

## Opening Story, Unit 2: The Concert

I once read a book on parent/child communication. I am sure the author was an expert. After trying the techniques suggested in the book, I am also convinced that the author had no children. I am living proof that parents can be some of the slowest folks on the face of the earth to learn. I remember talking to Greg until I was blue in the face. Most parents believe that when we speak to our kids enough and give them sound reasoning, that our children will undoubtedly see things our way. To quote my older son, *Yeah. Then you woke up!*

I heard a story about a father with a compliant kid. This father described his son as the perfect child. One day the boy came running up to his father and said, *Dad, Billy's Mom is letting Billy's sister drive me and five of the other guys to the Forum in Inglewood, to see We Are Satan's People in concert.* With great confidence in the power of communication, the father gave his child several good reasons why he could not let his son go.

- *Son, it's a school night. You won't be able to do your homework.*
- *You'll get home too late. Without sleep you won't be able to get out of bed for school tomorrow.*
- *There will be entirely too much alcohol and other drug use at a concert like this. I don't want you exposed to that at age 14.*
- *We Are Satan's People is a self-proclaimed Satanic group. That music doesn't fit into our lifestyle at all.*
- *Billy's sister has a Toyota pick-up truck. I wouldn't let you go across the street without a seat belt, let alone clear to the Forum in Inglewood.*

After hearing his reasons, this father half-expected his compliant, perfect son to say something like, *Gee Dad. You're right. I never really thought of it that way. I'll go tell the rest of the guys. They won't want to go either.* The Dad woke up when his son said, *But Dad:*

- *I know it's a school night. I'll study an extra 4 hours a night for the rest of the week.*
- *I don't need much sleep. I promise I'll pop right out bed tomorrow morning.*
- *Don't you trust me? I would never use drugs or drink alcohol.*
- *You know I don't listen to the words. I just like the beat of the music.*
- *Billy said I could sit up front. I'll be the one wearing the seat belt.*

Yeah. Some of us are slower than others. Parents who believe that better communication is the key, forget that even compliant teenagers, are still teenagers. Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that we shouldn't talk with our kids, just the opposite. Talk to your heart's content. Share your values, feelings and reasons with your children. Our thoughts and values eventually sink in and take root. But, if we think that words alone will change a teenager's behavior,

especially a strong-willed or out-of-control child, I offer this simple advice: *Wake up! You're dreaming!*