

So, Congratulations! You are about to give your teenager a phone and prepare him for a major part of life.

## IT'S A TRANSFER OF TRUST...

There will be a few conversations that take place in the teenage years that are more than conversations. When teenagers get their driver's license, when they go on their first date, and when they prepare to leave for college they are taking one more step into making decisions based on their own moral compass.

These are the moments in the adolescent journey that I like to call “transfers of trust”. These are prime time parenting moments that are pregnant with opportunity to guide your teenager into healthy adulthood.

That is terrifying for a parent. Do you remember the first time you let them spend the night at a friend's house. How will they act? What will they say? Will they have manners?

Will they break something? Will they be safe?

Every time you transfer your trust to teenagers through offering them freedom these kinds of questions can haunt you. The temptation is to control the situation by creating a list of a thousand rules or hire a private detective to do some surveillance work. But eventually you get a hold of your senses and allow them to take one more step away from you. As they head out the door they never realize that you are ten times more terrified than they are.

Please don't just hand your teenager a cell phone, enjoy the squeals of excitement, and then walk away. If you do, you will miss an amazing opportunity to transfer trust to your teenager.

The purpose of this ebook is to help you set your teenager up to succeed. Let's partner together in the next few pages to make sure your teenagers honor that trust and ultimately begin to trust themselves. Then you will have young adults on your hands!

## IT'S AN EXTENSION OF THEM...

One of my favorite questions to ask a teenager is one I already know the answer to. I don't know why, but I still keep asking teenagers, "If your house was on fire and you could only grab one possession before you leave what would it be?" They don't even think about it. Their cell phone.

Once you give your teenager a cell phone, you must understand that this is not like the other toys you have bought during childhood. They won't just play with this and lose interest after a few weeks. It will be so connected to them you will think their body has grown a new appendage. It becomes for many teenagers their main form of self expression.

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“TEENS CONSIDER THE  
LOSS OF A CELL  
PHONE MORE DIRE  
THAN THE LOSS OF AN  
INTERNAL ORGAN.”

– FROM NIELSEN AND KAISER  
RESEARCH

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## IT'S LEVERAGE...

Their cell phone commands leverage to offer consistent consequences to your older teenager. Let's face it, you really can't put your 16 year old into time-out anymore.

There will come a time when you will struggle to find ways to hold your teenager accountable for her behavior. The cell phone will be a key to that process.

The reality is that you will most likely be the one paying the bill, and that means you will have the rights to something they will consider their most prized possession.

This will help you.



# CHAPTER TWO

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**WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO  
GIVE THEM A CELL PHONE?**



# When is the Right Time to give them a Cell Phone?

This is the most frequent question parents ask me about cell phones. My answer is that I don't have an answer.


Before you start trying to get a refund for this ebook let me explain. My job is not to do your job.

No one on this earth knows your teenager better than you. I won't give you a formula or a bunch of parenting rules that are guaranteed to work.

The privilege I enjoy is not to tell you what to do but to help you understand your options so that you can decide what is best for your own teenager.

With that said, here are some things to consider when deciding the best time to give your teenager their first phone:

- \* Giving a phone to your teenager just because they are asking constantly for one communicates clearly to them that they are in control
- \* Giving a phone to your teenager because their friends have phones communicates to your teenager that you are willing to follow the lead of other families rather than make your own decisions. This sets up their friends' parents to be in control.
- \* Giving a phone when they reach a certain age might not be the best gauge of their level of responsibility. Consider allowing them to demonstrate that they are ready for a phone by earning money to buy it, carrying an old phone around for a certain amount of time without losing it, or simply by maintaining their grades. This will give them a sense of accomplishment when they receive their phone.
- \* Most parents I work with tell me that they gave their teenager a phone when the logistics of their family schedule made it necessary for communication and safety.



The right time for your teenager to have a phone has a lot less to do with their desire to have a phone, what other families are doing, or what age they are.

It has a lot more to do with their level of responsibility and your family's need to communicate in the midst of weekly activities.

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“The Freedom of a Cell Phone Should Be Earned and the Currency is Trust.”

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# CHAPTER THREE

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## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PHONE

# Choosing the Right Phone

Parents love giving their kids good gifts. I know I do.

My children do not win the award for most excited person in my house on Christmas Eve; I do. My wife and I love to carefully prepare the presentation of gifts and watch the clock. At just the right time my boys do not disappoint, running down the stairs with screams of anticipation.

While wrapping paper flies in a frenzy around my house, I just sit back and smile.

You have the same feelings about giving your teenager their first phone.

Because you are a great parent, you want to give them a fully loaded Iphone with all the bells and whistles. If you could give them a phone made of gold that stood up and danced a jig you would get it.

But you are not just a great parent; you are a wise parent as well.

And you know that it is not wise to hand your teenager a fully loaded phone right away. So check out this list of things to consider when choosing the right phone.

After a quick Google search on Smartphones I found that there are an estimated 4 billion active smartphones in the world.

Only 6.3% of those folks are 13-17 years old.

You better believe that your teenager wants to be one of the 4 billion and start with a Smartphone.

But before you make that dream come true, consider a few things.

Try and remember when you were a teenager, and ask yourself this question.

“If someone gave me the whole Internet in my pocket as a teenager, what would I have done with it?”

My answer to that question helps me understand that it might not be the best choice for my boys.

Your teenager’s exposure to inappropriate content has increased tenfold since you were a teenager, but their maturity level has not. They still think the same thoughts that you did. They still have the same questions you did. Their brain works like yours did to process information. But with the growth of technology they must use that brain to process way more information than you or I ever saw.

David Brower said, “All technology should be considered guilty until proven innocent”.

My suggestion would be to start simple rather than smart with your teenager’s first phone.

There will be plenty of opportunity for you to upgrade their phone as they earn more trust. But most parents of teenagers I talk with do not give their teenager a phone that has internet capability to start.

## Will your teenager help you pay the bill?

You could join a few schools of thought on this one.

Some parents believe that as long as their teenagers meets expectations in grades and household duties they do not want them to be burdened with earning money.

Other parents want to teach early the balance of academics and work. So they encourage their teenager to earn their own money, practice budgeting, and begin paying their own way.

I see benefits of both options, but whether your student chips in or not there is one thing they can't miss. It would be a great idea for your students to understand that they are expected each month to sit down and review the cell phone bill with you.

This will help them get familiar with reading a monthly bill, and it will serve as a great accountability time for their minutes/data usage.

Whether they pay up or not is up to you, but I strongly encourage you to involve them in the bill paying process for their own education.

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“They have to earn the privilege of having one... then pay for it and then give \$10 monthly towards part of the bill. It teaches responsibility.”

– Courtney, SuperMom

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# Should you get a pre-pay phone, add a line to your family plan, or get them their own plan with unlimited minutes?

Clark Howard told CNN news that while he was in Mexico he tried a new wireless card to download the movie WALL-E for his nephew to his phone. Imagine his surprise when he opened the bill and there was a \$62,000 charge for the download.

He disputed the charge and convinced the cell phone company to reduce it to \$17,000.

Isn't that nice?

Although this is an extreme case it is a wonderful reminder. You are handing a device to your teenager that has the ability to ring up some serious charges.

Don't underestimate your teenager's ability to send text messages.

The average teenager sends 3339 texts per month. That is six texts per waking hour. In fact they text on their cell phone way more than they talk.

According to Nielsen, "Texting is also supplanting voice calls — 22% say SMS is easier than a phone call and another 20% say it's faster. Voice usage has decreased by 14% among teens and is decreasing in all age groups under 55."

Texting is King, so the phone plan that you choose with your provider determines your level of sanity each month when you open your bill. I will list the different options moving from my most to least favorite.

\* My favorite way to go with the cell phone plan is to add an additional line to your family plan with an unlimited texting option. Typically, this is the least expensive option and it allows you to take advantage of the parental controls that your carrier offers. The unlimited texting option might be an unexpected expense but consider insurance against a crazy cell phone bill.

\* My second favorite option is to give your teenager a pre-paid phone to start out with. This works in the same way a debit card works. You put a set amount each



month on the phone's balance and when that is reached the phone stops working. This option insures no big bills, but you are not allowed to use parental controls. Pay special attention to the expiration dates on prepaid cards. Lower priced plans expire in as little 30 days, and any unused minutes will be lost.

\* My third favorite option is to give them their own line with unlimited texting. Sometimes a family has to choose this option because of the way their plan is arranged with their carrier. Very few families go this route because it is typically a greater expense and there is a potential of limited parental controls. There is not much benefit to this one.

## Should we use parental controls?

Parents I work with fall in one of two camps on privacy. There is not much middle ground. They either feel their teenager deserves absolute privacy or none at all. I happen to believe that the middle ground does exist, and the cell phone conversation is a great place to find some middle ground on the privacy issue.

Let's resist the extremes here. Let's not live in ignorance and in the name of privacy leave our teenagers to do whatever they want and face some of the toughest issues in life by themselves. Let's also refuse to become a parental cop who is constantly withholding privacy and chooses to be reduced to a 24 hour surveillance service.

The middle road approach says to start small with lots of supervision. As your teenager displays a sense of responsibility, you can reward it with your trust. Because they are human, your teenagers will break your trust. When they do, you can offer them consistent consequences and a clear plan to re-establish trust. This gives them hope and offers them a chance to gradually grow into making adult decisions on their own.

That is why I am a big fan of parental controls. Parental Controls are a tool to help evaluate responsible behavior. Parental Controls are also a tool to help you in the process of re-establishing trust, offering hope to your teenager after a mistake.

Most plans have a small monthly fee (usually \$5-\$10) attached to their parental controls and parents tell me that it is the best money they spend every month.

# Should they be able to send and receive pictures?

Do you remember those things called digital cameras? Pretty soon we will think of them like we think of 8 track tapes.

The digital camera industry is being swallowed up by cell phone cameras and your teenager is going to want in on the action.

Before you unleash your little cell phone photographer, here are some things to consider...

The good....

\* Seeing your teenagers' lives through their pictures will give you a window into their soul. Their phone is a tool for self-expression, so a camera phone will let you see who they are becoming.

\* One parent that I work with uses the camera phone as a trust-building tool. Instead of sending a text to confirm his teenage boys arrived at their destination, he will have them send a picture. This gives him more peace of mind that they were where they were supposed to be. It also gives his sons a chance to earn trust through demonstrating their responsible behavior without a shadow of a doubt.

\* Teenagers are not fans of the spoken word. They will often prefer text to talk. More than once I have seen a group of them be physically in the same room and still text one another. Instead of fighting this, I encourage parents to join in and use texting to build relationship with their teenager. This same concept is true with pictures. That takes words out all together. Being able to exchange pictures with your teenagers is a great way to grow your relationship with them.

The bad...

\* Teenagers are pretty smart. In today's new world of technology they have come up with some pretty creative ways of cheating in school. One of those ways is to take pictures of tests and homework and send it to each other to share answers. I know your sweet, perfect little angel would never do that, but it is something to take into consideration.

\* Don't underestimate the human desire to be known. Teenagers are posting pictures of any and everything that might get them 15 minutes of fame.

When I was a teenager and a fight broke out in school we all crowded around to watch. Today when a fight breaks out in school the crowd around it looks like the paparazzi and the fight is posted on YouTube in a matter of minutes. We all have moments in adolescence where we make dumb mistakes. I know I had my share.

Imagine living in a world where your dumb teenage mistake could be posted online for the world to see. That is the world your teenagers live in, and when they have a camera on their phone it makes it even tougher to navigate.

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“When my son goes out, I have him use his camera to take a picture of his destination so I know he arrived where he was supposed to go .”

– Darren, Really Smart Dad

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“TEENS HAVE BEEN DOING  
INAPPROPRIATE THINGS FOR A  
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THINK THEY CAN BECOME  
CELEBRITIES DOING IT. THE  
INTERNET PROVIDES  
ADDITIONAL MOTIVATION BUT  
THESE THINGS CAN JUST AS  
EASILY LEAD TO PROSECUTION  
AS BROAD CELEBRITY”

– DR. ANDREW ADESMAN

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## The Ugly...

\* Sexting is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos between cell phones.

When you and I were young if we liked someone we would pass them a note. Today it is much different. Sexually explicit images are like a relationship currency now. It is a test to see how committed you are. When you and I were young if someone asked us to give them a naked picture of ourselves, we would be appalled. But that is a common request today.

This issue demands your time and attention. This is not the time to say, “My sweet little angel would never do that!” You are most likely correct, but even sweet little angels sometimes get sent pictures that they didn’t request. I know you probably never dreamed you would be discussing this subject with your teenager, but unfortunately it has become unavoidable. So here is a short guide to help you get the conversation started.

\* Make sure to bring up the topic with your teenager in a way that they know you are not accusing them, just informing them.

\* Teach your teenager that whatever they put online can never permanently be deleted

\* Teach your teenager that it is common for people to share images with other people after a break-up.

\* Tell them that when a sexually explicit picture is sent so is any control of where that picture goes.

\* Paint a picture of how it could affect their future job interviews or endeavors.

\* Explain that there are laws being suggested that make sending sexually explicit pictures among minors an act of child pornography. In short, this activity could become illegal very soon.

\* The biggest thing to teach in this conversation is that there is absolutely no need to send or receive these kinds of pictures to build a relationship. It only builds the relationship on the foundation of lust and not love.

\* Tell them what to do if they receive a sexually explicit picture that they did not ask for. (I would suggest you tell them not to delete it, and bring it to you) That way you will know what you are dealing with and you have the picture to show the other party's parents if you have to.

\* Make sure they understand that it is not just images, but having sexual conversations over text is also considered sexting.

This sums up one of my favorite reasons for writing this ebook. Most of the families I have worked with who have dealt with this issue were shocked that their teenager was involved with it.

They made the mistake of thinking their teenager already had an adult sense of privacy.

If this is a discussion that happens when they get their cell phone, then you are ahead of the curve. They will learn from you the boundaries of privacy and self-respect.

You will be able to educate before it happens rather than after it happens.

## The Conclusion on Cameras...

You love your teenagers and you want to trust them very badly. That desire is what makes you a great parent. My encouragement is to also be a wise parent and understand that a camera on a phone is not a toy. There is no doubt that your teenager will be ready for a camera phone at some point, but I strongly encourage you to let that be a privilege that is added a little later in the journey.

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**Percent of teens who have sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos or videos of themselves:**

- **20% of teens overall**
  - **22% of teen girls**
  - **18% of teen boys**
- **11% of young teen girls between the ages 13-16**

**Percent of teens that sent sexually suggestive messages via text, email or instant messaging:**

- **39% of all teens**
- **37% of teen girls**
- **40% of teen boys**
- **48% of teens say they have received such messages**

## Should I prepare for my teenager to lose their phone?

YES. There is a great chance that your teenager will lose their phone. They are only human and they are still learning the life skill of keeping up with their stuff. I am way past the teenager years and I still struggle with it.

For their own piece of mind, many of the parents I work with either give their teenager an older phone that is inexpensive to replace or they purchase an insurance policy that will replace the phone if lost.

If and when your teenagers lose their phone you should consider offering them a consequence of some sort to help enforce a life lesson. Although, you have protected yourself financially, you probably don't want them to believe its no big deal to lose their phone.

Remember that if you choose a phone that is inexpensive with basic options you can have time to guide your teenager slowly through this process. One day you can give them the fully loaded amazing phone of their dreams that will make them very happy. But by taking your time to slowly allow them to build trust you can give it to them with a huge smile on your face as well.

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“We didn't buy our daughter a new cell phone. This way, if she loses it, we aren't out a whole lot of money.”

– Nicole, Awesome Mother of Teenagers

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# CHAPTER FOUR

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## GIVING THE RIGHT PHONE IN THE RIGHT WAY

# Giving the Right Phone in the Right Way

Now that you have chosen the perfect phone for your teenager, it is time to have a blast giving it to him. What an opportunity to be creative and make a memory.

Here are a few ideas for giving teenagers their first phone in a way they will never forget.

\*If you are giving it to them for a Christmas present, why not hide it in their stocking and call it during the gift exchange?

\*My friend Matt, gave away a cell phone by setting the phone's alarm by their bed so they would wake up to a surprise

\*My friend Tammy gave a phone to her daughter by finding the largest box she could and filling those boxes with other boxes of many sizes. The last box was the very small box containing the cell phone. The anticipation of watching her open all the boxes made a wonderful memory.

\*My friend Katie told me a story of when she was 16 and her parents sent her on a scavenger hunt around the house to find her new phone. Of course they called it to help her discover it on the final clue.

\*My friend Paige loaded the phone with a ringtone of a favorite song. Then she called it, only to see a fury of excitement.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST...

When your teenager takes time to learn the functions of a new phone, you might want to sit in. Trust me, there will come a time when you will want to know how to operate that phone and you will be glad you took the time to learn.

## PHONE BOOK FUN...

Help your teenagers enter in the phone numbers of their relatives and family friends that you trust. They may not have those phone numbers and this will be an opportunity for them to interact with loved ones privately. It will strengthen those relationships and give them additional people to call in case there is an emergency and they can't reach you.

## LEARN THE LANGUAGE...

ABT 2B@ KFC CIAO NRN #PAL TCOY! One day you might just pick up your teenager's cell phone and see this. When you do it will be time to find an interpreter.

When your teenagers get their phone they might speak the new language called "text lingo". Let me translate the sentence above for you. "I am about to be at Kentucky Fried Chicken, Bye. No return call is needed, because my parents are listening. Take care of yourself!"

Wondering how you are going to be able to understand the "text lingo"?

A quick google search will get you to an updated text slang dictionary that will help you navigate the harsh waters of decoded your teenager's text messages.

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“As a parent, learn to text and learn the abbreviations. Don’t try to be cool and use them (cuz then you’re a dork), but at least know what they mean so you can actually understand the text messages.”

– Janet, Text Lingo Specialist

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## MAKE SURE TO BREAK THE ICE...

Emergency responders are trained when they arrive at an accident and find a cell phone to check under the term “ICE” in the contact list. This means “in case of emergency” and one of the first things you and your teenager need to do is enter ICE into their phone with your number under it.

## EXPLAIN THE RULES OF PEEK-A-BOO...

A foundational conversation to engage in with your teenager hinges on the ownership of the phone. If you pay for the phone’s monthly plan then the phone belongs to you. It would be wise to establish an “I can look at your phone anytime I want, because I own it policy” when you first give the phone to your teenager. If you wait a while and then decide later to implement the policy, you will have an uphill battle.

A lot of really wise parents shared with me that they started with similar policies and then relaxed them over the years. That seems to work best.

## TO TRACK OR NOT TO TRACK...

You can easily use your teenager's phone to pinpoint their location. Some of you will see that as an "over the top" gesture of a paranoid parent. Others of you are saying,

"Where do I sign up?"

There are great reasons to take advantage of this feature other than snooping. You can utilize the GPS locator service, available under many parental control features, as a safety measure in case your teenager is in an accident and you need to find them.

Also, it is useful in locating a lost or stolen phone pretty quickly.

May I suggest a happy medium? If you can afford to use the tracking service I suggest you try it out. But let your teenager know that you are doing it, and explain to them that it is not just to check up on them.

## ALL NIGHT LONG...

Listen to what a teenager recently confessed. "I get into bed and reach for my phone to text someone, listen to music, or play a game before I fall asleep rather than just shutting my eyes. Sometimes I even feel a slight pressure to stay awake and continue a conversation (especially if it is with a cute boy)," she says. "A text message going off in the middle of the night will wake me up and I will usually respond." Researchers from JFK Medical Center discovered that the average teenager sends 34 text messages after they get in bed each night. Many teenagers text up to 4 hours after they go to bed.

This is why many of my friends that are parents of teenagers take preventative measures to make sure their teenager does not have a distracted slumber.

\* My friend Joy offers this suggestion, “All chargers were in my bedroom and all cell phones were turned off and charged in my bedroom overnight.”

\* My friend Megan uses the kitchen to charge, “Our phones are charged and ‘turned in’ to the kitchen counter at each specific kid’s phone curfew.”

\* My friend Keith uses a technological solution, “We have Verizon and through the parental controls I can set a time that my teenager’s phone is no longer operable. The only number they can call after 9 pm are my wife and me.”

A fabulous idea for your family would be to find some way to free your teenager from the temptation of talking or texting all night long.

## TWO THINGS WE CAN ALL AGREE ON...

I surveyed a group of parents about this topic and there were two comments that rose to the top of the list.

- One parent I work with said, "We told our boys that the cell phone is a privilege and not a right. Along with that privilege comes responsibility."

- My friend Tracy said, "It is not something that my teenager is entitled to have. It can be taken away as quickly as it was given."

So many parents said similar things because it is wise to lay down this expectation early. It sets a stage for you as a parent to offer consistent consequences without emotion when necessary. It also clearly communicates your expectation to your teenager so he can be set up for success.

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"The phone is a 'privilege' and only comes with responsible behavior. So she started with a small number of minutes. Over the past year and a half she's earned increased minutes and just this month was able to earn a limited amount of texting. I'm no expert, but placing restrictions on the phone and earning the increased privileges has worked well for us!"

- Peggy, Parent that has a Plan

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# CHAPTER FIVE

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**HOW TO STOP CELL PHONE  
FIGHTS BEFORE THEY START**



# How to Stop the Cell Phone Fights Before They Start

Welp...you have chosen the right phone, you have given the phone in the right way, and now welcome to the final step: STOPPING CELL PHONE FIGHTS BEFORE THEY START!

When my son started kindergarten the teacher sat in front of the class and asked the kids to come up with the class rules. I thought to myself, "This woman is crazy. They are going to make eating your own boogers into a class rule!"

Boy was I wrong. The students created the perfect rules for the class, and the teacher never said a word. Because the kids made the rules, they showed more respect to the rules. That teacher was a genius!

The same principle can be applied to giving a cell phone. You could just dictate a list of rules to your teenager, but I suggest you begin by asking them what the boundaries should be. They might surprise you.

I know it might make you a little uncomfortable to let them set the rules, but this is a great opportunity to allow them to practice being an adult.

Of course, once they have had their turn it will be time to take yours. When your turn comes you can use this checklist to fill in any rules your teenager may have forgotten. This is simply a list of suggestions that you can pick and choose as you please.

## DO:

- \* Try to encourage at least one friend a day through text messaging. This will make you a good friend that people enjoy being around.
- \* Communicate with your parents where you are going with your new phone.
- \* Keep your phone charged each night (preferably by the parent's bed so you know they aren't using it in the middle of the night)
- \* Call us if you ever find yourself in a situation where you feel like you are in danger or need help.
- \* Use your phone to stay connected to extended family members.
- \* Keep your grades up while owning this phone or it may result in losing the phone for a period of time.
- \* Let us know if you receive sexually explicit images or messages
- \* Stay within our family's allotted time for phone usage in our monthly cell phone plan (make sure to communicate to them what that is)
- \* Pay ahead of time for any ringtones or apps you might want to download.
- \* Pay for any repairs or needed replacement to my phone if it is lost, stolen, or damaged
- \* Follow all school policies as it applies to cell phones

# DON'T

\* Text and Drive

\* Use the phone during homework time or family meal times (you might think of some other "no phone zones" that you would like to communicate ahead of time to add to this)

\* Get involved in Cyber-Bullying. (using images, text messages, or posts on the internet to make fun of someone or hurt their reputation)

\* Use your phone to cheat in school

\* Clear your history of web searches. A clear history is not a good history.

\* Send sexually explicit images or messages

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A national survey of 1,000 16- and 17-year-olds by the American Automobile Association (AAA) found that an alarming 46 percent send text messages while driving, a practice that has led to fatal accidents nationwide.

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# THE BUILDING AND RE-BUILDING OF TRUST...

Agreeing together on what is acceptable and unacceptable lays a foundation that frees you and your teenager to build trust with another. Building trust will not be difficult, but the process of rebuilding broken trust sometimes proves to be challenging.

Let's face it. Your teenager came from your gene pool so there is a great chance they are going to break your trust at some point with the cell phone. You can either live in fear of that or be ready for action when it happens.

This is why a Cell Phone Contract is a wonderful tool. You can list together with your teenager what builds trust and what breaks trust. You can inform your teenager of the freedom they can earn as long as they are building trust. You can also clearly educate them on the consequences that will happen if they break trust.

Don't stop at that list, though, you must also include in the Cell Phone Contract a clear plan for how your teenager can re-build trust if they break it. This will give them hope when they mess up that it is not, "GAME OVER!"

You don't ever want your teenager to give up and believe they are just a bad kid. If you have communicated and agreed to the consequences ahead of time by using a Cell Phone Contract then that part is already clear.

That allows you to spend the majority of your parenting energy making this statement, "I know you messed up. You already know what the consequences are, but I also want you to know that if you can show us over the next 3 weeks that you have learned from this we will move on like it never happened."

The message your teenager hears is, "It stinks that I have to do this consequence, but it is only for 3 weeks and they will trust me again. Then I can go back to earning freedom. It is not hopeless."

# A GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR OWN CELL PHONE CONTRACT...

I want to give a quick guide to writing your own Cell Phone Contract that fits your family perfectly.

**STEP 1:** Begin with a Blessing- Take some time to explain to your teenager that you are giving them this phone because you love them and trust them.

**STEP 2:** List the “Do’s”- Let them know clearly what you want them to do with their cell phone. You can write your own and choose from the list of suggestions we made earlier.

**STEP 3:** List the Freedom that comes with Obedience- What your teenager wants more than anything is freedom. So get them excited by spelling out how you intend to dispense freedom to them as they display responsibility.

**STEP 4:** List “the Don’ts”- Clearly explain what they should not do with their cell phone. You can write your own and choose from the list of suggestions we made earlier.

**STEP 5:** List the Consequences that comes with Disobedience- This is the most valuable part of the contract because it lessens the argument. If you and your teenager agree on the consequence ahead of time, then it is already established.

**STEP 6:** Offer Hope ahead of time- Write a section that clearly spells out how they can re-earn trust and get back on the road of earning freedom.

**STEP 7:** Sign it and Post it- Have a place where both you and your teenager sign it. Then post it publicly in your house just in case you need to refer to it in the future.

I can promise you this that one Cell Phone Contract does not fit all. You can expect to adjust and adapt this contract over the adolescent journey, but this will give you a great start.

# YOU CAN DO THIS!

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It is a scary thing to give your teenager a cell phone. Who knows what they will do with it?

The reality that you must begin to embrace is that in the coming years you will have to

gradually let go many more times. Whether it is a cell phone, car keys, the first date, prom

night, or high school graduation you are guiding them one step at a time toward adulthood.

Parenting teenagers is a series of “Hold Your Breath!” moments where you simply have to trust.

I am proud of you for taking the first step in that direction. I am also proud of you for taking the time to read this ebook. Your teenager is lucky to have a parent that cares enough to learn how to guide them along this adolescent journey.

I hope you have found this ebook to be a help to you, and know that you are not alone on the parenting journey.

You Student Ministry has your back!

