

## Talking with Teens (Ages 15–17)

*When a Parent Goes to Prison*

Teens may carry the heaviest load — helping at home, watching younger siblings, and facing stigma at school. They are old enough to understand consequences and young enough to still need protection and hope.

### Key Biblical Truths

**God invites honest wrestling** (Job, the Psalms).

**Your future is not erased by a parent's past.**

**Suffering can deepen compassion and faith** when brought to God (Romans 5:3-5).

### How to Talk with Teens

**Respect their need for space** while staying available.

**Discuss facts directly** — charges, sentence length, visitation rules — without dumping every court detail.

**Name anger, grief, and loyalty conflicts as normal.**

**Encourage healthy outlets** — journaling, sports, music, trusted friends, youth group.

**Watch for depression, substance use, or self-harm.** Get professional help when warning signs appear.

### Identity, Stigma, and the Future

Teens may wonder if they are destined to repeat a parent's path. Speak identity over them: their choices matter, education and character still open doors, and God can write a different story.

### What to Avoid

Do not expect them to parent younger siblings alone, minimize their pain, or cut off contact with the incarcerated parent without thoughtful conversation (unless safety requires it).

*Teens need hope with honesty — not easy answers. Walk with them through the questions and remind them their life still has purpose in Christ.*