

PARENTING 19-22 YR OLDS

Navigating the Transition Years

SESSION ONE – GOALS AND GUIDELINES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. As parents, we are in different places.

1. Encouraged
2. Discouraged
3. Unsure

B. While my main audience is parents, singles can benefit today as well.

1. This is not the time to evaluate your parents. The word of God evaluates us.
2. As we discuss different topics as parents, consider how you're doing in those areas.
3. If your mom and/or dad fall short as a parent, consider how you've fallen short as a child.

C. We all have the same hope.

1. Jesus Christ came to redeem sinners for his Father's glory. (1 Tim. 1:15-17)

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:15-17)

2. Passing our faith on to future generations is God's plan. (Dt. 6:7-8; Eph. 6:4))

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (Dt. 6:7-8)

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)

II. WHAT ARE OUR GOALS AS PARENTS DURING THIS SEASON?

A. First, to encourage, confirm, and cultivate a genuine conversion and a personal devotion to Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

1. If your child isn't converted, your first responsibility before God goal is to persuade him or her that salvation and satisfaction are found only in Jesus Christ.
2. That devotion is evidenced in a number of ways, including practicing of the spiritual disciplines, commitment to the local church, a heart to serve, a pursuit of holiness, and a desire to share the gospel with others.
3. Conversion involves more than praying a prayer as a young child.

B. Second, to extend care and counsel as our children enter the next season(s) of life.

1. Many decisions and temptations.
2. In most cases, our children will live at home for only a small portion of their lives.
3. Parents are meant to be an invaluable means of grace and instruction during this time, bringing perspective, history, and compassion to the situation.

C. Third, to lead our children into biblical maturity and wisdom. (Prov. 3:13-18)

My son, do not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. (Prov. 3:21-22)

1. One aspect of maturity is being able to make wise, God-honoring choices when no one watching or imposing a decision.
2. An equally important aspect of maturity is a healthy self-mistrust that leads to self-disclosure, teachableness, and seeking the counsel of others.

Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered. (Prov. 28:26)

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (James 3:13-17)

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. (Prov. 18:1)

3. Our goal for ourselves and our children is not self-exalting independence, but God-exalting dependence.
4. Our young adults will understand maturity more easily if we exemplify this kind of humble wisdom in our own lives.

D. Fourth, to lead our children in influencing others, including future generations, to trust in, obey, and worship Jesus Christ.

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (Ps. 78:4-7)

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

1. God wants us to have a view of parenting that goes beyond raising children who are good citizens, easy to get along with, or who stay out of trouble.
2. We must look beyond our own experiences, preferences, and expectations to ask what God is doing on the earth.
3. While families and parenting are important themes in Scripture, they contribute to God’s greater plan to redeem a people for his glory.
4. Throughout Scripture, God often uses young men and women to accomplish his purposes. (Joseph, Josiah, Daniel, Mary, Timothy)

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, (Acts 2:17)

5. What kind of difference can your son or daughter make for the sake of the gospel?

III. GETTING OUR BEARINGS

A. Our children are no longer completely dependent on us. They are young adults, potentially capable of:

1. living on their own
2. making their own money
3. establishing their own home with a spouse

B. Our position changes from one of authority to influence

1. God's command to children, "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex. 20:12), has no time limit or date of expiration.
2. But as our children get older, authority that's demanded will be lost.
3. Ultimately, we are responsible to influence our children to obey and fear God as the ultimate authority.

C. Primary Areas of Focus

1. Our relationship
 - a. Scripture assumes that the relationship between parents and children will continue into the later years. (1 Tim. 5:4, 8)
 - b. Parents must continue to cultivate a strong relationship with their young adult children.
 - c. Instruction or counsel apart from a good relationship will bear little, and potentially bad, fruit.
 - d. Pursue any and all avenues of communication: meals out, night time conversations, emails, Facebook, chat, Twitter, etc.
 - e. One of the primary hindrances to a relationship is sinful judgment, that is, "claiming to know motives without actual or complete evidence." The stronger the feeling, the quicker to speak, the more forceful my point – more probable that I am judging

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. (Prov. 18:2)

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (Prov. 18:13)

2. Our example
 - a. If our example contradicts our message, our children will have a difficult time hearing us.
 - b. We must model what we want our children to practice, including gospel-centeredness, humility, a love for the church and God's Word, serving, evangelism, etc.

3. God's provision

a. His Word

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16)

b. His gospel

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom. 1:16)

c. His Holy Spirit

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26-27)

d. His church

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4:15-16)

e. Keeping God in the picture inspires faith, produces peace, motivates prayer, and cultivates a fear of God.

IV. THREE APPROACHES TO PARENTING YOUNG ADULTS

A. Oppressive, authority-based engagement

1. Over-involved
2. Focused on rules and responses
3. Can be rooted in a craving for respect or control
4. This can tempt young adults to rebellion, mindless compliance, or bitterness.

B. Inconsistent or non-existent engagement

1. "It's too late...We can't do anything...They should be on their own."
2. Sometimes the result of changing responsibilities or living situations
3. Can be rooted in the fear of man, selfishness, and unbelief

His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?" (1 Kings 1:6)

C. Ongoing, Gospel-centered engagement

“Your heart’s desire in every phase of childrearing is to see your children internalize the gospel.” (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding A Child’s Heart*, 224)

1. Humble
 - a. Aware of your own sin
 - b. Regularly confess your sin
 - c. Receive the counsel of others
 - d. Seek the input of others

2. Focused on the heart

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (Prov. 4:23)

- a. Don’t settle for surface conversations.
- b. We must do more than assign labels (*worldly, rebellious, independent, deceptive*). We must explore motives, desires, values, and beliefs.
- c. Take time to ask “why, how long, how much, what for?”
- d. Key questions: What direction is your child’s heart headed? From what do they derive their identity?

3. Redemptive

- a. Our job is to keep help our children keep the gospel in view, whether they’re converted or not.
- b. We are never beyond the hope that Jesus has purchased for us at the cross.

V. THREE RESPONSES OF SINGLES TO THEIR PARENTS

A. Resistant to engagement.

1. Avoid interaction
2. Look elsewhere for input
3. Argue
4. Act defensively

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. (Prov. 18:1)

B. Open to engagement.

1. “I’m here if you want to talk.”
2. Often waits for a crisis to open up.

C. Pursuing engagement.

1. Is aware of the deceitfulness of the heart. (Jer. 17:9)
2. Pursues growth through confession of sin, self-disclosure, and seeking counsel.

An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. (Prov. 18:15)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:7)

SESSION TWO – RULES AND RELATIONSHIPS

I. LEGALISM, LICENSE, AND LIBERTY

A. Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience to God. (C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross-Centered Life*).

1. Characterized by self-righteousness, sinful judgment, and a fear of being infected by the sin of others. “Bad company corrupts good character.
2. But often based on our own standard of righteousness, not God’s.
3. Results in ostracizing, lack of reaching out, staying away from Christians who are struggling.
4. The impulse of the legalist is to leave rather than love, separate rather than serve, condemn rather than care.

B. License is misinterpreting grace and mercy as an opportunity to sin. Donald Whitney defines it as “living as though freedom in Christ means there are no measurable standards of spirituality.”

1. License is seeking to take advantage of grace.
2. Gladly joins in with non-Christians, but others can see no appreciable difference in their behavior or values.
3. Rarely considers a biblical rationale or support for their behavior.

C. Christian liberty is freedom of practice in matters that the Scripture does not clearly define as right or wrong. Liberty is to be exercised for the glory of God and the good of others. (Craig Cabaniss, 2009 Sovereign Grace Pastor’s Conference, “The Pastor and Christian Liberty.”)

1. Liberty does not mean we can do whatever we want.
2. Christian liberty is a fruit of the gospel and must be exercised in light of the gospel.

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13)

D. Areas to cultivate a conviction

1. Alcohol
2. Non-addictive tobacco use
3. Music
4. Appearance
5. Dancing
6. Fads
7. Technology
8. Media and entertainment

E. Five questions to ask to help young adults build a biblical conviction:

1. Does God's Word speak directly to this activity?
2. What counsel have you sought and received, especially from us?
3. What are your specific temptations? (i.e., is this wise for *you*?)
4. Is this legal?
5. Does this activity contribute to you loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving others as yourself? (Mt. 22:37-39)

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9-11)

F. Don't confuse external conformity but internal maturity.

1. The goal is not that your children would agree with you in every decision, but that their lives would be a practical picture of submission to God. (Paul Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 204)
2. If your young adult is a Christian, help them "think like a Christian," that is, someone who has been bought for a price, and is no longer their own (1 Cor. 6:20).

G. True Christian liberty means seeking to honor God and exploring gospel opportunities, not doing whatever we please.

H. Legalism and license are typically the result of making decisions from an individualistic perspective. Christian liberty, however, is always exercised in light of the community (Rom. 14:1, 15:1, 15:7)

1. The focus is how what I do might affect those around me and how I can contribute to the strengthening and unity of the church.
2. If our children believe they can do anything they want because they're "free in Christ," they haven't yet grasped the profound corporate aspect of Christian freedom.

I. Frequently young adults engage in "grey" areas not out of Christian liberty, but self-confidence, lack of discernment, or a reaction to their upbringing.

J. Young adults may need help to see why a particular activity is sin. On the other hand, parents may too quickly assume they know their child's motive or degree of involvement in an activity.

II. NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX – FOUR LEVELS

A. How to use these descriptions

1. Meant to simplify and help think through relationships.
2. Too many categories creates confusion.
3. Don't make these four levels a law or a temptation to anxiety.
4. Every relationship requires definition and communication.

B. Friendship – committed to serve

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. (Rom. 12:9-11)

1. The primary focus of friends is serving, not selfishness; encouraging, not enticing, preparing, not playing.
2. The more we serve, the more opportunities we find for relationships to develop.
3. Excessive attention shown to an individual prior to expressing a commitment can lead to misunderstanding, confusion, temptation, gossip, bitterness, and immorality, among other things.
4. If people are asking about two people being together, they probably need to have a conversation or change their behavior.

C. Discovery/Pursuit – committed to explore

1. With humility

Love does not insist on its own way (1 Cor. 13:5).

Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him (Prov. 26:12).

- a. Ask others if you're ready, or if they have any reservations.
- b. Involve other people for observations, input. It's unwise to trust your assessment of how the relationship is going.
- c. No list of principles that applies to every situation or every person.
- d. Don't think your job is done when you've simply sought counsel. Consider the advice you receive and get back to the person if you disagree with it.

2. With integrity

Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out (Proverbs 10:9)

Love does no wrong to a neighbor (Rom. 13:10).

a. Clear, not vague, communication

Don't allow actions to get ahead of your commitment.
Don't try to manipulate or discover feelings.

b. Clear intentions in the relationship

Goal is to find out if God intends this relationship to lead to marriage.
Communicate where you're at as the relationship progresses.
Don't allow display of affection to exceed what you've communicated.
Don't be checking out other prospects while exploring a specific relationship.
Remain friends even if the relationship doesn't lead to marriage.

3. With purity

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. (1 Thess. 4:3-6)

"Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity." (1 Tim. 5:1-2)

a. Establish clear guidelines and keep them.

b. Five reasons why sexual affection outside marriage is wrong or unwise:

- 1) Can lead to further sin.
- 2) Can confuse the woman.
- 3) Makes it difficult to maintain friendship if you have to end the relationship.
- 4) Makes it difficult to hear God's direction.
- 5) Sexual affection is meant for your spouse. (Heb. 13:4)

4. With intentionality.

- a. What does the other person believe? Why do they believe those things?
- b. How well does the other person understand and apply the Gospel?
- c. How strong is their walk with God?
- d. What major experiences have shaped their life?
- e. How do they relate to their family and others?
- f. How does they respond to correction? How faithful are they to correct others, especially me?

5. With faith

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Heb. 11:6).

For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23b).

- a. Believe that God will speak clearly to both of you.
- b. Allow time for space to reflect on the relationship so God CAN speak.
- c. When a major concern arises, evaluate the relationship and end it if necessary.

D. Engagement – committed to marry

1. A man is ready for engagement when he knows he's found the woman he wants to lead, care for, cherish, provide for, and protect for the rest of his life (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Pet. 3:7; Prov. 5:15-19; Col. 3:19).
2. A woman is ready for engagement when she knows she's found the man she wants to serve, respect, love, honor, submit to, encourage, and support for the rest of her life (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6; Col. 3:18).
3. Length of engagement can be affected by the maturity of the couple, the history of the relationship, the church and family calendar, the administrative ability of the couple, geographical locations, and more.
4. Long engagements can introduce potential temptation, but aren't morally wrong.

E. Marriage – committed to fulfill

1. Marriage is God's idea and is to be fulfilled in line with his purposes.

The Fall did not alter the Creator's design or standards for marriage and family, and he still expects these institutions to be marked by monogamy, fidelity, heterosexuality, fertility, complementarity, and durability. (Andreas Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 272).

2. As of 2005, the first marriage for men is now at age 26.7. For females, the age is 25.

The delay of marriage has caused any number of ills in the larger society, and in the church. Honesty compels us to admit that this is indeed tied to levels of sexual promiscuity and frustration, even as it means that many persons are now marrying well into their adult years, missing the opportunity of growing together as a young couple, and putting parenthood potentially at risk. (Al Mohler's blog, Aug. 20, 2004, http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2004-08-20).

3. The first and most clarifying question to ask when attracted to someone of the opposite sex is, "Am I ready to be married?"
4. If not, that's what sets the agenda for relationships – preparing to be someone who is ready to be married.

F. Don't make preferences obligatory

1. Keep the non-negotiable list to a minimum.
2. Major on the majors (conversion, love for God's Word and the gospel, commitment to the church, humility).
3. Minor on the minors (education, savings, giftings, family background)

G. What if my child is seeing someone I wouldn't have approved of?

1. Resist sinful judgment.
2. Get to know the individual.
3. Talk to your son or daughter about what they find appealing in this person.
4. Seek to help them grow in godly discernment.
5. Keep the lines of communication and encouragement open.

SESSION FOUR – COLLEGE, CAREER, AND BEYOND

I. WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING COLLEGE AND CAREER DECISIONS

A. God's unique design for men and women.

1. Gender is a central component of how each of us is to reflect God's image (Gen. 1:27). Given its fundamental importance in creation, we must factor our gender into our thinking about any area of life.
2. We don't do anything merely as a Christian. We do everything as a Christian man or woman.
3. Scripture encourages and invites Christians to pursue education for the glory of God. Pursued rightly, it can develop your mind and enlarge your soul. It can prepare us for our vocation. It can also make us arrogant.
4. Men are called *primarily* to provide for a family. They should pursue whatever education is necessary to enable them to provide for others.
5. Women are called *primarily* to nurture a family.
6. We should seek to instill in our young adults a robust view of God-glorifying manhood and womanhood that allows for a woman pursuing higher academic education without minimizing, neglecting, or disdain the high calling of being a wife and mother.
7. Both men and women are called to bring glory to God by serving others with their gifts.
8. No cookie-cutter approach to this issue. The key is maintaining a compelling demonstration and a persuasive biblical conviction of the value God places on the complementary differences between men and women.

B. Gifts and abilities

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

1. God intended for every Christian man and woman to participate in his task of recreation in the earth, through using the unique gifts he has given them.
2. We are responsible to develop those gifts and abilities given to us by God, for his glory and his purposes.
3. We reflect God's image and character by using the gifts he has given us.

C. Passions

God will often lead us through the activities that most inspire, refresh, and stimulate us.

D. Relationships

Parents, relatives, friends, and other church members are often the primary means God uses to direct us in our future path.

II. OTHER ISSUES

A. Responding to a child who wants to live outside the home

1. Take time to discover the reasons.
2. Talk through the issues of maturity and trust.
3. Make any expectations of interaction clear in advance.
4. Maintain communication.

B. Parenting a rebellious and unconverted young adult.

1. Pray.
2. Seek counsel from your pastor.
3. Review these notes.
4. Pick your battles. Sunday morning attendance, certain meals, meetings, etc.
5. If they are a negative influence on the rest of the family or refuse to submit to basic rules, it may be wise to ask them to leave.

C. Relating to your married children

1. Continue to make yourself available for counsel.
2. Don't require your married children to maintain a level of commitment to you and the rest of the family.
3. If you see them pursuing an unwise path, speak up.
4. Be generous.
5. Do everything you can to make their home prosperous in God's eyes.

III. Q&A