



faith PATH

LAUNCH

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*releasing your child
to embrace independence*

We've all heard the phrase "failure to launch" describing young men and women who don't make the transition into responsible adulthood. Unfortunately, many parents inadvertently keep their children from growing up due to overprotection and lack of intentionality. Whether your son or daughter is going off to college, joining the military or entering the workforce, how can you be intentional about successfully launching them into a God-honoring life?

BE A COACH

As the parent of an older teen on the verge of adulthood, you are a very important coach. You can motivate, encourage, challenge and advise, but you can't force-feed. You can help your child articulate what they believe, challenge their thinking, remind them of the "basics" already learned during earlier years, but the time has come for your child to truly own his or her own beliefs and choices. Provide a listening ear as they wrestle with and possibly question the values they learned as a child. Also, remember that it is not your responsibility to protect your child from failure and suffering—these are often the things that will help them learn and mature the most! Maintaining a strong relationship is key, and this includes frequent, open dialogue.

KEEP CHRIST CENTRAL

During the transition into adulthood, your son or daughter will face a lot of big questions, including: Where should I go to college? What does God want me to do with my life? Where should I live? Who should I marry? As parents we will offer a lot of practical advice about setting goals, choosing a job, finding a spouse and so on. But we must also elevate the importance of making decisions in light of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Both small and large decisions can be lifted up to God in prayer. The last words of King David to his son Solomon provide a model for parents advising emerging adults: "And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind" (1 Chronicles 28:9). As your child leaves home, God will be a constant in their life in a way that we as parents cannot be. Be explicit about the advantages of keeping Christ central through these life-changes.

GIVE A VISION FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Parents often go to extremes to help a child prepare for college or the workforce, but don't know exactly what they can do when it comes to preparing them for the more important work of marriage and family. While a small minority will be called to life-long celibate service, most young people are called to marriage and family. We sometimes overlook how much marriage and family serve as the organizing structure of life and the prime arena for our spiritual development. You have a vital part to play in helping your child leave your nest and become united to their future spouse in a healthy, life-giving relationship. Talk with your child about the joy you find in your marriage. Talk about the joys of parenting. Talk about the danger of overworking and being excessively absorbed in your career.

MAKE THE MOST

While leaving home is a healthy and good process, it can be emotional for parent and child alike. Ease the pain by using the remaining time your son or daughter has at home to create lasting memories. Spend quality time together connecting and talking about the exciting adventure of adulthood.

PREPARE THEM

Set your child up for the best opportunity to succeed and make an easy transition.

1. Plan special times together to discuss the future in the context of God's incredible vision for their young adulthood. Remind them, as God reminded the prophet Jeremiah, that "I know the plans I have for you...to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29.11-13).
2. Choose a particular book or resource to read together. Schedule coffee dates to talk through specific topics or chapters.
3. Write a letter of blessing to encourage your child. Let your child know that you are praying for them during this season of transition.

INTENTIONAL FAITHPATH PLAN

CHILD'S NAME _____

How will you be intentional this next year?

- Pray daily for and with my child.
- Attend church regularly.
- Schedule and have regular family times.
- Create a habit of worship with my child, teaching them “why we do what we do.”
- Consistently spend time in God’s Word with my child.
- Help my child develop the habit of giving some of their money back to God.
- Schedule a time to serve the wider community together as a family.
- Talk with my child about the upcoming changes of puberty.
- Sign my child up for Confirmation.
- Coach my child to set healthy boundaries.
- Schedule a time to bless and give my child a vision for the future.
- Schedule regular times of connecting with my child to help prepare for the launch into adulthood.
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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *“Go With God,”* by theologian Stanley Hauerwas, is a fantastic article for teens who are about to enter college. It can be accessed at firstthings.com.
- *Don’t Waste Your Life*, by John Piper, is a book written from an evangelical perspective.
- *Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower’s Guide for the Journey*, by Jonathan Morrow.
- *How to Stay Christian in College*, by J. Budziszewski.

INCARNATION’S CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

Bringing Faith Home: incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home

Children & Family Ministry: incarnation.org/grow/children