

Connecting with Her Heart and Pursuing the True Immortal Hero Together

What a privilege to meet with you again, coming alongside you and your teen as you continue in your journey of building trust and relationship. Here are some ideas for connecting and sharing your thoughts as you work through the book. And don't forget: I would love to hear from you on my Facebook page, "Escaping the Vampire." Become a fan and write a comment telling me what you're learning about the True Hero!

Idea #1: The Twilight Craze

It's everywhere! Through TV shows, books, interviews, and movies, girls are drawn to these love stories. Check out these stats on the Twilight saga: To date, 70 million copies of the books have sold. They have been translated into thirty-seven languages. And in 2008, the *Twilight* movie brought 383 million dollars to the theater box office.

Like Bella of the Twilight series, girls long to be loved, respected, and protected. Girls are looking for a hero, yet they often settle for the counterfeit. They are drawn by the allure of the bad boy, while they really want the good guy.

These stories of forbidden love and longing are so captivating because at the core of every woman's heart is a longing to be truly, madly, and deeply loved. The latest trend is to fill this longing with stories like *Twilight*—but that kind of filling is only temporary. The joy in this longing is that a fiercely protective and true Immortal Hero loves her with perfect, unconditional, and irrevocable love. He desires to rescue her from a captive, fearful life and provide her with a life that is full of strength, freedom, purpose, and trust. And His name is Jesus!

Read again "A Message from His Heart" on page 109 of *Escaping the Vampire*. What a fabulous opportunity to think about the heart of our Hero and to dwell on Romans 5:5–8. Read these verses carefully, and specifically look for the sacrifice and the hope that His love offers each of us.

Just Breathe

Write a letter of thanks to God. Why do you appreciate His sacrifice so much? What does that tell you about Him as our Hero? Why do we need His hope so much? Ask Him to bless you as you begin this journey with your teen, praying that your hearts will be open to each other and to Him. If you feel comfortable, invite your daughter to do this exercise with you, as a starting point for your journey.

Idea #2: Building Trust

I have had many conversations with mom and mentors asking me how they can start relaxed, honest, and encouraging conversations with their teens. How do they "just talk" to them without sounding judgmental, demanding, or disconnected? How do they maintain the parental role and also establish respect and trust? It is important to establish relationship; talking about life, about day-to-day situations ... about how they are doing inside.

You may think you know her best, but talk to her heavenly Father. Have you had continual communication with your teen over the years? How would your teen answer this question? Here are some important things to remember when connecting with your teen:

- Be real with her ... open and honest
- Be vulnerable ... yet wise in what you share!
- Don't be afraid to ask God to give you understanding for the heartbeat of your daughter.

If these things don't come easily to you, don't worry; it's a process. Your daughter is striving to discover who she was created to be, and she may struggle a bit through this time. But God has created her to be an individual, so be patient and pray her through each step. She may not come to you for answers, but she will watch how you live. You play a crucial role as she discovers her true identity. It's important to continually consider how you are speaking to her, the tone of your voice, your responses, your actions, the decisions you make, and your faithfulness in your time with God.

Perfection is not our goal; we talk about that on page 27 and pages 74–76. Check out these sections, and I believe you will be inspired. Realize that you are not perfect and neither is she. Let's look to the only One who offers us perfect love.

Just Breathe

Begin a prayer journal, writing to God about your heart for relationship with your daughter. This can be a very encouraging learning tool for you. You will be able to look back and reflect on how God is working to grow your relationship with Him and with your daughter. Take a trip to a bookstore and offer to purchase your teen a prayer journal of her choice. Know that God is continually working in you just as he is working in your daughter. So there you go—a perfect way to begin to show God's grace and love to each other. Read again about His agape love on pages 164–168.

Idea #3; Connecting with Her Heart!

Set aside some time just for your teen. Let her pick the place you go together. Whether it is her favorite restaurant, a special place for coffee, or somewhere that both of you love, buy her lunch, coffee, or a desert and continue building your relationship.

Just Breathe

Begin with laughing. A laugh always sparks a memorable moment in any relationship. Then begin to share with her something about you that is unique. Maybe it's something very few people know. Maybe it's a list of little things that share a bit of vulnerability. Maybe share something that makes you feel afraid or makes you laugh, or share a dream you've never realized. Check out page 26 (Just Breathe) in *Escaping the Vampire* for more ideas.

Be real with her; she'll appreciate your vulnerability and honesty. She might be a bit shocked ... but get ready. You might even see how your openness encourages her to relax and open up to you. Don't carry expectations, but welcome her words and stories. Encourage her to share something unique about herself. And just listen.

I think we can all agree that some deep issues in life are hard to share. Think about how hard it is for you to share your deepest secrets, then put yourself in your daughter's shoes and really think how hard it must be for her. As you prepare for this journey, ask God to help you share your life as well as to be open to hear from her. This will build trust and safety for both of you. You both need to feel confident that you will not judge one another. You need this as much as she does. If your daughter begins to open up with you, listen, don't judge—this may be one of the hardest things to do. Watch her responses, and go off her cues to ask her questions. Take a break if she seems to be resistant. But don't give up.

Prepare your heart to be real with her. Be patient; this may take some time. I am praying that God will connect your hearts with an unbreakable bond.

Idea #4; She Has It All!

Have a bonfire with your daughter. Roast some marshmallows, s'mores, whatever you both would like best. Make this setting comfortable and easygoing (pillows, blankets, cool chairs). Flip through a magazine and think about how pictures of a so-called "perfect look" can make influence how you think about yourself (maybe it is gorgeous hair, seemingly perfect bodies, spotless/

wrinkle-free complexions). Think about how these pictures may influence your teen. Take a few minutes for both of you to tear out a few of these pages. Then begin to share how each picture easily influences you to compare yourself. Be sensitive to each other; just listen.

This will open up doors for communication for both of you to know a little bit about what you each struggle with. Be vulnerable and honest, willing to share what first comes to mind. Remember to only take God's thoughts of you as the truth. He tells us to take our thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ. Second Corinthians 10:5 says, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (NIV). So let God's words of truth counter what's in your head. He says you are beautiful!

"The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your Lord." (Ps. 45:11 NIV)

Ask your teen what she thinks about that verse and why it is so hard to believe.

Pull out your copies of *Escaping the Vampire* and reread Lie #1 on pages 50–52.

Just Breathe

Take some time to pray or write in your journal, sharing your struggles with God—ask Him for His courage to see yourself the way He sees you. If you're comfortable, pray for each other. Then burn those magazine pages and share at least three things that you admire about each other. You might even want to swap journals (turning to a new page, of course!) and write each other a letter, reminding each other of your valuable qualities and gifts.