

## ALL ACCESS

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### WE'RE TEACHING THIS

Have you ever been to a concert? Maybe you had tickets for great seats. Maybe you were in the nosebleeds. Either way, you probably noticed that everyone had the same goal in mind, to get as close as possible. There's just something about being near the band or near the artist that makes a great concert even more fun. But there's a limit, right? No matter how good your tickets are, you can only get so close. There's a velvet rope you can't cross, a hall you can't walk down, or a security guard you can't stroll right past because those areas are reserved for certain people . . . special people—people with an all-access pass. Maybe you've felt the same

way when it comes to God. Sure, you come to church and sing songs or listen, but there's a limit to how close you can get. It's almost like there's a velvet rope around certain parts of our faith that tells us those parts are restricted to special people, to church-staff people, or to super-spiritual people. But what if that's never what God intended? In this series we'll explore what the Resurrection of Jesus really meant—for real people like us. And, we'll discover that, because of Easter, we have an all-access pass to Him and to the life He has for us.

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### THINK ABOUT THIS

By Carey Nieuwhof

You may have a toddler right now who won't leave your side. You know the kind. The kid who's glued to your leg, velcroed to your arm, who keeps wanting you to read the same story again, and again, and again. It's driving you nuts some days, isn't it?

It's hard to believe, but one day, they're going to withdraw. Ask any parent who has middle schoolers. Or teenagers. It happens . . . they withdraw. And you know what happens to most parents? Most parents have no idea what to do. So they do this: When their kids withdraw, they withdraw.

Why wouldn't you? I mean it kind of works like that in life, doesn't it? When someone doesn't want to be your friend

anymore, you eventually give up and withdraw—which only makes sense. You can't be friends with someone who doesn't want to be your friend. Except that in this case, they're your family. The dynamic isn't as straightforward. So what do you do?

As a father of 2 sons, now 19 and 23, I can give you a few pointers. Now, I'm not an expert by any stretch of the imagination. I've just been confused by it long enough and have enough scars to write a few hundred words on the subject.

Basically, if you've got a kid who thinks Minecraft is far more interesting than Mom, or a son who doesn't want to watch

movies with you but seems to want to watch anything and everything with their friends, what do you do?

**1. Get Over Your Hurt.** Just admit it: It kind of hurts a little. You pour your heart into your kids, get up at 5 a.m. to take them to practice, do homework with them on nights when your brain should have had a rest hours ago, fund everything, and suddenly they find you . . . uninteresting.

As much as that kind of stinks, you're the parent. Get over it. Your job isn't to be their friend, it's to be their parent.

**2. Be Around.** When my oldest started high school, he told me, "Hey dad . . . why can't you just be like other dads and simply hang around more?" It was weird for me to hear that, because I was home a lot. But he was right. I was always busy. Being a driven person who loves what he does, I was always working on a new project or writing something new.

The penny dropped. So basically I just needed to hang around and do nothing, or at least not be preoccupied? I didn't know if I had a category for that. But I tried. I decided to hang around the house night after night with no particular agenda, just to see what happened.

The first night my oldest son went out after supper to hang out with friends and my other son was tied up with something else. I thought, well this is stupid. I wanted to go get busy with something. But my wife persisted. So I decided to give it more time.

And after a while, we started connecting much more. No agenda. Nothing pressing. Just by virtue of being in the same space in the same time repeatedly, we connected. And I learned this: While being around is no guarantee anything relationally significant will happen, not being around is an absolute guarantee nothing relationally significant will happen.

So be around.

**3. Leverage The Ordinary.** Your rhythm changes as your kids get older. Tucking your five-year-old into bed is an amazingly

glorious ritual. Tucking your 15-year-old into bed every night is just weird. You lose a lot of the rhythms of childhood when your kids get older. And if you keep invading the space they spend with their friends, you lose major points.

But there are other opportunities. Meal times are a case in point.

Take the time to eat a meal together . . . not in the car . . . not standing at the kitchen breakfast bar sucking back a smoothie on your way out the door, but at a real table, with real chairs, with real forks and real knives. And chew your food. If you take 15-30 minutes to have dinner together and turn off all your devices, amazing things happen. Amazing things like conversations. No matter how busy our lives get, we always try to sit down together for five dinners a week. If you prioritize it, it can happen.

Another great opportunity is during your drive time. I know, you feel like a taxi service. So leverage that. Turn the music off . . . or up, depending on your mood. Don't talk on the phone. Stop texting (especially if you're driving), and talk. Conversations in the car can go deeper faster because you haven't got the pressure of looking at each other.

So what happens when all this happens?

Well, you grow up. They grow up. And sometimes, they develop a habit of coming around.

I'm writing this after having lunch with my eldest son and his wife at a Mexican restaurant they found near their place in Toronto. He had called the day earlier and said, "Hey Dad, you and mom want to come down after church? We'd love to hang out with you guys." My other son now calls and texts from a university out of town . . . even when he doesn't need money. Imagine that.

Just remember this. When your kids withdraw, don't withdraw. It's so worth the fight.

*Get connected to a wider community of parents at [TheParentCue.org](http://TheParentCue.org).*

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## TRY THIS

In this series, we've been talking about the idea of "all access"—the idea that we have all access to God, which gives us access to hope and purpose. But your teenager also

needs to know they have an all-access pass to talk to you. That's certainly easier when they're younger. Bath time and bed time give you clear opportunities to talk. But as schedules

get busier and the conversations become more complicated, it may be helpful to remind your son or daughter that they still have your attention.

This week, try texting them or writing a simple note to let them know you're still available to them. It doesn't have to be long or emotional. Try something like this:

*Hey, I heard you've been talking about "all access" at church. I know sometimes it may not feel like you have or need all-access to me, but I want you to know that you can talk to me about anything, anytime. No pressure to start today. Just wanted you to know.*

Honestly, you may not get a response. That's okay. The goal is to simply re-give them permission to talk to you on their time and when they're ready.

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