

Foundation of Christian Parenting – Lessons 12
College Age & Marriage

Introduction

Leaving home is a significant passage for both the parents and their child. For the child leaving home and gaining freedom and independence is exciting, exhilarating, and a little scary. They can be apprehensive about a new situation, yet ready for the challenge. They are growing up and away from us and life will never be the same again. Parents struggle with mixed feelings. They are joyous as their child exhibits a sense of maturity and have completed the passage through high school and received their diploma. They should not compromise on the basic values and morality that they have worked to instill throughout their child's life.

Teaching Self-Respect

During the high school years, a parent has moved the responsibility for their teen's development from their shoulders to their teen's. The more responsibility a parent gives their teen during the high school years, the more opportunities they will have had for success and the building of self-respect. Teens are maturing into young adults and are searching for the truth and answers to life, for themselves. A parent's challenge is to help their teen develop self-respect. Teens with healthy self-respect discover that the secret to finding themselves is to find satisfaction in making wise choices and in offering respect to others. Parents should instill the understanding in their teen:

- The reasons we do what we do are more important than what we do
- We were put here to serve, not to be served (**Mark 10:45**)
- What we give is more important than what we are given (**Acts 20:35**)
- Through humility, we gain confidence (**Prov. 3:26; 14:26, Phil. 4:13**)

As the older teen/young adult is leaving home, it is still important to stay connected, communicate regularly and be available to listen. Although your child may not be willing to admit it, they are still relying on you to be there for them when they need encouragement or advice. Parents are a steady force in an otherwise changing world for them during this period. Before a child moves out of the home, there are three questions that parents should help their teen/young adult answer:

1. Who am I?

A parent's goal should be that a teen feels a sense of closeness with their parents in a caring relationship. They must know that there is nothing they must do to make you love them more and nothing they can do to make you love them less. **I Cor. 13:4-7** talks about "Unconditional love" and a parent's goal should be to enable their teen to face the world with enough self-respect to thrive in it. The choices that they make determine who they will become. Examples would be allowing a child to experience consequences of poor choices and allowing mistakes in order to mold character. A parent should ask their teen that is preparing to leave for college thought-provoking questions:

- What do they believe about premarital sex? (**Matt. 19:5-6**)
- What are their goals for themselves -- both spiritually and physically? (**Prov. 3:6**)
- What is more important to them—character or money? (**I Tim. 6:10, Heb. 13:5**)
- How is their relationship with God? (**Deut. 5:33, I Pet. 2:2-3, I Tim. 4:6-8, II Pet. 1:5-8, Eph. 3:14-19**)
- What will be their determining factor in making decisions—what their "friends" say or do or what God would want them to do and why? (**Ps. 118:8**)

- What characteristics are they looking for in a mate?—impress upon them the importance of finding someone that is also a Christian and shares common values (**II Cor. 6:14**)

2. Can I be in charge?

Our society says whatever feels good is good and right. It is hard for parents to give teens responsibility for dealing with their own problems, because often the consequences of their behavior might be embarrassing or uncomfortable.

- When mistakes are made, don't rescue your teen; instead help your child resolve the problem
- Help your college-bound teen develop goals and determine a method to accomplish those goals—then step back and watch
- Remind your teen that God is in charge of us all (**Rev. 4:11**)
- Don't ever forget that your children will benefit from a parent's example as much as from their training (**Deut. 6:6-9**)
- Respect for parents, God and others becomes respect for self and results in a respectful young adult

3. What is the basis for my faith?

When a teen has been raised in a Christian family, it is easy for them to rely on the faith of their parents instead of developing their own faith. Once they leave home, they will be relying on their faith as they continue down the path of developing into a strong and faithful Christian.

It is time for the teen to know:

- What are the necessary steps for salvation? (**Hear—Rom. 10:14,17; Believe—John 6:29; Repent—Acts 2:38; Confess—Rom. 10:10; Baptized—Mark 16:16**)
- How important is prayer in their life? (**Phil. 4:6, I Thes. 5:17-18, Matt. 7:7-11**)
- How influential can friends and bad behavior be in their life? (**I Cor. 15:33**)
- Why is being active in the local Church so important? (**Heb. 10:23-25, Acts 2:42-44**)

One outward sign of their faith will be their determination to continue regular attendance at worship services in the city where they are going to college. Parents can help them in being faithful in their attendance by ensuring that a faithful congregation is located as close as possible to the campus or where they will be living. Make connection with the elders at that congregation so that they can encourage their child after the parents have returned home. Continue to ask them about the local congregation and their attendance at services. They will see that it continues to be a priority with you.

Saying Good-bye

As we say good-bye and can see the child of the past gone and in their place an adult—a grown-up person, we may feel some sorrow. We may have a measure of regret about what things we could have done better in raising our child and preparing them for life. A parent questions how they should guide from a distance and how they should act when their child returns home or when they are in their child's home. A parent may have a sobering feeling when they have the realization that they are getting older and the family structure and dynamics are changing. Very quickly, a parent will find their relationship with their child changes as they become young adults. This feeling of change will become even more pronounced when the child gets married:

- When a child marries, the mother and father transition from being the authoritarian to becoming an advisor (**Matt. 19:5**)
- As husband and wife, our example of love and commitment to each other will be remembered by our children (**Eph. 5:22-33**)
- There may be a feeling of confusion by the changing roles -- the kids will operate as their own bosses and establish the rules in their own home and parents need to respect the rules established including rules with their children
- This is the time in their life when you can be their friend and confidant

Conclusion

We must continue to pray for our children even when they are grown and no longer live with us. We have to trust our parenting efforts and trust our sons and daughters as we trust the Lord for continued guidance both in our lives and in the lives of our children. We must release the child from our grasps – they are now adults and are largely responsible for their own lives. If the parent and child have made mistakes, spoken hateful words and chosen wrong directions that is now in the past. Make a fresh start. If they are striving to live a Godly life, give them your blessing – tell them of your approval. Always reassure them of your love no matter their choices in life. God has demonstrated his love for us even when we stumble and fall—we should do the same for our children. Remember the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-31, roll with the changes and keep the communication lines open.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do parents and children find the transition to College difficult?
2. Why is it important for parents to transfer more responsibility to their teens during the High School years?
3. What questions should parents help their children answer as they transition to their College years?
4. How does a parent's role change after a child gets married?