

Focus on the Future: College, Careers, and More

High school begins with great excitement for the new challenges and opportunities ahead. But it is not long before teens begin to ask the bigger questions and the restlessness for answers grows. This session brings together a panel of four experienced moms to discuss the questions common to this phase of life, and to share how they helped their teens successfully discern their next steps in life.

Topic 1: Discernment

- A. God has a purpose and a plan for each child (and for you)
 - 1. This is number one for a reason! You are partnering with their Creator/Maker/Redeemer. Your job is to be confident and secure in Him whether you feel it or not. Remember this is not about *your* identity; it is about *their's*.
 - 2. Be ready for "out-of-left-field" comments and questions. Hold tight to your own identity and purpose as their provision for this stage.
 - 3. Don't neglect your own heart and faith. Be real; it's the biggest teacher for them.
- B. Accept and Learn to "Sit in" with the uncertainty of this stage:
 - 1. Look and talk about giftings, what motivates them?
 - 2. Do they need to be pushed to dive into awkward and uncomfortable?
 - 3. When they shut down, or abruptly "change."
 - 4. This is a crazy time of uncertainty but we can be certain that their path and purpose is prepared. We are pushing them to the true, the good and the beautiful and away from the lies that they see and are tempted to believe about themselves and the Lord.
- C. Communicate confidence that they will reach a good decision.
 - 1. It is helpful to be listening and watching closely. Again, Partnership!
 - 2. Walking with the Holy Spirit and letting go of them in increments when you see them owning their own walk.
 - 3. Grace in the bad decision. Romans 8:28.
- D. Help them not be too set too soon; protect their hearts.
 - 1. School, Career, Marriage, Dating, Mission
- E. Pray
 - 1. Pray
 - 2. Pray
 - 3. Pray
 - 4. It really is number one. Watch and believe and let your faith grow as you choose to believe and entrust your children to Jesus. Your growing faith and choice to not panic will affect them.

Topic 2: Detachment

- A. Be a consultant / coach / wise guide at this stage.
 - 1. We are the bridge to assist them to the other side
Childhood > Adulthood
 - 2. Navigating Relationships: Family, Friends, and Romance
 - 3. School: what is the right choice?
 - 4. Jobs: applying / interviewing
 - 5. Don't Forget: Taxes, insurance, forms, and other mundane adult tasks
- B. Wait and Trust: Learn to Be Quiet
 - 1. Fewer words: sometimes silence speaks volumes
 - a. Silent disapproval can be more effective than verbal confrontation
 - b. Praise and a pat on the back for good choices are much appreciated
 - 2. More kind acts
 - 3. Positive Reinforcement
- C. Pray
 - 1. Lean on the Holy Spirit for wisdom, comfort, and peace
 - 2. Be a prayer warrior for them; this is vital.
 - 3. Ask them directly how you may pray for them.
- D. Communicate
 - 1. Be open with them about your difficulty in letting go
 - 2. Be to them what you wish your parents had been (or were) for you
 - 3. Set clear requests and expectations
 - e.g. "I would like you to be home for the family dinner on the 18th; will that work in your schedule?"
 - 4. "My job is to let go; your job is to reach back."
- E. R.E.S.P.E.C.T.
 - 1. This is a two-way street.
 - 2. Attempt to treat them as adults.
 - 3. Be polite with one another.

Topic 3: Direction

- A. Biggest point: Keep as many doors open, as long as possible.
- B. Every child is different.
 1. Early Bloomers (small % of kids)
 - a. Have always known what they wanted to do
 - b. Have a very specific talent or interest
 - c. Have a family tradition already in place
(i.e. specific school/career in mind)
 2. Late Bloomers (large % of kids)
 - a. Have *no idea* what they want to do
 - b. Have *too many ideas* of what they want to
 3. No category has an easier time with figuring out a direction.
 - a. Kids with talent/interest still need to have broad options available to them
 - still need to be able to make a living at the talent/interest, or else it simply becomes a very expensive hobby
 - need to be able to pivot for unforeseen circumstances
 - b. Kids without a specific direction also need to have broad options available if they try one path and decide to change
- C. It's going to take actual effort.
 1. Kids will not know where to begin either.
 2. Start the conversation and keep it going throughout high school
 3. Treat it like making a great spaghetti sauce: put the ingredients together, bring it up gently, get it simmering, be watchful, keep testing it along the way to adjust the taste (adding new/more ingredients), until it's ready.
 4. Research:
 - a. Careers / Fields
 1. What the entry level is like
 2. What is possible down the road
 3. Do you need an advanced degree?
 - b. Degree programs / Schools
 1. Size of school/size of program
 2. Location: Urban, Suburban, rural; close to home or far away
 3. Public, Private, Faith-based
 4. Cost

- living on campus vs commuting from home
- in-state versus out-of-state
- public schools offer less merit scholarships than private (generally, but not always)

5. Campus culture

6. Triple-threat apps:

- “safe” school(s)
- “reach” school(s)
- “scholarship” school(s)

c. Resources: Books / websites / YouTube videos

d. Draw on friends & community members

D. Make the most of high school.

1. Have your child take the strongest courses possible

- a. For his/her situation (time, cost, options, etc.)
- b. For his/her aptitude

2. Include outside experiences wherever possible: part-time job, sport, club, service work, church organization, etc.

3. “Multum non Multa” applies here, too.

- a. Don’t try to mold your child into a “perfect candidate.” This is fake and schools see right through it.
- b. Do help them become a “best version of himself” by choosing things that suit him as a unique person, full of character and purpose, rather than checking boxes to impress.

4. Test prep is valuable.

- a. Plenty of free options (Kahn Academy/College Board/Supertutortv.com articles and videos)
- b. A better score can mean more \$\$\$ from a school.

E. Specific Recommendations:

1. College:

- a. **Liberal Arts College:** Offers the broadest applications to life after school because of the overall formation of the human person and the versatility of the degrees offered.
- b. **University:** Offers the chance to pursue a specific line of study, but many options to change direction if desired without losing too many credits.
- c. **Community College:** Offers a low-cost opportunity to try out college courses, begin working on general education requirements, work part-time to save money for transferring to a

4-year program, and have time to continue discerning a specific content area or interest.

2. Work:

- a. Able to save money for school, build a body of experiences, narrow interests, and strengthen commitment to go to school;
- b. Able to try out various fields to see if a specific interest or talent remains strong (internships / shadow / apprenticeships);
- c. Able to build connections that could lead to a permanent position or that serve as inspiration for creating one's own business.

3. Service:

- a. Many options exist for spending a year in a missionary role or working for a service program.
- b. Research carefully, talk to past participants, and go through trusted organizations.