

License to Drive

KICK-START WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PARENTS

Teens get more verbal jabs about being first-time drivers than they do on just about any other adolescent milestone. This R.O.P.E. is your opportunity to pour your confidence into them and give them wisdom to succeed as a driver.

It's wise to set gradual driving privileges involving where they may drive and how many passengers are allowed in their car. Don't be afraid to set incremental goals that should be met before more privileges or responsibilities are given.

FRAMING UP OUR PURPOSE

Although driving does not necessarily seem like a spiritual activity, it is crucial to teach our teens that driving is one place where either the fruit of our faith shows up...or it doesn't. As you plan this R.O.P.E., find ways to "drive" home the idea that driving is one of the first big tests of our trustworthiness and integrity.

New freedoms still call for trust in lessons that were learned throughout childhood.

"My son, keep your father's commandment, and don't forsake your mother's teaching."

--Proverbs 6:20

The incredibly fun part of being a first-time driver is the immediate freedom it offers. As you witness your 16-year-old's excitement, try to enjoy it with them. But also remind them that as parents, you have clear expectations about speed, car maintenance, and how many passengers are allowed in the vehicle. How they drive and incorporate your instructions will, in some way, demonstrate their level of trustworthiness. Remind them that this is a tremendous

opportunity for them to show respect for your teaching and obedience to your wishes when they are out of your sight.

Driving reveals a picture of our true selves.

"He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much. He who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much." --Luke 16:10

Driving is a strong test of integrity. Not only is it a time for your teen to show they can do what they have been instructed to do, but it is also a strong indicator of whether or not they will do what they say they're going to do. Try to include spiritual connections to the idea that in their driving, they should be going where they say they will go. Be sure that they are really driving phone-free and text-free and be sure that they see the importance of following even the 25 MPH speed limits in neighborhoods. Guide them in understanding how integrity (or lack of it) in this endeavor will shape your ability to trust them in bigger things in the future.

Foolishness is less painful if we recognize it before something bad happens.

“A wise man fears, and shuns evil, but the fool is hot headed and reckless.” --Proverbs 14:16

Teens are at a place in life where their knowledge is growing by leaps and bounds, and their level of impulsivity is probably at an all-time high. It’s the reason adults look back on something they did at 16 and say with disdain for themselves, “That was REALLY dumb!” But teens don’t like the word foolish being attributed to them. However, much of the information they are taking in at school is compartmentalized away from their short-sighted ability to see consequences ahead of time. The message that something they are about to do is really dumb or foolish does not typically get to the processing area of their brain until something bad happens as a result of an impulsive action. So go into your teen’s driving season with a wisdom/foolishness index in mind. Evaluate how well they are able to connect quick decisions with natural consequences.

Help them see any patterns of recklessness in other areas of their life and challenge correction in those areas before you turn them loose with the keys to the car.

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IDEAS FOR ADDING DEPTH TO THE LICENSE TO DRIVE

When you celebrate your teen’s obtaining their driver’s license, let older friends and family jot a note to them, finishing the sentence, “The most important thing I learned when I first started driving was...” or “The stupidest thing I did my first year of driving was...” There will be some funny and some poignant stories--all of which will reinforce to your teen that we identify with this new freedom they have gained.

Write a Driver’s Blessing or have someone help you write it.

Know which parent is most stressed out in the front passenger seat during the driving permit season. That parent should NOT be the primary

driving instructor in the family! If you are the only option in your house, but teaching your teen to drive sends you over the edge, and you are nervous or overly critical when they are driving, try to find a trusted adult who is willing to teach and guide your teen without overreacting.

Encourage your teen to recognize and evaluate driving issues they see with other cars on the road. It can help in troubleshooting their own mistakes.