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### Roots and Wings

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# FAMILY TIES

## Roots and Wings

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

*“There are two lasting bequests we can give to our children. One is roots. The other is wings.” —Hodding Carter*

Summer is nearly over, school has started for many, perhaps tearful good-byes have been said for those who have children attending boarding academy or college. Whatever the circumstances, if you have children, your schedule has changed!

But some things should not change. Whether home or away at school, our children still need a balance of our love and attention along with expressions of our confidence in them. They need to know we see them growing to be more independent and responsible for their lives, but believe they are still close to our hearts. If your child is away at school, verbally acknowledge and affirm her importance in your family, and let her know she is missed.

Avoid hurtful humor. Statements like “Now the grocery bill won’t be so high” or “Whew, now I’ll have a break from so much laundry” carry a sting. Remarks also are hurtful that convey that your life is more difficult because of a looming school bill. In most cases, parents make the decision where their children will attend school. Although kids should contribute appropriately (working on campus and/or contributing some of their summer earnings toward their education), they are not responsible for the financial difficulties that may result from a decision to invest in Christian education.

Parents may assume their children don’t need or want them to come to campus or they “bother” them too much. Generally, academy and college students want to see their parents, even though they may not ask specifically. Be aware of on-campus events your child is involved with, and make it a priority to attend.

Some parents are like helicopters, hovering over their children with too many demands, phone calls, texts and even campus visits. College students indicate they are more likely to be depressed and dissatisfied with life when their parents are over-involved.

When on campus, make an effort to know your child’s friends; include them in conversations and meals out, or even invite them to your home at some point in the school year. Remember, you can be a cheerleader for kids who don’t have the home support they so desperately desire.

Teens complain! While the adage “If you are in trouble at school, you will be in trouble at home” has left many without the support they need (as sometimes teachers and staff are in error), siding with your child without knowing the full extent of their angst or the staff’s reasoning is not helpful. To listen with concern is one thing; to take your child’s “side” just because they are your child is another.

Always remember that God’s work is not yet finished in any of us. Even if your son or daughter is making choices that trouble you now, the last chapter is yet to be written. Continue to pray for your child, his friends, and the teachers and staff who interact with your child on a daily basis throughout the school year.

Susan E. Murray is a professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, and she is a certified family life educator and licensed marriage and family therapist.

