

Launching Young Adults

After years of saying, “When I grow up, I’m gonna be…” there comes a point in which your children start going through the steps of actually making it happen. Dr. James Dobson calls ages 16 to 26 the “critical decade” as young people transition from childhood to an adult. We’ve all heard the phrase “failure to launch” describing young men and women who don’t make that transition for one reason or another. Unfortunately, more and more parents are inadvertently keeping their children from growing up by protecting them from the risks necessary to adulthood. How can you be intentional about successfully launching your older children?

STEP ONE: Be a Good Coach

As the parent of a teen on the verge of adulthood, you are in the prime of the coaching years. You can motivate, encourage, challenge and advise, but you can’t force feed.

You can help your son or daughter articulate what they believe, challenge their thinking, remind them of the “basics” they learned during their earlier years, but the time has come for them to truly own their beliefs. Through that process, you can provide a safe environment to wrestle with and even question the values they learned as children.

The key to your influence at this point is in maintaining a strong relationship and frequent, open dialogue.

STEP TWO: Give Perspective Amid Their Big Questions

Making the transition into adulthood, your son or daughter will face big questions like: What kind of work should I do? Where should I live? What should I do with my life? The most important thing you can do during this season is to direct them back to overarching Biblical principles.

The last words of King David to his son Solomon (in 1 Chronicles 28:9) 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, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you"

In the midst of the practical advice parents may offer on setting goals, choosing a job, finding a spouse and so forth, we must also elevate God’s principles such as...

- *Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain (Psalm 127:1).*
- *Lose your life to find it (Luke 9:23-24).*
- *Number your days aright (Psalm 90:12).*
- *Seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).*

What they do is not as important as who they are. Be careful not to stress worldly success over Godly success.

STEP THREE: Give a Vision For Community and Marriage

Parents of teens often help their children get ready for college and the workforce, but don’t know exactly what they can do when it comes to preparing them for vital community life, marriage and family. As Christians, we are called to actively participate in our communities positively influencing the people around us for the Kingdom of God.

We sometimes overlook how much marriage and family serve as the organizing structure of life. You have a vital part to play in helping your children become mature adults. This is a process that begins years before they meet their future mate – in their hearts as well as yours. Actively modeling a Christian family is the foundation; and daily prayer for your child’s future is an important commitment.

Encourage your older children to find ways to serve the community with other believers. Older teens are transitioning into adulthood in every area of their lives, not just in their relationship with you. If they feel disconnected socially, brainstorm ways they can find connection while “giving back” to the community through service or social events. When they leave for college or enter the workforce for the first time, they must often leave friends, youth groups, and the structure of teen activities. Point out ways they can be involved in bringing God’s kingdom into the world around them. This can be done by affirming the gifts God has given them.

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Recommended Book:

Some books are available for checkout at the Faith@Home Center or for purchase online.

Life on the Edge (by Dr. James Dobson) offers Biblical principles to help young adults face “crucial questions about identity, education, marriage, career, God’s will” and more.

The Myth of Adolescence: Raising Responsible Children in an Irresponsible Society (by David Allen Black)

Recommended Website:

Boundless.org webzine provides young adults with a community of mentors and fellow believers throughout the season of transition from high school to starting a family.