

# CHAPTER ELEVEN THE TRANSITION YEARS— ADOLESCENCE AND BEYOND

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## *Scripture Memory Verse— Mk 1:19, 20*

*“And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.”*

## Chapter Eleven

### The Transition Years — Adolescence And Beyond— Bible Study

#### INTRODUCTION

The transition years from adolescence and beyond are just that— transition years. Although adolescence, culminating in graduation from school and independence, seems to be thrust upon us by the school system, it should and can be anticipated and transitioned into over a period of several years. For many parents, training and control have become so natural that it seems like it should never end, but it should. Others, preoccupied in the early years with their own careers and pursuits, suddenly find themselves with children who are becoming adults, yet they are undisciplined and unprepared for the life ahead. Prepared or not, they are going to leave. Whether it seems fair or not, God does not give you the authority or the ability to control the transitions from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. *Rather, your role is to facilitate it.*

By this I mean your government and society will in many ways dictate the transition years. This is in God's hands not yours. It is now that the child/ adolescent begins to make his own decisions. Slowly, these options will increase. What you must understand is that at age thirteen, entering the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, your child will be just five years away from 12<sup>th</sup> grade and graduation. Your job, now, is to help your child successfully make this transition. It is no use going back or trying to slow it down; it is happening. The best thing you can do for your child (as well as for yourself) is help the transition along rather than fight against it. **It is, after all, our desire for our children to grow up,** and leave home as disciples of Christ. They should be leaving Father and Mother, brothers and sisters, to lead a fruitful and fulfilled life in his service, while still maintaining a loving relationship with his parents.

What follows is:

1. A brief Bible study to aid you in understanding the subject matter of this chapter.
2. A manuscript for you to discuss and study with your spouse.
3. Practical projects for discussion and application are provided to aid you in implementing those areas of the seminar that meet your needs as a parent.

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*And another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."*

*But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead."*

Mt 8:21, 22

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## The Freedom to Choose

*It is a frightening thought for most parents that the carefully engineered environment is not being recreated or chosen by the child. Further, the friends, and the atmosphere so carefully chosen is not being continued. There is a temptation to lash out, “Well, if you can’t make the right decisions then I’ll just keep you as a child.” But in doing this, you’ll in all likelihood sacrifice the relationship while at the same time hurting both yourself and your child emotionally.*

### *The Prodigal Son— A Study in Letting Go*

*Please read Lk 15:11-32*

When, in verses 12 and 13, his son was ready to leave home, what did the father do?

- A. How have you experienced this in your relationship to your heavenly Father?
  
- B. How and when will you extend this same principle of freedom to make mistakes to your children, as they begin to transition into adulthood?

Why did the father allow his son to do this? Why didn’t he stop him?

During this period, in what ways did the father try to blunt the force of the child’s willfully wrong decision?

**What good came out of this boy's experience (verse 17)?**

- A. How has God allowed you the freedom to learn from your mistakes?**
  
- B. How will you apply this same principle-the freedom to make mistakes- to your children as they begin to transition into adulthood?**

**What was the father's response to the child after he had learned from his mistake (verse 20– 24)?**

- A. How did he respond verbally?**
  
- B. How did he respond physically?**

**In a situation like this, who is teaching and training the child, the father or God?**

- A. What role does the father play?**
  
- B. What if the father had intervened and blunted the consequences of his son's irresponsibility?**

**From the parable of the prodigal son...**

- A. What can you learn of the freedom God gives you?**
  
- B. What can you learn of the freedom a father gives his son as he begins to transition into adulthood?**

## Children vs. Sons and Daughters

***Our child will always be our son or daughter, but our son or daughter will not always be a child. They will not stay a child, but grow into adulthood.***

What is the admonition in Eph 6:1? “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

A. To whom is this directed?

B. How is a child defined in our culture?

By contrast, Ex 20:12 is addressed universally to all sons and daughters. **What is the admonition in this verse? “*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.*”**

Are you prepared for you child to make the transition from “obey” to “honor”?

A. Given your child’s current behavior, will he honor you when the time for obedience is over?

B. What are you doing to prepare your child for the transition from obedience to honor?

To what degree is your security tied to your child’s?

A. Remaining a child

B. Obeying you.

At what age do you feel your child will be when he fully makes this transition? \_\_\_\_

When your child reaches the transition point and moves from obey to honor, what will a situation look like where he chooses not to obey you, but in an honoring way?

## Chapter Eleven

# The Transition Years: Adolescence And Beyond— Lecture

### I. THE DIFFERENCE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS.

There is a marked contrast between the relationship of parents to children and parents to adolescents and on through adulthood. It is true that your children will always be your children, but it is equally true that your children will not always *be* children. They become sons and daughters. The terminology is tricky and it is easy for parents, since they refer to their sons and daughters as their “children,” to forget that they are not children. Focusing in on key terms, goals, objectives, and the context of our ministry to our children as they pass into adolescence and adulthood, can help us as parents to make that transition.

Remember that growth is something that happens. We do not make it happen, and hopefully we do not retard its happening. We simply cooperate with it. If you are not ready for your child to be a teenager, your child will still turn 13. If you do not think your child is ready to be a teenager, (translated, you have not prepared your child to be a teenager), your child will still be 13. The same is true for 14, and then for 15. In fact, it is just five short years from 13 to 18, and total independence. It is time to stop talking about how fast it is all happening, how society makes our children grow up too fast, how your child is not as emotionally ready as other children, and how society does not prepare our children adequately for all the freedom and responsibilities independence brings.

It is time to stop talking about all this and start preparing your children to live on their own. In America, at 17, a child can leave home and you cannot report that child as a runaway. In the eyes of the law, an adult has left home. In most states, in three weeks, you can turn in the name to missing persons, but not to a truancy officer or child protection department. In America, at age 17, your child can join the Marines, get married, or join the Merchant Seaman’s Union, board a ship and leave the country. Remember: growth, birthdays, aging... the passage of time, is something that is happening and we, as parents, must cooperate with it.

#### A. KEY TERMS FOR CONTRAST

Irrespective of the actual words you use, what do these terms mean in your heart? Are you making the transition in the way you think and talk, with and about your children, your sons and daughters? When you think of what the Bible says about the Family, are you making the transition in terms of what verses are shaping your relationship with your child and the biblical terms you use in shaping your expectations of your children?

1. **“Children”** (Eph. 6:1) vs. **“Sons and Daughters”** (2 Cor 6:18):

*Discipline your self to think of your offspring, not as children, but rather as sons and daughters.* This is a big one. The Bible clearly states certain commands for children that do not apply to adult sons and daughters. Both phrases are in Scripture, “children” and

“sons and daughters,” but both carry with them very different relationships with the parents.

Do you still see your adult sons and daughters as children? Some parents hate to think of themselves as being as old, like they remember their parents being when they began to move into adolescence and adulthood. The solution for these parents is denial that their children are now no longer children but young men and women, sons and daughters. “If the kids don’t grow up, then I don’t get old.”

Most of us have very clear memories of our junior high, high school, and college years. With equal clarity, we remember how old our parents were at that time. Well, the future is now. Remember how old you felt? Now remember how old you were. You were indeed a lot older than your parents treated you. You knew this because of the way other parents, your boss, your teachers and your friends’ parents treated you and by the way your parents treated your friends. “Why don’t they treat me like they treat strangers my age?” is a valid question and one I am sure your own children ask.

Think of your relationship with your own parents. Do you consider yourself their “child” or their son/daughter? Sure you are their genetic child, but you are not a child; you are an adult. Think of all the conflicts you have had with your parents since you began the process of growing into and living as an adult. How many of these have been typified by their trying to put you back in the old mold of childhood? Now think of your relationship with your own children. What decisive actions will you take, in terms of how you think of your children, to keep this from happening?

When you read the Word and pray for your children, are you still falling back on the verses directed at parents with children who are indeed children or are you making the transition to emphasizing those verses written for parents whose children are not long children but yet are their sons and daughters? ***Discipline yourself to think of your offspring, not as children, but as sons and daughters.***

## **2. “Obey” (Eph. 6:1) vs. “Honor” (Mt 19:17-19)**

***Discipline yourself to require honor from your sons and daughters, rather than obedience.*** One of the key ways to tell if you are making this transition is if you are beginning to move from the phrase “Obey”— “I will obey Mommy quickly the first time...” to “Honor”— “I will honor my parents by prayerfully considering their wishes and feelings as I pray through and come to an understanding of what God would have me do.”

The Bible clearly says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right...” and when a son or daughter is no longer a child this passage no longer applies. On the other hand, one of the Ten Commandments is for sons and daughters to, “Honor your father and mother.” This aspect of our relationship will always be true. As my children grew into adults, I did not require them to obey me, but respect or honor was always necessary in our relationship.

The parent must always be asking himself, “Was respect or honor lacking here because of my child, or was the issue that I embarrassed or shamed my child by treating him like a child?” The child must always be asking himself, “Did I react like that because I was really hurt, or because I was disrespectful?” “Do I treat my own parents with the same honor as I do other adults?”

I do not know how many times I have sat down with my teens, as wonderful as they are, and explained that they must treat their mother and me with the same honor and respect that they treat other adults in positions of authority.

This transition comes gradually, but by the time they leave for college, you want it to be complete. It is hard for parents when our children reach adolescence. We have known them as a young adult for only a short time. Our clearest memories are those of their childhood and this is our primary reference point. In contrast, the other adults in their lives— their teachers, their Sunday school teachers, their parents friends— all have known them almost exclusively as adults and treat them as such. Consider if you will why you often treat your children’s friends with more respect than your own. What would happen if you used the same

tone of voice and condescending speech toward their friends that you often do with them? At thirteen, the incremental steps must begin and proceed on for the next five years. Are you making this change? ***Discipline yourself to require honor from your sons and daughters, rather than obedience***

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*Becca and I had just finished having a long talk. We had had another run-in, and she was just two days from leaving for the spring semester of college. She really wanted to work it out. “I just don’t feel like you are treating me like an adult...” and the conversation continued. As I listened to Becca, I could remember well my own feelings of frustration when I was this age. My parents were basically missing out on all the changes in my life, as I was away at college. In addition, others, who did not know me as a child, accepted me as an adult. I found myself slipping back in to old roles when she was at home. I could empathize completely with Becca. When she finished I promised to try to be more understanding and shared with her my own experiences.*

*Then I shared with Becca, “I think you are right, Becca. We are in transition and we do not treat you as though you are as old as you are or as others treat you. We need to work on this, but I think it is equally true that you do not treat us as though you are old as you are.” Becca wanted more on this, and I went on to explain that in our relationship she treated us in ways she would never treat her friends’ parents, her coworkers, or adults in school and church. Just as we needed to adjust to her maturity in our treatment of her, so she needed to adjust to her maturity in her treatment of us. This conversation was a real breakthrough in the dynamics of our relationship, on both sides.*

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**3. “Under control” (1 Tm 3:4) vs. “Glad heart” (Prv. 23:15; 27:11)**

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Discipline yourself to begin rejoicing in your sons’ and daughters’ accomplishments as they grow in independence, rather than continuing to require that they be under your control.

The time is now past for your children to be completely under your control. You must begin to let go. Now is the time to begin rejoicing in their independence. You do not want to raise children who cannot exist outside your sphere of control. If this is the objective, to raise children who are successful and independent of you, then you must now begin the transition.

If you are unable to let go and begin to rejoice in your child’s transition into adulthood, then some serious soul-searching must now take place. If the decisions your child is making in their growing independence are poor ones that bring you shame, it is too

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*“We don’t go to childraising seminars. All they do is make us feel bad about all the things we have done wrong.”*

—Local pastor relaying the response of missionaries as to why they are not joining the nationals in coming to the childraising seminar.

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*“I have here a plan for my daughter that takes her into her thirties. She is not cooperating. You are not cooperating, I will have my way!”*

—Senior missionary yelling at me as he shakes an outline he had developed for his daughter’s life in my face, while demanding to know why his college-age daughter is not following his plan for her life.

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late to wind back the clock and protect them from their independence by re-exerting your control over them, or only now beginning to exert control over them.

Your child is growing into an adult. Your child will be completely independent by age

18. Your child will be in many ways beyond your control by age 15. Good or bad, sink or swim, your control is waning and will soon end. You can transition graciously, communicating with your child as you go along, or you can fight all the way, alienating your teen as you go along. Either way, it will happen and you will lose your control over your child. ***Discipline yourself to begin rejoicing in your sons and daughters accomplishments as they grow in independence, rather than continuing to require that they be under your control.***

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*"We suggest that you give your child total freedom their senior year of high school. Give them all the freedom they will have their freshman year of college— no curfew, no room checks, no nothing. Let them make all the mistakes they are going to make under your roof, so that you can be there to help them if they need it."*

—Advice of ministry couple whose children all had vibrant walks with God, throughout their college years and beyond.

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## B. GOALS FOR CONTRAST

Your long-term goal is for your child to live in a fruitful and fulfilled manner, independent of you. This is easy to understand, this is constant. The short-term goals, however, change along the way. The very goals that are necessary for the success of a child are completely counterproductive for the success of an emerging young adult and vice versa. What are the goals of childhood and how do they change as the child transitions into adulthood?

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*"The problem with the child raising techniques in this culture, is that they treat kids like responsible adults, giving them total freedom when they are irresponsible children, and, then, when they move into adulthood, they try to control them like they were kids. They don't lay a finger on them when they are children and then get in fistfights with them when they are teens. They have the whole thing backwards."*

—Missionary expressing his frustration on the childraising philosophy of his culture, which is all too quickly being assimilated by our own.

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### 1. Training vs. Cheering

**Training**— building a foundation for the child which will serve him in the future.

**Cheering**— the future is now, encouraging and motivating the young adult to step out on his own.

***Our new goal is to encourage and reward good decision-making as the child grows in independence from us.*** The time for training has come to an end. Slowly, your child will grow in resentment of unsolicited advice until he resents it just as much as you do this behavior in your own parents. Slowly, but surely, your child's response to unsolicited involvement will go from appreciation to irritation. Rather than being seen as a parent who is training their child for success, you will be perceived as a parent who is always sticking his nose where it does not belong.

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*"The trouble is, when Jim was really pliable and I could control him, I did not know anything. Now that I am old enough to really have the wisdom to help him out, he is trying to get out of the house as fast as he can."*

—Parent confiding in me his own frustration in raising his son.

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Encouragement is always appreciated. Everyone likes a cheering section. Compliments and thoughtful words are always welcome. They are the keys to the invitation for involvement. A controlling, nosy, critical parent, in the end, is separated even further from their child’s life than they would be normally. Come now. Tell the truth. Do you really appreciate people butting in and setting you straight? How do you think your emerging young adult feels? ***Our new goal is to encourage and reward good decision-making as the child grows in independence from us.***

## 2. Nurturing vs. Letting Go

**Nurturing**— to protect and care for.

**Letting go**— allowing the child to learn to fend for himself.

Our new goal is to slowly, yet consistently, grant children the freedom to fail, to learn from their own mistakes in the school of hard knocks. Just as the mother eagle pushes the bird out of the nest, so we, as parents, must prepare our children to leave the nest. The time for nurturing is coming to and end. Is that still your objective, to nurture and care for your child? Are you preparing yourself and your child for the day when he will lead a fruitful and fulfilled life apart from you?

At some point your child will have to learn to take the knocks of life, to survive both physically, emotionally and spiritually in a harsh environment. The best way to do this is by degrees, and the only way a child can experience this by degrees is if the parent will begin letting go by degrees. Are you letting go by degrees? ***Our new goal is to slowly yet consistently grant children the freedom to fail, to learn from their own mistakes in the school of hard knocks.***

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*“I was sitting at my office window watching the mother eagle care for her young. It had been a dramatic spring and summer, and I watched with fascination. First, I watched her build the nest on the cliff of the Erie, and later I watched the pair of eagles hatched and cared for. I watched with a sense of disbelief, mixed with horror, as the mother eagle inched one of her young to the edge of the nest and deliberately pushed it over the side. The young eagle fell and fell when, suddenly, like a flash, the mother lifted it up and then dropped it again, only this time the young bird began to fly.”*

—Minister from Colorado relating his experience in watching eagles with childraising.

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*“I guess you don’t think too much of homeschooling your kids during the college years.”*

—Parent, during question and answer time.

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*Becca was adamant about wanting to go to the party. We were equally as adamant about her not going. We felt that no good would come of it, and wanted her to stay home. Becca pointed out that we could not “stop her,” which was true. If she really wanted to go, she could sneak out, or she could lie and say she was going somewhere else. If push came to shove, I was not about to resort to force against my own daughter to keep her from going, nor was I going to get into a shouting match in the front yard in front of all our neighbors. Becca was aware of all of this, as were we.*

*I pointed out to Becca that we all make hard decisions for the sake of the family. I come home everyday driving past scores of strip joints and porno shops. Mommy comes home from work rather than going out bar hopping with the other teachers. We all face the same temptations and struggles and, for the family to work, we all have to give.*

*Finally Becca said, “OK, I will not go, but it is not because I think it is wrong, it is not because you can, or, are making me stay home, I am not going to go because it will cause a rift in the family and I don’t want to do that.”*

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### C. OBJECTIVES FOR CONTRAST

Have you thought through on how your objectives for the methods you are applying will change now that your child is transitioning to adulthood? With this change of objectives, will a change come in methods and manner on your part?

### **1. To obey quickly the first time vs. to think through and make the proper decision**

*Our new objective when giving our child guidance and advice is for our sons and daughters to discern the will of God for their lives*, as a result of the principles that have been built into their lives. Now this was fine with me. Becca, recognizing her own independence, recognizing her own empowerment, thought through and made the right decision. Many fathers would still not be happy. They would not be happy unless the child had obeyed in subjection to their will and authority, but this was fine with me. I wanted Becca to begin to do right, not because I could will her into it, but because she could think through and make the right choice, on her own. Also, it was not essential to me that Becca be happy or have the right attitude in making proper decisions. When I have to make a right decision that is hard or that I do not like, do I always have the right emotions to go with them? How much harder for the emerging adult! The key to the young adult in having the right attitude is for this attitude to change as a result of your continuing praise, both public and private, of the fact that they made the right decision. If they make the right decision and then are jumped on for their attitude, then they might as well have made the wrong decision in terms of your response. **Your praise will affect their emotions far more than your lecture.**

I cannot think of one time when I have been told how I ought to feel that, in mentally understanding it, I could then *feel differently*. No, my feelings often changed with how I was treated, not by what I was lectured about.

A child, in order to learn right from wrong, in order to live safely in the world, in order to develop correctly, must learn to obey their parents quickly the first time. This is not healthy, though, for our sons and daughters as they mature into adulthood. We want them to be able to think through and make the right decision.

I have two people in my life from whom I cannot ask advice. One is a relative, and the other is a man who had a strong spiritual impact on me early in my Christian life. The reason is the same for both. In each case, if you ask for advice and do not follow the response to the letter, then you are perceived as being disrespectful and disloyal. "If you're not going to take my advice, then why bother to ask?" is the hurt reply from both camps when the decision is finally made. If you want your child to ask you for advice, then allow them to make a different decision without it impacting the relationship or your self-worth.

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*"I am the mediator before God for my children. God has placed me as head of the home. I am responsible before Him for the family. God is the hammer, I am the chisel and my children are the rough-cut stones. I am the organ of their sanctification."*

*I could barely keep my mouth shut as I listened in astonishment to my friend sharing his new-found conviction after attending a popular parenting seminar.*

*I was in shock for two reasons. First, this man was a mature Christian who knew very well 1 Tm 2:5 "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This same man could argue effectively the universal priesthood of the believer, and would never submit to anyone serving in a mediatory role in terms of God's will in his own life. Yet, he was now declaring himself the High Priest, the Biblical Patriarch of his family.*

*I always like to point out to these men, especially when they are in my ministry, that the word "obey" in chapters five and six of Ephesians, as it refers to wives and children submitting to the father as head of the home, also appears in the thirteenth chapter of Romans to refer to a man's submission to his government, and the twelfth chapter of Hebrews to refer to his relationship to me as a spiritual leader and elder. It is great to see them choke on these verses. Remember, Dads, there is only one mediator between God and your child and it is not you, it is Jesus Christ. I went so far as to suggest to one zealous, black-and-white thinking father, that he put an index card on the mirror in his bathroom that would be just above his face every morning when he shaves, with the inscription, "This Is Not Jesus Christ."*

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When your child is away at college, you do not want them calling home every night to see if they are making the right choices or to get your guidance. You want them to grow up, to leave home, to learn to make right choices on their own, to acquire new spiritual leaders and for you to settle into the role of the loving parent who is one of many counselors, but primarily a cheerleader. ***Our new objective when giving our child guidance and advice is for our sons and daughters to come to the correct conclusion as a result of the principles that have been built into their lives.***

**2. To develop specific convictions and life-styles vs. To apply convictions in the crucible of life.**

Our new objective in the atmosphere we create in the home is for our sons and daughters to have an environment where they can learn to apply their convictions in the real world, yet have a haven to return to and grow in.

As your child moves from junior high to high school and then on to college or the work force, it is time to begin to incrementally wind down the training program and turn it over to God and those who will ultimately minister to and lead your child when they leave home. We all learn for a lifetime, but there comes a time when, good or bad, win, lose or draw, the training process is over. Whether or not they are ready for the crucible of life, it is time for them to tumble in and make their way. The home becomes a haven where the child can sort through and discuss those things he is learning. It is time to learn by doing. This assumes a certain amount of freedom. It is time to be able to discuss the impact of the world on their lives. This assumes a certain communication level with the parent that is only possible when the parent extends to the child the dignity and respect that is due any adult in interpersonal communication.

Think for a moment about the people you don't like to discuss things with. They are pushy, they are emotionally manipulative, they are judgmental, they jump to conclusions, they interrupt you, the list may vary from person to person, nevertheless, because of their failure to treat your opinions with dignity, you do not like to discuss issues with them. Now, when it comes to your own children, as they enter adulthood, don't do the same thing. It is important in our relationship with our children that we think through when the training program will end. When will our children be on their own? Then, begin transitioning at the appropriate time.

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*Vic could not understand it. He was losing touch with his son. It wasn't that his son was having problems, far from it. He was a leader in his youth group at church, on the national honor society at school, and served as an officer of his senior class. Yet, his son was making many crucial decisions without Vic's input, except where Vic intruded into his son's life.*

*This hurt Vic. He knew his son was getting and following counsel taken from counselors at school, from the church staff and from his adult friends at church. He jealously coveted that type of access to his son's life.*

*Yet Vic had long since sacrificed that access on the altar of control. His son was for so long a project with him, that he could not imagine life without the training program. So, his son just stopped asking for advice.*

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One of the goals we set for each of our children their senior year of high school was not to correct them, except for very major issues. I would say over and over to myself, “This problem will take care of itself.” In other words, the child will be out of the house in nine months. At this point, it might be helpful to ask yourself, “If he were a friend's child living with us or an exchange student, how would I be treating him differently in terms of my verbal and nonverbal communication?” Remember, many children do not like to go home from college, simply because their parents force them back into old behavior modes that they left behind in high school. They like to be treated as an adult and find their parent's inability to make this change distasteful. Allowing the child to live his or her own life, with you as coach, while you maintain the relationship is the goal, but the change will not take place over night. ***Our new objective in the atmosphere we create in the home is for our sons and daughters to have an environment where they can learn to apply their convictions in the real world, yet have a haven to return to and grow in.***

*“You don't have to marry me.” Guy looked totally relieved as I shared this phrase with him. Guy wanted help with his family, with his marriage, and his walk with God.*

*He had sought that in the previous city where he had lived and realized that after entering into the training relationship, it would take a divorce to extricate him.*

*I assured Guy that he did not have to marry me. We would work on this for a year, and after that time, we would always be friends. Unless there was some other way I could serve him, the training would be over.*

*I knew the man Guy was talking about. I knew that to be trained by him meant to enter into a relationship that was almost impossible to free oneself from, and I knew about this man's relationship with his children. They felt the same tension and despair that Gus did. In their father's eyes, they would never grow up and leave home.*

## D. THE CONTEXT OF THE MINISTRY

### 1. Parents, home, and those to whom the parents expose them vs. Church spiritual leaders and peers.

The new context of the ministry shifts from the home to the Christian community as our sons and daughters successfully leave home and live apart from the parents on their own. The last transition that every parent has to address is the context in which they perceive the ministry to their child taking place. As parents, it is important for us to visualize and plan for the day when our children are cared for spiritually and emotionally outside the home. You certainly do not want your child to remain in the context of your home until you die. Beyond that, when is a child seen as successful in terms of leaving home? It is always surprising to me to hear men who in no way planned for their children to leave home based on how they raised them, then verbalize their resentment of the fact that their children in no way plan to leave home. They may leave. They may not. They may leave and come back, but they are not planning to leave.

I believe the two most important decisions Eleanor and I made, in terms of our teenagers' spiritual development were to not criticize the youth minister at the church and to encourage them to seek and follow counsel outside the home, in terms of important

*“I had six brothers. On the day after graduation, my dad went through the routine with each of us. We went down to the Navy recruiter. He went through the process with us, making sure we would come out with a good marketable skill and a good college scholarship program, and then shook hands with the recruiter and said, ‘Send him back a man.’ Then, he would give us a bear hug and kiss and say, ‘You're always welcome for a visit.’ It never occurred to me to ever think of living off my father.”*

—Successful Minister shaking his head as we discussed the phenomenon of children who will not leave home.

decisions in their lives. This enabled them to do this with ease once they were away from home at college. Seeking and receiving spiritual guidance was now a necessity, but the skill was developed before it became a necessity. This made all the difference in the world in their spiritual development.

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, there is a marked contrast between the relationship of parents to children and parents to adolescents on through adulthood. It is true that your children will always be your children, but it is equally true that your children will not always be children. They become sons and daughters. The terminology is tricky and it is easy for parents, since they refer to their sons and daughters as their “children,” to forget that they are not children. Focusing in on key terms, goals, objectives and the context of our ministry to our children as they pass into adolescence and adulthood, can help us as to make that transition. I would encourage you to think through these areas in an honest and open manner. Discuss them with your spouse and with your son or daughter. If your child knows that there is an end in sight, that the process of you recognizing their adulthood has indeed begun and is progressing, that you are working toward a goal, then much of the friction of these transition years can be avoided.

“There is light at the end of the tunnel,” I kept stressing to my high-school children. “It looks like an eternity to you, but look, each year you get more and more freedom and then finally you will be on your own.” In saying this, I would map out their growing freedoms, not based on their conduct, but based on the reality of their age. This did not eliminate conflict in our relationship, but it greatly reduced the tension. I was constantly seeking to defuse the trapped feeling that all teens get. This is based on the fact that though they have adult minds, adult bodies and adult emotions; they have no history in this to put things in context. Thus, for the teen, time is still forever and today is everything, just as with a child. Helping the teen develop a sense of continuity and time in the departing process is a great gift, and one from which you both will benefit.

## II. Eight Questions I Can Ask Myself To See Whether I Am Making These Transitions.

*It is not that I don't trust you. It is just that I know how difficult these transitions can be. I will, therefore, list a series of questions. Reflect truthfully on your relationship with your teen and the answers, not just the ones you would give, but run them by your spouse and yes, your teen. If your children are in the preteen years, now is an excellent time to begin dealing emotionally and spiritually with these issues. Do this before they reach the teenage years, while you are still rational, clothed, and in your right mind.*

- 1. Do I think of my adolescent as a child, or as a son or daughter?**
- 2. Am I satisfied with honor, or do I need obedience?**
- 3. Does their questioning of my beliefs, convictions and philosophies seem stimulating, or do I feel threatened and need to demand conformity?**

*“Dr. Lynch never forgave me for discipling his son.” The words sounded strange as they rolled off my tongue. I was trying to explain why one of the foremost theologians of the age felt such animosity toward me.*

*You see Dr. Lynch was first and foremost a Calvinist. As such, in his brand of Calvinism, you did not engage in aggressive evangelism. As you prayed and worked hard in life, God brought the elect to you. His son, Russell, was in my ministry and had grown in his gift of evangelism to the point where he was in charge of the evangelism program at the University where I was ministering. His views, as a successful campus witness and evangelist were now quite different from those of his father and, thus the statement: “Dr. Lynch never forgave me for discipling his son.” This is exactly true.*

*The fact that Russell now held a different theological view was intolerable in his eyes, and I was to blame.*

**4. Do their mistakes seem positive or do I still need to protect and nurture them?**

*"I let my children learn from all the mistakes that I do not have to live with." I made this statement, off the cuff in response to a question early in this seminar's career, but, in a nutshell, it did sum up my philosophy of learning from your mistakes. For instance, Sam chose not to play summer baseball after his freshman year and as a result lost his starting position on the team, which he had to work very hard to reclaim. He never forgot that lesson. Later, after his junior year, he had the opportunity to work at a Christian summer camp. He now knew the consequences of missing summer baseball, but this time was able to prayerfully think through and make the decision he felt God wanted him to. Again, he lost the starting job, but this time with his eyes open and after much prayer. There were some mistakes, though, which we aborted in their early stage. These were priority choices that would have cost Sam his opportunity to get key scholarships upon graduation. The reason being that I would bear the brunt of that mistake and not Sam.*

*Becca was at a difficult time in her education. She was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and just did not see the importance of a foreign language. Making a good grade in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish or French made the difference in which high school you were admitted to, and there was no comparison between the two.*

*We intervened because of the emotional price we knew we would pay if Becca did not get in the preferred school. We would all pay for her mistake for the next four years, thus we stepped in. We let our children learn from the mistakes we do not have to live with.*

**5. Am I taking positive steps to prepare them to leave me, or am I hanging onto every bit of authority that I can?**

*With each of our children we have encouraged an increasing independence during the high school years. This ranges from camp jobs where they spend six weeks or more away from home, to a savings account where they can save up for college while coming into a little spending money as well. Keeping in mind that it takes time, money and anonymity to get into trouble, we never allow our children to buy a car with their money and they keep only a certain percentage for their own, the rest going into their savings account. This finally culminates their senior year with having almost no restrictions at all. They have no curfew, don't have to keep their room clean or answer prying questions. We try to give them the freedom they will have in the dorm while we are still around to pick up the pieces.*

*Young men and women do not lack for situations where they can be youthful, but going places where they begin to be treated like an adult and, as a result, think of themselves like an adult, is a different matter. John Crawford, a retired missionary, gave me some advice that was very useful. He told me, as Sam and Becca entered their high school years, not to always take them to the arcade or whatever thing was popular for high-schoolers at that time. Sometimes, take them to do what you like to do. Put them in your world— the adult world— and treat them there like they were adults, before the others. The growing awareness of what it means to put behind childish things will grow in them, and the realization of just how others treat them will begin to affect your behavior and view of them.*

**6. Am I developing and promoting a spiritual authority for them outside the home, or does this threaten me?**

*"Well, I have some good news for you," Jeff said in that half-sarcastic, half-serious, voice he always used when God was teaching him something he wasn't too thrilled about.*

*"What's that?" I queried. "Well, I went home this weekend and decided to let my dad know about all the things you were doing wrong."*

*This caught my interest. Jeff's father was a successful minister, in another denomination, whose doctrine and methodology were quite different. I was just waiting for him to pull the reins in on Jeff's involvement.*

*"And my dad says to me, 'Jeff, you prayed about it and felt God was calling you to this ministry. I think you should quit complaining to me about your campus leader. From now on, if you have a complaint you should take it to him. God has put him in charge of the ministry, not me.'" I was impressed by the maturity of his response and prayed that when the time came, I would exhibit the same maturity and faith.*

**7. Am I preparing them to be able to choose God's will over my will, or do I equate the two?**

*Eleanor and I were struggling with Becca's decision to go to California with Campus Crusade for Christ to a summer training program. She felt keenly that it was God's will, and that He would provide for her education. We weren't so sure and hoped she was right. Could she at this age really determine God's will on so crucial an issue?*

*This scenario was later to repeat itself when she wanted to go to a closed Islamic country for a summer mission project. That really tested my faith. It helped for me to look back and remember how important these times were to the students in my campus ministry, to remember how puzzled I was by the response of Christian parents who so vehemently opposed their children's priorities when it came to their walk with God.*

*The future was now and I needed to allow my children to choose God's will over my own and not equate the two. "Sweetheart, we spent the first 15 years of our ministry career separating children from their parents. You really didn't expect us to do anything different for you, did you?"*

*1 Tm 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...*

**8. Do I look forward to the day when my children are living separate lives from us, or am I threatened by this and seeking to delay it?**

*"Hey, John, don't sweat it. You're going to get your wife back." Ron was helping me work through my separation anxiety with my first child. This phrase clicked and gave me hope, "That's right." It suddenly dawned on me, "I am going to get my wife back." And it was true, with each child, I got 25% of my wife back, and it was glorious. Of course, that presupposes you have maintained your marriage...*

*"We're going to have two more children." Dr. Clayton said this with a straight face but I nearly fell out of my chair. His oldest son was in college and his second was soon to follow. "My wife doesn't feel we will have anything to do without kids and I tend to agree with her. We are going to have a couple more." They did just that and postponed their divorce another 15 years.*

*With each of our children, we tried to help the transition for leaving home by arranging for them to spend part of their summer away from home both their sophomore and junior years of high school. The whole senior summer was devoted to work and getting ready to leave. It was our thought and intention that in so doing the move from home would not be such a shock for them. In the protected environment of a Christian camp or mission project, they would begin to make these adjustments. We found out that it was just as important to us to get used to their being gone as it was for them.*

### III. Correlations With Infancy

I have often reflected on the fact that the teen years have much in common with the transition out of infancy. I have nothing to base this on, other than casual observation. Perhaps they both have to do with the anxiety of separation on the part of both the parents and the children. During this leaving stage, you may sometimes wonder if you are back caring for an infant again, only this time he is gigantic. Now, however, the “infant” wants to wear all your clothes, drive your car and is eating you out of house and home.

**Routines:** Several things do correlate. One is the desire on the part of the teen for boundaries and structure, especially in the area of routines. Now they may not want to be a part of the routine, but in the chaos of life, they like to have a home that has routines. These include: a regular mealtime; Mom and Dad home at night; a father who is stable rather than experiencing his second childhood; a mother who is stable rather than abandoning her children emotionally as she “discovers herself;” regular places to sit at the table; roles and relationships which reinforce stability in the home. All these come together to create a sense of stability for the teen.

**Praise:** Another area that correlates with infancy is the need for constant verbal reinforcement. “I love you,” “I am proud of you,” “You’re so handsome,” “You’re so cute,” “We’re so glad God gave you to us,” are all phrases need to be repeated over and over again. It is important to remember that your teen needs to hear these things. This is not factual, but emotional. The difference between factual information and emotional information is the difference between appliances and food in the kitchen. Factual pieces of information are the appliances. You buy one set and it stays there forever. You buy a fridge and next week you don’t go out and buy another. It is done and you can forget about it. Factual information is your office phone number or what time the family meal is.

Emotional information is like food. It is a consumable item that you constantly need to partake of for your health. You can’t say, “OK, I’ve eaten dinner. Now I know what it’s like. When it changes, or I forget it what it was like, I will eat it again.” Been there, done that, it’s over. No. No matter how much you liked the meal, no matter how much time you spent on it, in a few hours you will need to eat again. If you do not, it will affect your health.

It is very important for parents to realize that praise is the food of the teen’s emotions. No matter how lavishly you heap it on, in a few hours your teens will need more and if denied, it will affect their health. The Word of God says in Prv 16:24 “*Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*” Pleasant words and praise are food to the soul. They are like a honeycomb, rich in energy-producing foods. They are a delicacy. They have a healing quality for both the body and soul. The need for this type of spiritual food will not go away. The sooner you recognize the difference between factual and emotional information, the sooner you will begin the spiritual healing process in your teen's life. Healing from the wounds the world inflicts on him throughout the day.

**Physical Affection:** A third area which correlates with infancy is the need for physical affection. Fathers tend to be the worst about this. As soon as a child passes through puberty and begins to mature into adulthood, many fathers become reluctant to express physical affection. This can be very confusing to the teen. I would encourage all the fathers to continue to give their children hugs and kisses at the appropriate times. Not in a way that embarrasses them, but in the same way you expressed your love to them when they were infants.

**Emotional outbursts:** “Becca, I know you don’t agree with us, and I know you are growing up, but one thing we must insist on is that you treat us with respect.” I don’t know how many times we said that to Becca and our other teens as they were growing up. Emotional outbursts are very common for teens as they move towards adulthood. They are not used to functioning as adults, and a true gift that you can give them is to discipline their tongue, and their anger, while dealing with authority.

Helping the teen to see his relationship with you in the context of his maturing social network will help him change his behavior. Your children must understand that it works both ways. We would tell our teens, “You don’t have to like it. You don’t have to agree with it. You don’t even have to like us, although this would make us very sad, but what you do have to do is treat us with respect.” Another talk we would have is, “With which of your friends’ parents, your teachers, the adults in Church or at work, do you, in a disagreement, raise your voice, stomp out of the conversation, and then slam the door behind you?” You have to begin treating them as if they were adults, and they have to begin treating you as if they were adults.

It is also important for you to understand that shouting with your teen will accomplish nothing. Many parents use excellent coping skills when dealing with any adult but their own sons and daughters. They then resort to functioning not as if their child were an adult, but as if they were a child. Demand honor, but do so in an honorable manner. One

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*Then he said, "At this season next year **you shall embrace a son.**"  
And she said, "No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant."*

2 Kgs 4:16

*...A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; **A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing.***

Ec 3:5

*Then his father Isaac said to him, "**Please come close and kiss me, my son.**"*

Gn 27:26

*And did not allow me **to kiss my sons and my daughters?** Now you have done foolishly.*

Gn 31:28

*And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "**Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you.**"...*

1 Kgs 19:20

***Greet one another with a holy kiss.** All the churches of Christ greet you.*

Rom 16:16

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*"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city."*

Prv 16:32

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*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."*

Prv 15:1

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*"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you."*

Ex 20:12

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of the best ways to do this is not get in to circular arguments with your teens. Set consistent, definable expectations on their behavior, with consistent, definable consequences that are not left up to anger or emotions. For example: Freedom is linked to grades. If you are responsible in your grades, then you have the freedom to decide your evening schedule. If not, then you do not have this freedom. You must be home on weekday evenings, studying, until you have brought up your grades. Another example: From now on, every time you shout, "I hate this family," you will have to clean all the toilets in the house.

**Interacting:** The last area I have seen that correlates with infancy is that, like with toddlers, the opportunities to spend time with your teen must be taken as they present themselves. Just as a toddler's sleep, feeding and temperamental cycles of life restrict when you can have fun times, so a teen's busy schedule and temperamental attitude do the same. You have to take opportunities as they come, pretty much on their terms. This does not mean that you are at the teen's beck and call. What it means is that you, unlike the teen, recognize that the life you are living together, will not go on forever, and that you have the wisdom and maturity to make use of opportunities together, even if the teen does not. Later, they will regret their own missed opportunities, but be thankful for the ones that *you* did not miss.

## IV. Preparing For Adulthood in Five Years

You have been called in to the office of the President of the United States and you cannot believe your eyes. Before you stands an alien from another planet. The president explains, "This alien had the ability to transform himself into any shape. He has come to learn our culture and customs, to make his way in our land. Unfortunately, he is totally unprepared. We are entrusting him to you for five years. He will assume the identity of a teenager. You have five years to prepare him, after that he will function as the emissary of his planet to ours. That is all." You have five years and then must report back to the President. What will you do?

You are out shopping and you notice a pay phone ringing. You pick up the receiver and the voice at the end of the line is Tom Cruise. "Welcome to the Mission Impossible team," and you hear theme music, tum, tum, da, da, tum, tum, da, da..." You look around for its source but find none.

Tom continues, "Look under by the phone, you will see a small tape recorder. Listen to it and be aware that it will self-destruct." Click. The phone goes dead. You pick up the small recorder and press "play." Again, the theme music. Am I on candid camera? Is this being taped for incredible home videos? Slowly the music subsides, and you hear Tom's voice again. "Welcome to the Mission Impossible Team. Each year, thousands of children enter their teen years and then in five short years find themselves living alone, far from home, making decisions that will affect them for the rest of their lives. Your mission, if you decide to accept it, is to take your children and prepare them for this. You have just five years, good luck!"

The tape goes up in smoke. The clock is now ticking; you have five years to prepare your child to live on his own, as a fully responsible adult. What will you do?

One thing you won't do, or at least shouldn't do, is put off the preparations for independent decision-making until the summer of your child's senior year. Each set of parents must come up with their own plan for this exciting adventure that they and their

son or daughter are about to embark upon. Many aspects will vary, but we have found a few things that are very helpful in this process.

## A. ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND SPIRITUAL IDENTITY OUTSIDE THE HOME.

One of the things Eleanor and I have done, beginning with the entrance of our children into a Youth Group at Church and on through the college years, has been to work very hard at helping our children transition smoothly, and without conflict, to spiritual leadership outside the home. That means we have had to begin letting them make decisions in this area, both wrong and right. In my life, I often learn more from the wrong decisions I make than the right ones. I am often unaware of the value of right decisions and sometimes unaware that I have even made a right decision. But I am very aware of the wrong decisions I have made and their consequences. Remember that the objective is not to minister to your child right up until they leave for college.

The objective is that, by the time they leave for college, they can wisely choose a Christian environment in which to be ministered to and can minister to themselves as well.

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*“And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”*

1 Jn 2:27

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”*

Eph 6:1 (Passage in author’s prayer notebook for children up through the 6th grade)

*“I have no greater joy than this: to hear of my children walking in the truth.”*

3 Jn 1:4 (prayer notebook passage after 7<sup>th</sup> grade)

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## B. DEVELOP THE APPRECIATION OF WORK, SAVINGS AND THE VALUE OF MONEY.

I don’t know of any way a young adult can learn the value of money without working for it himself. With each child we went through the ritual of getting a job, setting up a savings account, deciding on a missionary to give to, and then putting together a savings plan for college. Two thirds of the paycheck goes into savings. One third can be held back for personal use. It does not take long for the child to learn the value of money.

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*He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.*

Prv 10:5

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*My dad taught me not to gamble. For him, it was a simple thing. He had spent his formative years losing his money in crap games on the troop ships of World War II, and had no great regard for the supposed sport of gambling. His technique was simple. He would say, “Want to play monopoly?” We would all excitedly chime in, “Yes!” Once the board was set up and we all had our money, he would divide up the property cards. Wow, we all had property. Then he would say, “Want me to teach you to gamble?”*

*This was fantastic! The only thing better he could have said was, “Want me to teach you to sneak cigarettes and smoke them?” We all excitedly gathered around. “OK, this game is called craps. I am the house— the gambling hall. You guys are the gamblers.*

*After explaining the rules, we would commence to lose all our money and property. "Well," he would say, "looks like I've won. Sure beats working for a living. Game's over, suckers!" and he would put the game up, explaining that that is just how a gambling casino works. After a few times, he would say, "Want to gamble first?" and we would look at him like he lost his mind and say, "No!"*

*Becca sounded a little agitated on the phone. Upon asking her about this she said, "My psych teacher gave us another walk today in class. That really burns me, Dad. I just figured out how much I have to pay for every class. He is cheating me out of my money. I paid for that class!" Only a child who has saved for college through the high school years, who has worked consistently to learn the value of money, will resent a class being called off. The rest of her classmates, foolishly unaware of the value of money and the fact that the professor was working for them, thought they were getting a good deal.*

*It was an exciting time in Becca's spiritual life. The little girl she adopted through World Vision was graduating from high school and leaving the orphanage. My sister worked at World Vision when Becca decided to give her tithe to an orphan from India. She selected a girl about Becca's age and Becca faithfully sent in her money each month and wrote the girl, sending her ribbons and small gifts. The girl would write Becca back, and we would have someone from the University translate the letters for her. Only through saving and giving can a child understand the value of money and the spiritual ministry that good financial planning makes possible.*

*"See that guy filling up that car with gas, son?" He nodded yes. He knew what was coming. "See that guy sitting in that Buick while he does it?" He again nodded yes. "Do you know what the difference is between these two men?" He replies, "A college education." "That's right, son. Make those grades or pump gas. That's your choice."*

*"How'd you like to dip ice cream for the rest of your life?" Sam looked at me like I had lost my mind. He had just come in from working the third shift, he was tired... it was dark. He smelled like old ice cream and was sitting down to the dinner that Eleanor had left for him. I continued, "Well, just flunk out of Chemistry, and you will get to do that or something just as exciting, for the rest of your life." Sam now knew what menial labor was. He knew the difference between giving orders and taking them, and he definitely did not want to dip ice cream for the rest of his life. Making a good grade in chemistry took on a whole new meaning. You can only focus your son or daughter on this reality in the crucible of life.*

**C. CREATE QUALITY MEMORIES WHICH CAN BE RELIED ON IN TIMES OF STRESS.**

The only way conflict can be the exception to the rule in your relationship with your

*Sam jumped into the car grinning. "What are you so smug about?" "Well," he replied boastfully, "Everybody in second period was complaining that their dads never check them out of school just to eat with them. It's pretty cool being special, Dad."*

teen is if you purposefully create memories to counterbalance them. My work schedule permitted me to take my teen out to lunch each week. I would check them out, run them over to the nearest fast food restaurant, have lunch with them and get them back before the lunch bell rang. Perhaps your schedule does not permit this. Another thing I have done is to take them to school once a week and stop at the local doughnut shop for a treat along the way. Think about it, what can you build in to your weekly routine so that when Satan whispers in your teen's ear, "They don't care about you. All they do is fight with you all the time," the Holy Spirit can shout back, "Wait a minute, what about..."

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*As Megan got out of the car to return to school, she still had the cup with her from her soda. We had eaten at a local fast food restaurant, and I had assumed she wanted to finish it on the way.*

*"Here, honey," I offered, "I'll throw that away for you." "No thanks, Daddy. I like to show off that you took me to lunch today."*

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When push comes to shove, you want a relationship that your child is just not willing to trade off for the passing pleasures of sin.

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*"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin;"*

Heb 11:24-25

*"When I was a son to my father, still tender and the only son in the sight of my mother..."*

Prv 4:3

*"Give me your heart, my son..."*

Prv 23:26

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## D. BE THERE FOR QUALITY TIME

Just being there, what for want of a better term can be called quantity time, is the greatest thing you can do to prepare your children for adulthood. Just being around, modeling the stable Christian life, being available to answer questions, being on the scene, reinforcing by your presence that you are committed to the family and to the family's well-being. This is laid down like coats of varnish. No one coat is significant. Each coat is laid down, allowed to dry, sanded, and then the process is repeated. Slowly, over a period of time, a work of true craftsmanship emerges. That is what being there is all about.

Keep in mind, the same people who will willingly allow you to give every waking moment to the ministry, who will praise you as a sacrificial man of vision, whose capacity for the work of God is seemingly endless, will sit around the Fellowship Hall or Conference Center, drink coffee and say things like, "I wonder what the deal was with ole Jones. Can you believe what the stories are about his kids? Why can't these guys learn to stay at home and just take care of the basics?" The rest of your former cheering squad will nod soberly and

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*My son, give attention to my wisdom, Incline your ear to my understanding;*

Prv 5:1

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*"In discipleship, more is caught than taught."*

—Lorne Sanny, past president of The Navigators

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*"Gold watches don't have grandkids, and sales awards don't come home for Christmas."*

—My advice to every young career man I meet

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wisely in agreement. I give this scenario to every young, full-time Christian worker I meet.

## E. PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN ON A DAILY AND SPECIFIC BASIS

I have literally bathed my children in prayer. Every morning, I pray for them in my quiet time. Claiming specific verses and praying for specific areas in their lives. Then I pray with them, and bless them before they leave for school. Every evening Eleanor and I pray for our children as the last thing we do before falling to sleep at night. While they were in the elementary years, the last thing they did at night was to pray with their father before falling off to sleep.

There is no fifth grader on the face of the earth who will pass up the opportunity to have a special, quiet time alone with Dad-no one else, just the child and dad-if dad will just make it special. Put together a little special routine and incorporate the Word and Prayer. Something simple that takes about ten minutes and something that makes the child feel special. Start at the age when they will do it with you and keep it up as long as they are willing to do it with you voluntarily. When I have my quiet times with my children, I try to always do three things: keep my answers as simple or simpler than theirs; praise them for their spiritual insight; and find something that they share to which I can say, "Wow, that's really good. Can you repeat that thought so I can write it down?"

*And it came about, when the days of feasting had completed their cycle, that Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.*

Job 1:5

"Daddy, are you ready for our special quiet time together."

—Megan, my ninth grader, calling me to our 6:30 a.m. quiet time.

"Dad, if it is all right with you, I want to have my quiet time alone with God. I just need this focused time with God in the morning." "Son, there is nothing that will make me prouder."

—Brief exchange when Sam began meeting on his own with God rather than with Megan and me.

## V. Shifting Gears

### A. DISCIPLINE

As we move into the transition years the issue of a change in the methodology of discipline comes into play. During the ages of nine months to three years the job should pretty well be taken care of. From three to the start of school, the need for spanking will gradually diminish with the growing wisdom of the child, (remember that the last thing you want to do is send a foolish child away to school). As your child matures through Kindergarten to the fourth grade, you will build upon this, but the child is not with you on a constant basis as he was before. With the transition into adolescence (fifth grade or puberty, whichever comes first) discipline must change with the child. Physical discipline, spanking by the parent, ceases and moves to other forms of training which will produce success. Physical discipline, the rod, passes from the hands of the parent, to the hands of God.

A parent who will not pass the rod to God does all the damage in a child's life that is associated with man's unwillingness to surrender to God his rightful place. I have seen this damage done in the ministry by pastors who are not willing to admit that their church belongs first to God. I have seen this damage done by businessmen who are not willing to admit that their careers belong first to God. I have seen this damage done in marriage, by husbands who are not willing to acknowledge that their wife belongs first to God. I have seen this damage done in child raising by both fathers and mothers who are unwilling to admit or face the fact that the child is a creation of God and that we are stewards, not owners.

Are you preparing your child to live under the leadership and discipline of Jesus Christ? The first step in this process is to turn the rod over to God. I would suggest an actual decision on your part where you gather up the rods, lay them before God, commit this ministry to God and dispose of them.

Once the child begins moving into adulthood, God has new assignments for all involved.

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*"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."*

Psalm 23:1, 4

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*"It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."*

Heb 12:7-8

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*"And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him."*

Mt 4:21-22

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## 1. COACHING DURING THE LAST STAGES OF DEPARTURE FALLS TO THE PARENTS.

We are now preparing our children to leave. Here in Houston, the whole city becomes excited when a space shuttle launch nears. As it nears liftoff, a checklist is prepared and the entire focus is getting ready for the launch. If there is a delay, there is great disappointment and a sense of failure among the team of engineers assigned to that particular launch. When it does proceed, the launch itself is accompanied by cheers of excitement. It is the same way with us, as parents. Our job is not to see how long we can stall and delay the launch, but to work at launching our children into adulthood smoothly and on schedule. The engineers, as the shuttle begins to roll to the pad, do not begin at that time to contemplate the construction of the materials, or the manufacturing process. Their concentration is totally on the proper functioning of what is put together, and a successful launch.

In this same vein, there comes a time when the basic construction and discipline of our child is past. Now is not the time to be considering if we should go back and try to redo or undo things that belong in childhood years, but rather prepare the child for launching and to concentrate on this task. Ours is an engine with a timed fuse. It will launch, and there is nothing we can do about it. The best thing for us to do is accept this fact and work toward a successful launch. When the shuttle is launched, the responsibility shifts from the team of engineers who have followed it from construction to the launch pad in Cape Canaveral, to the mission control specialists here in Houston. These engineers are trained in the mission itself. The first set return to Houston and serve as advisors and a backup team, in case of an emergency. In the same way, we as parents must be prepared

to pass off the primary responsibility for our children as they launch from our primary care into college, and independence as adults. We are there as a back up team in case of emergency, but God has provided mission control specialists for our children. These are all under God's direction, just as we were. In God's eyes, the child is leaving one set of specialists, the parents, and going to another, in stewardship of the child. He never viewed the child as exclusively ours, but as exclusively His.

## 2. INSTRUCTION PASSES TO THE CHURCH AND OTHER CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIPS.

One of the teams God has put together to care for the newly launched son or daughter is the Body of Christ, comprising local churches and support organs which manifest themselves in Christian organizations and fellowships. A child who has been prepared for life independent of the parents will become involved in such a ministry, and the job of admonition, instruction and training is assumed by them. The biggest mistake I have seen as a college minister is that most parents make a black-and-white shift with their children. They basically have their children grow intellectually and socially at a transitional pace, but in terms of spiritual authority, they are functioning in basically the same mode as they did in elementary school, until they leave for college.

Eleanor and I encouraged growth in this area in a number of ways, so as to prepare our children for this inevitable transition. First, we tried never to contradict or criticize the Youth Minister or Pastor in front of our children. Second, when they were facing an important decision we would ask, "Have you talked with Brother Donny about this?" or "Have you talked this over with your Sunday school teacher?" Many parents, who encourage their children to talk with high school counselors on selection of their future university and career, do not bother to encourage them to seek the same type of guidance from their youth pastor and Sunday school teachers.

Next, we tried to get our children jobs, away from home at a youth camp, or in some type of Christian service for a half summer or summer before they started their senior

*"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*

1 Cor 12:7

*Blake was visibly shaken. Bill, his 17-year-old son did not want to go to their church. It was a smaller church. Its membership was older, and there were few young people that his son Bill could relate to. On the other hand, his friend Tim went to an active church with a vibrant Youth Ministry and several full-time staff devoted to them. I tried to help Blake see this clearly, "Hey, it is not like he wants to join a motorcycle club or a cult. He wants to be actively involved in a church. Let him do it. It will be a great experience for him to choose his own church, involve himself in his own spiritual identity and, all the while, you can be praising him for his wise decisions. Then, when he goes off to college, you will have the confidence that he knows how to make this transition."*

*I wondered if Blake had thought through on what his attitudes and actions were teaching his son, and how that would affect their relationship and his ability to coach him during the college years. Nine months of forcing your son to go to a church he does not want to and the tension associated with this is not the foundation to be laid for the first year away from home.*

*"Actually, Sam and Becca think I am a little bit uncommitted." My listener was more startled by the fact that I viewed this as a good thing than by the fact that my children would think such a thing. "You see, my ministry with the Navigators precludes me from Wednesday and Sunday night Church and Monday night Evangelism Explosion. My kids go to all of these activities, and to tell you the truth, if they were completely honest about it, they feel I should be more committed. This is a good thing."*

*I went on to explain, "They are there because of their commitment and by comparing their activities with their own, it tells me they are viewing themselves and their spiritual pursuits independently of my own."*

year. We wanted them to go into their senior year with the confidence that they could indeed live away from home and maintain their walk with God. Lastly, we encouraged spiritual activity outside our realm, so that they would have the confidence of their own spiritual identity apart from us.

### 3. DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT PASS TO GOVERNING SOCIETAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ORGANS.

During the transition years, the parent begins to hand over the reins of discipline and punishment to governing social organs, so that by the time they leave home this aspect of the relationship is completely severed.

Now this does not happen overnight. There is plenty of room for parental discipline during the next five years, but there should be definite transition points. It is one thing to ground an eighth-grader for a poor progress report, but if, by the senior year, you are still having to check homework and discipline the child for study habits, you had better face the fact that you have not transitioned with your child in this area and that you are both in for a rude awakening in a few short months. It is one thing to schedule a parent-teacher conference to undo some wrong your seventh grader has committed and get him back on track. It is another thing to still be stepping in and helping him to avoid the consequences of his actions his senior year.

*"Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and God establishes those that exist. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.*

*Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil."*

Rom 13:1-4

#### *Basic rule of thumb for disciplining a teenager:*

*The first priority*, take away any privilege that creates opportunity for them to get into trouble, be it friends, possessions, money, time, freedom, what ever it is-this goes.

*The second priority*, take out whatever cultural influences that are definite detriments to your child? If he has an activity he is involved in that you do not like, TV, Radio, certain friends or hangouts— out they go.

*The third priority*, give him something to do that he hates.

*The fourth priority*, give him work to do that you hate doing.

Examples: Cleaning the bathroom; cleaning the kitchen stove or floors; cleaning the windows; and weeding the garden. All parents should have a list of things they hate to do nearby, so they can use it for discipling their teens.

#### 4. THE ROD OF DISCIPLINE PASSES PERMANENTLY TO GOD.

The key in all this is to view the consequences that sin brings from governmental, institutional, societal organs and natural consequences of actions, and all such hardships as discipline from God.

For God, discipline is a way of life. He intends to always have organs of discipline at his disposal for our good. For the first seventeen or so years, the primary source of this discipline is the father, as head of the house, in concert with the mother, as his wife and helpmate.

After this there will be for the child some fifty, sixty, even seventy years of the discipline of God, completely separate from and without reference to the parents. It is best to use these last five years to prepare the child for the next fifty, than to reinforce a type of relationship that is rapidly coming to an end, and that by the will of God. Parents who refuse to hand over their children to God, fight Him, not their children.

*For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.*

Prv 3:12

*For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life,*

Prv 6:23

*But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever."*

*And Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the Lord confirm His word."*

*So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, although the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord. For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord." And he worshipped the Lord there.*

*Then Elkanah went to his home at Ramah. But the boy ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest.*

1 Sm 1:22–28; 2:11

## VI. Creative discipline through the transition years, seventh to twelfth grades

### A. WHAT SEEMS TO WORK.

You have now handed over the role of applying physical discipline to God. He can use His sovereignty over physical circumstances, the state, or the Body of Christ in fulfilling this role. Whatever He decides, this role has definitely passed now out of your hands. You still have the role of trainer and coach. As such, there is much work still to be done. The question then arises, "Since it is no longer my role to spank my son or daughter, what options are left to me as the parent/trainer/coach in the area of disciplining my children as I prepare them for a fruitful and successful life outside the home?"

My answer is simple and to the point, "Hit 'em where it hurts them the most, helps them the most and helps you the most." By keeping this in mind, a kind of hierarchy has developed in our discipline selections. As a result, we have come up with five simple tests or models to determine the discipline to be applied.

**First: What does it take for a kid to get in trouble?**

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Free time, money, transportation and anonymity. Since we know this, then the discipline will affect one or all of these areas. For free time, you can ground the child. In terms of money, cut off his allowance or institute fines. In terms of transportation, you can ground them from the car. As for anonymity, this takes time, money and a car. As a result we told all of our children, that if, during their junior year of college, they were actively involved in a Christian ministry in a leadership position then we would buy them a car. Otherwise they would have to buy it. We also told them that if they had money to buy a car, they could use that money first for college and living expenses, then when those were all met, the extra money could go to the car.

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*Whenever I go to the mall with Eleanor, shopping or to a movie, I am continually amazed at the kids I see hanging out, loitering and getting into trouble. If idleness is the devil's workshop, then the things produced there are distributed at the local mall.*

*Up until the junior year of high school, the mall is a place where you go to do things but not a place to spend the idle hours. The key to this is to be the person who picks up. Most kids are tempted during those idle hours when the irresponsible parent is late. If the movie is over at 9 P.M., be there waiting at 8:45 and don't trust Dorothy's mother to this job, as she may show up closer to 10. If they want to go shopping with a friend and you agree that two hours is enough, have Dorothy's mother take them and you be there waiting 15 minutes early.*

*Now, I say until their junior year of high school because, by then, they have their driver's license and the opportunities at the mall seem tame to the world that is now open to them. The mall is the trap of the pre-teens and teens who want a place to hang out, but don't have wheels. It is a large place you can roam in and maintain a level of anonymity.*

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For different children different issues get their attention. For our daughter Becca, being grounded for a day was like an eternity. She hated it. She cannot stand boredom or inactivity and learned very quickly from it. For Megan, she enjoyed being in her room and reading. This had very little effect on her, so for Megan we included work around the house that she hated. (When we ground, we ground from everything, TV, Radio, Telephone, going outside to play or sun bathe. The only type of entertainment we allow is Christian media or books and usually, since they are around the house anyway, we give them plenty of work to do).

**Second: What cultural influences are definite detriments to your child?**

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The first thing to go is in the area of secular media: TV, Radio, Videos and Movies, the wrong friends and certain cultural gathering places and fashion styles which open the door to the wrong friends. As far as the other two areas, we do not let our children enter these areas in the first place, so discipline from these areas is not an issue. Think through on your child's life. Is there some activity or group of friends that seems to be associated with rebellion or disobedience on their part? If so, devise a discipline that kicks in on that behavior and eliminates the opportunity for that influence.

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*Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.*

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Prv 4:23

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For me, it was a simple trade off. TV and secular music for a clean room. We told our kids, if you do not have your bed made and your room clean before you leave for school, then no TV or secular media for a 24-hour period. Our kids usually chose cleaning their room over these forms of entertainment, and I could not have been happier. They were choosing to eliminate one of the most harmful influences on their lives. A messy room will not

permanently damage them, but continual input from secular media will. As time went on, they were less and less sophisticated in the area of secular media. As a result they were corny to the bad kids. Thus, they had a double protection.

**Third: What do they hate?**

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Is it cleaning the toilet? Then, that is the first thing they do whenever they talk back. Is it picking weeds? Then, out they go. Every child's nature rebels against certain everyday tasks. Figure out what these are and put them at the top of the list. It will be great training for them, as well as a great discipline tool for you.

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*Sam enjoyed being outside and engaging in physical exercise. In fact, he would trade off the outside chores with his sisters for his inside ones, and they gladly agreed. As a result, having Sam do outside work for discipline might inconvenience him, but it was not discipline. On the other hand, he hated cleaning toilets, or any other grimy domestic duty. Now, here was a discipline that would get his attention. On the other hand, for Becca, Megan and Liz there was nothing worse, nothing more terrible, than to be sweaty and hot and, worse yet, visible to others in this state, as they did what to them was the most menial of jobs... yard work. You guessed it: that was at the top of the discipline sheet for the girls.*

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*When I was growing up we had a brick back porch. Little sprigs of grass and weeds would grow up through the bricks. The job I hated most was being down on my hands and knees, working my way among the bricks in the hot summer heat, pulling up little sprigs of grass and weeds. (This was in the days before herbicides and weed eaters.)*

*Another great pastime of my father's was fruit trees. He always planted fruit trees. Mom was not too keen on canning or serving fruit with worms in them, so there was always plenty of nauseatingly sweet, rotting fruit at the base of these trees. This was the other job I hated. Down on my hands and knees, picking up rotted fruit, with fruit flies, gnats, sweet bees and wasps buzzing around.*

*If my parents wanted to get my attention, all they had to do was mention one of these two tasks. Your job is to simply discover their equal in the lives of each of your children.*

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*Connie looked at me wryly, "Mr. Mahon, guess what I have been doing this month?" I hated to ask. Her parents had spent a long evening with me, seeking suggestions on how to help her with a smart mouth. One of the things she had gotten in the habit of saying is, "You're wicked!" when someone crossed her, and in a surly and vehement manner. I had suggested that they make June, "Wicked Month." Every time that (or any other similar phrase) came out of Connie's mouth, she would have to clean one of the four bathrooms in their house. With a house full of boys, those bathrooms were a sight to behold. So, I bit. "What's that Connie?" She smiled a little knowing and sarcastic smile, as she got up to get some milk, and purred, "I've been cleaning the bathrooms all month." I hate it when the parents clue their kids in on where these ideas come from.*

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**Fourth: What needs to be done around the house that you hate?**

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This is also a great tool. When your kids misbehave just ask yourself, "What needs to be done around the house that I hate to do?" *and there is your list!* Eleanor and I have an agreement, since each of us has a very different list, the one who is disobeyed or dishonored is the one who gets blessed with eliminating something from their list.

Sometimes, I will bless Eleanor by forgoing something on my list for hers. This is great indoor sport, and takes the edge off having to be around a teen in one of their surly, sour moods.

*As I write this, I have to confess that the car really needs to be vacuumed, washed and waxed. I have been putting it off because I do not like this job, and have been counting on one of the kids to blow it. No such luck so far. In fact, I think they sense that there are several juicy chores like this coming up now that spring weather is here and are really watching their step. One good temper tantrum, sibling argument or curfew violation is all I ask of them, then I won't have to face the car this weekend.*

**Fifth: Let the punishment fit the crime.**

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The goal is for them to remember what they did, why it was wrong and to grow successful and independent by not repeating this sin or error. To the degree that the infraction and the discipline can be associated, this should be done (though it is not always possible), or that particular discipline will be too easy or ineffective.

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*Becca went through a stage when she would get into a surly mood, tell me off, and then want nothing to do with me. Respect was not an option, and for Becca, the discipline of choice in these circumstances was to spend a day working with me in the yard. Not only did she hate the work, but she was stuck with me. This was agony because Becca is really a sociable and sweet kid. The only thing that could be worse than doing yard work alone, was doing it with someone, who if you were reconciled to, would make it fun and go fast. Since you weren't, it was worse, and went sooo slow. It was always worth it to Becca to reconcile herself to me and at least have a conversational work-mate than to go on in brooding silence, all day in the summer heat.*

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*In terms of chores, the punishment fit the crime method was in its stride. If you don't do your dishes and someone else has to do them, then you have to do theirs for the next three days. If you don't do your chore, which keeps someone else from doing theirs, then you have to do both. For instance, if your job is to clear the table but you take off without doing it, and the person who does the dishwasher dishes can't do their dishes, and the person who does the hand wash dishes can't do theirs, then when you get back you have to do them all. On the other hand, if we want them done, we will say, "Who wants to do Sam's dishes?" And then you have to do theirs and yours for the next three days.*

*If someone has to do your work, then you can do theirs triple. Why should anyone have to do your work?*

**B. WHAT DOES NOT SEEM TO WORK**

One thing Eleanor and I never did was punish the child by denying them spiritual input. The problem is the wrong input, thus the key to creative discipline is to deny the wrong input, create an atmosphere where the right input is maximized, and then let the natural spiritual process take over.

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*Prv 4:23 Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.*

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*Prv 23:7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, "Eat and drink!" But his heart is not with you.*

*Lk 11:34– 36 The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.*

*Mt 15:18,19 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.*

It is just like the old computer term, “garbage in, garbage out.” Spiritually, what goes in, must come out. We never stop the good stuff from going in as a form of discipline, only the bad. Thus, you are grounded from the phone, but you can call your youth leader to talk about it. You are grounded from music, except, of course, Christian music. You are grounded from all activities, except, of course, church activities. You have to go to bed early, unless you want to stay up and read the Bible. The list goes on. Just remember the simple rule— if you have an opportunity to stop the bad stuff from going in, do it. But never stop the good stuff from going in.

In the same vein, we never use spiritual pursuits as a form of punishment— e.g. memorize these verses, read these passages, write this essay on this Bible verse. The Bible is neat. The Bible is fun. The Bible is life. The Bible is love. It is a privilege, and it is not a tool for punishment. **You do not want your child growing up associating the Bible or spiritual activities with punishment.**

It goes without saying, there are certain manipulative emotions that will work temporarily, but as your child matures, he will begin to resent that you have used them to his detriment. Things like shouting, hitting, isolation, berating, guilt, comparisons and the like will bring about a temporary short-term change, but do long-term damage to your child and your relationship with him.

In creative discipline, don't be too cute for your own good. It needs to be discipline, not just poetry.

Another cute trick teens use is to use their behavior to punish their brothers and sisters, or the family as a whole. Don't allow them to punish rest of the children or the family by a surly or bitter attitude, and don't have their punishment inflict punishment on the whole family. “Well if you have such a sour attitude, then we just won't go to the mall.” It may be an even worse punishment for little sister, and they all know this but you. In the same way, do not let them cast a shadow of gloom over a family night out. Sit down and make it very clear to them that they will be pulling weeds and cleaning toilets until Jesus comes, if they even hint at spoiling this time for the rest of the family, and then stick to it.

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*I remember as a youth playing with matches. We fooled around with them until we finally burned a vacant field down. I got a good spanking with my dad's old razor strap and that was the last I had anything to do with matches. The other three boys were condemned to light a gazillion matches in their driveway. My dad walked me down to see it, and there they were laughing and striking those matches under the watchful eyes of their parents. On the way back, my dad clued me in on the fact that that first spanking was only the tip of the iceberg, which I believed, but back to the illustration. These guys did eventually get bored with lighting matches, and it got dark, and they whined appropriately and assured their moms and dads that they had learned their lessons. In they went, but you can bet the next day they all knew exactly how many matches they each lit. The ones who lit the most were bragging, but they were all held in awe, just by the sheer number of times they had lit the forbidden sticks.*

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In addition to this, the child should quickly learn that it is simply not worth it to embarrass you in front of your friends or to ruin family gathering or night out with another family. Early in the family life, every child should come to the conclusion that although you claim there is not an unforgivable sin, the punishment that goes with this type of behavior seems to indicate the possibility of its existence.

It is almost always futile to attack their bad friends, or kids that you do not like. They will almost always come to their defense. As a parental lifestyle, however, you can actively engage in a constant passive resistance to the bad and an active promotion for the good in terms of what you have time to do. There are some kids I just never seem to have time to pick up. It never seems the right time to have them spend the night. The car just never seems to be free. The budget seems to always be tight when they are involved. On the other hand, for church activities or the that kids I do actually like, the car seems always to be ready, the funds seem always to be available. Young teens generally take the path of least resistance, and will slowly be nudged in the right direction.

The silent treatment will always do more damage than good. I can tell you of parent after parent who uses this tool to punish their children and then complains that their children never talk to them. Never use an action as discipline that you want to discourage in your child's behavior. Never **promote** behaviors that damage your relationship with your child.

In closing, maintain communication and love at all times. As my good friend John Crawford used to say, "Your teenagers are not the enemy. Satan is the enemy. Your teenagers, however, are not the enemy." Keep lines of communication open at all times. Talk. Touch. Hug. Talk some more. Your teen may not seem to like it, but it is hard to alienate yourself from someone who loves you. It is possible, but it really has to be worked at.

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*Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."*

1 Cor 15:33

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*And your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.*

Is 30:21

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*"It's too bad he's your son, Cliff, and not just some visitor in the Church."*

*Cliff gave me one of those looks he so often gives me, since he is still not sure I am from the planet earth. "What are you talking about?" He demanded.*

*Cliff had been whining about his teenage son's behavior and how he felt like disinheriting him. He said that he was so ashamed, he didn't even look forward to having him in the home.*

*"Well, if he was some visitor in the Church, you would look at him as a ministry project. You would set out to first win his heart and then win him to the Lord. I have seen you do it many times Cliff. If anyone can apply the verse, 'to the weak I become weak, so that I can win the weak,' it is you. Yep! If he was some stranger, you would have mercy on him. You would see his sin and alienation as a challenge. You would work to save him. But, since he's your son, you won't have a thing to do with him."*

## C. BOUNDARIES

### 1. Take the high ground and don't sweat the small stuff.

Remember, to a teen, if everything is wrong, then nothing is wrong. One of the biggest problems parents face in helping their children through the transition phase is confusing their own convictions based on their life experience with what the Bible says.

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*Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.*

Mk 7:8

Keep in mind that your child is old enough now to read. If you have been faithfully telling him certain behavior patterns are practiced by your family because, “God says so” and God doesn’t say “no” in the Bible, then your credibility will come into question in other areas as well. Be honest with your emerging adult child. Be honest with the divisions from your lifestyle, which exist in the church, even among like-minded members of your church and among your friends.

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*The Lord says: “These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men.*

Is 29:13

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*Joe belonged to a denomination with a strong history of adult believers’ baptism. He was a lay leader in his church, and a strong advocate of this. I was grieved to see him estranged from his grandson with whom he would hardly talk. His grandson was going to a conservative Presbyterian Church (PCA). In every way, their life and their convictions meshed. Their deep devotion to God and their belief in the inerrancy of the Word meshed. However, because his grandson had come to the “wrong” conclusion from the Word of God on this one issue, that of infant baptism, he could hardly even speak to him. It was that same old phenomenon, better to be a stranger than a member of the family. Joe had worked closely with members of PCA in Promise Keepers, in the Billy Graham Crusade and other city Christian initiatives, but could not bring himself to allow his own grandson to think through and come to his own conclusions in this area.*

*Don and Kathy were very pleased with themselves; they were staunch believers in abstinence from alcohol. Concerned that their children would not share their convictions, they arrived at what they felt to be a great solution. They were helping Uncle Gus move out of his apartment when they came upon a case of old warm beer. The boys, one in sixth grade and the other in eighth, showed an interest. So, Don said, “Sure, go ahead, you can drink it, but you have to drink the whole thing.” Both boys selected a can of old warm beer and began to drink and before they were even into it, both boys were sick to their stomachs and in the bathroom, retching.*

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*And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.*

Mt 23:4

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*Now, they proudly shared with me that the boys get nauseated just at the sight of a beer commercial. “What will be their feelings toward you be the first time a fraternity brother or guy in the dorm laughs at them openly, tells them that that’s the oldest trick in the book and offers to prove it to them? All they have to do is take one sip of a really good-tasting mixed drink, just a teensy taste, just enough to prove your deceitfulness,” I asked.*

*They both looked at me like I was wearing the mark of the beast. “You know of course that is the oldest trick in the world. Before they are out of high school, they will have been ribbed and chided by their buddies for falling for it and begin to really wonder what a good cold beer tastes like. When they find out, what do you think they will think of this method you have employed?”*

*“You’re not saying we should teach our children to drink? You’re not saying it is all right to drink?” The stream of rote responses poured out, ending with, “Well, what did you tell your kids?” I told them, and will tell you:*

*The drinking of wine occurs throughout the Scripture. Jesus drank wine. The Apostles drank wine. It is in the New and Old Testaments. The Bible does say, though, that getting drunk is wrong and a sin. We know you will have to decide for yourselves someday. You should know, though, that in both your grandparents' family history there is alcoholism, so you must be very, very careful if you do decide to drink in moderation. We hope you will not decide this, but it is your decision. That decision, though, is far off. For now, you cannot drink because it is against the law. People drink because it tastes good and makes them feel good. We are not saying this is not true.*

*Many fine Christians drink for the same reason, and you will no doubt meet some in our church, in your friends' churches and in campus ministries when you go to college. But, it is still against the law, just like shoplifting or driving without a license. You can shoplift items because they taste good or make you feel good. You can sneak out at night and steal our car or another for the same reason. You don't do it because it is wrong; it is against the law. You may think that you should be able to take something. You may think you should be able to drive. But you can't. It is the law. For the same reason, we are asking you not to drink until you are 21. It is the law, and we are asking you as a fine Christian and as our child, to respect the law.*

*I might add, at this point, that Don and Kathy found this totally unacceptable... too risky. What if their children decided to drink? This was in spite of the fact that I have seen Don and Kathy, at weddings, toast with a glass of wine. They are not total abstainers. In fact, they had a glass of wine on their anniversary dinner, which they invited us to. I mentioned this to them and asked, "Since you do drink wine on special occasions, will you one day sit down and share a glass of wine with your sons on your anniversary, just like you did with us?" Now they knew I had the mark of the beast.*

*My point is this. Teaching your children traditions which are not Scriptural and which you may not even totally follow, as if they are the Word of God is unhealthy for you, for the child and for your relationship with each other. There are enough divisions among you and your friends over what the Word does require, without adding the burden of what the Word doesn't. You are not the final authority on Christian polity and ethics. You are doing some things wrong. Your children will do some things right where you are wrong, and wrong where you are right. The objective, the goal, is not to trick your children into walking with God. Our goal is for them to think through and make the right decision, based on their walk with God— their walk, not yours. If they do this, they are a success whether they agree with us or not.*

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**Areas my children disagree with me and yet we live in harmony and fellowship:**

- ✠ **Election:** Eleanor and I, yes; Kids, no
  - ✠ **The role of the institutional church:** Eleanor and I, moderate; Kids, Staunch conservatives
  - ✠ **Denominational affiliation:** Eleanor and I, independent Bible; Kids, Southern Baptist
  - ✠ **Worship:** Eleanor and I, neo-traditional; Kids, Hard Rock Christian
  - ✠ **Scripture Memory:** Eleanor, myself and Becca, yes; Sam, Megan and Liz, no
  - ✠ **Translations:** Eleanor and I NASB; Kids, NIV
  - ✠ **Evangelism:** Eleanor, Sam and I, Bridge; Becca, Four Spiritual Laws; Megan and Liz, E.E.
  - ✠ **Christian Organizations:** Eleanor and I, The Navigators; Sam The Navigators; Megan and Liz, SBC and the Christian Student Union; Becca, Campus Crusade
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**2. Practice saying “Yes.” Remember, you have to say “No” to so many things, say “Yes” whenever you can.**

In our house we have a dog, two rabbits, two birds, an iguana and a snake. We have had crabs, rodents, ducks, and a cat. Why? Because the Bible does not say “no.” The Bible does say no to lots of things. My kids don’t sniff glue, they don’t shoplift, they don’t see R-rated movies and they don’t go to parties where there is drinking, and they don’t... the list goes on. Hey, everything can’t be “no.” Loosen up. Begin saying yes to as many things as you can. (*One note, when you go, the pet goes with you; Eleanor laid down this law when Sam got his snake.*)

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.*

Prv 13:12

**3. Begin to lay down boundaries early, don’t wait until you get there.**

By this I mean, don’t make such black-and-white transitions. If your child is going to have to work their way through college, don’t wait until college to have them start a savings account, get a job and budget their own money. If your child is not going to be able to date until their junior year, don’t spring this on them when their secret crush all through elementary and middle school finally asks them to the junior high football game. If you are not going to let your daughter pierce her ears, then don’t announce this the day they are all going to the mall to have it done. The problem is that many parents are just reacting, just saying “no,” rather than sifting through and deciding on what are really Biblical convictions and then coaching their children to think through and make the right decision.

**4. Slowly lengthen the boundaries as the teen adjusts, while at the same time preparing for your new life without children.**

Be careful not to fall into the two extremes. The first: not transitioning so that your child is unprepared for the newfound freedom of the collegiate experience. The second: too much freedom too soon, because the parent has moved on to being a childless couple before the last child has left home. It requires just as much discipline to be a parent as it does to be a teen.

*The end of a matter is better than its beginning; patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit.*

Ec 7:8

**5. Finally, for good or bad, give them their freedom, commit them to God, and get on with your life.**

Actually, it is as important for the parent as the teen that there be a transitioning out of the parenting phase. Again, there are two extremes. One is not letting go because you are not transitioning. The other is not letting go because you realize that there is so much you didn’t do, so now you are repenting and going to do it all the last four years. Better to go on, face the fact you did the best you could, and begin weaning both of you, parent and child, for the newly found freedom you will experience. Many is the child who messed up his grade point average and credit rating, because he was not ready for freedom. Many is the parent who messed up his relationship with his child and spouse, and his own social life, because he was not ready for the newfound freedom of life without children.

Parenting was a very important part of your life, but now it is coming to an end. To your youngest child, who is in the ninth grade, the next four years seem an eternity, but you know that four years will pass swiftly by. Better to prepare yourself, your child and your marriage, than to live in denial until all three hit.

#### D. ISSUES THAT ARISE DURING THESE TRANSITION YEARS.

##### **1. Social:**

One of the first issues you will face is transitioning in the area of dating. Many parents come to this time with contrasting experiences, so good communication is important here. For the Mahon family the transition went something like this:

- Up to seventh grade— no boy/girl parties or activities outside of church, the family or scholastic events (*such as an honors banquet, etc.*)
- Eighth grade— boy/girl parties or meetings, but no group or one on one dating.
- Ninth grade and tenth grade— Group and solo dating, but no car dates. Car must be driven by a parent, and you must be in the house by 10:30 (*This keeps the older boys from dating your daughter*).
- Eleventh and twelfth grade— Car dates in town but no out of town dates and in by 11:30 P.M. (*Dear parent, please do not be foolish. Nothing but heartache occurs in a car with two teenagers in it after 11:30.*)

**Parties, sleepovers, slumber parties, etc. are another issue.** We did not allow for any unsupervised sleepovers. When in doubt, we checked with the parents. In terms of parties, it pretty much followed the dating rules laid down in the previous section. We always checked on the movies to be shown, the degree of supervision by the parents and where the chaperoning parents would be. Parents who say they are chaperoning a pool party, but then on further investigation are going to be in the second floor game room of the house, getting drunk with other parents, are not actually supervising the party.

This brings up another question. Will alcohol be consumed on the premises? If yes, even by parents, then the answer is no. No. No. No. Your child will get very tired of no. “Can’t I ever go to any parties?” “You don’t like any of my friends,” and the list goes on. One way to diffuse this issue is to have your own parties. Soon the bad kids will all think it is corny and the good kids’ parents will love you.

If your kids are not making church friends, then contact the Sunday school teacher, the Department head and the Youth Leader. Stress to them that you would like to begin hosting parties and after-church socials, etc. Get specific dates on the calendar and then make sure there is lots of food.

*We cheated Becca out of going to a Halloween party her sixth grade year. By the time we realized that the parties being given were unacceptable, it was too late to put one on. From that time on, we have had Halloween, Christmas and end-of-school parties non-stop.*

*Liz: “Daddy, Tammie’s mom wants to know if I am going to have another Halloween party this year?”*

*Dad: “Sure, if you want to, but why does Tammie’s mom want to know.”*

*Liz: “Well, she wants Tammie to go to ours, because of the atmosphere and all, so she won’t let Tammie accept a Halloween invitation until we decide.”*

**Movies:G until they are in the fifth grade; PG until 14; PG-13 after that.** We ask the kids not to go to R-rated movies or to watch them at parties, out of respect for us, until they are out own their own.

**Friends are a little trickier.** Parents can't control whom their child socializes with, but the parent can do things which will influence their decisions, their options and the type of people to whom they are attractive. For the emerging adolescent, clothes, hair and make-up determine the social strata to which they have entry. Your child must not be the nerd who is the last girl to shave her legs or transition from little girl clothes to that of teens, but neither should they be on the cutting edge. My son had a young man's haircut all the way through high school. Hair is an entry tool into certain social groups, but it is also a block. Do not compromise on hair. If he is being excluded from certain social groups because of his hair, good.

**Be an involved parent.** Be steadfast in your strict enforcement of dating and party rules. The bad kids will have nothing to do with a child of an involved parent with a high profile.

Do subtle things that control the environment. Be the one who picks up at social events. Make an appearance when you drop off the child at the party. Say something like, "It would be rude of me not to personally thank the Smiths for having this party at their house." Now your child, but almost as important, the Smith parents, know you are involved. Open your house to the study sessions and project nights. Be willing to host the impromptu movie nights, sleepovers, etc.

Have magnets around the house which will cause the kids to want to hang out over at your house. We have an area where the kids can be kids without being pestered by us. We have a basketball goal and a trampoline for them to burn energy on. We have increased our tolerance of the noise level of music so long as it is Christian, and most, most, most important, we have a part of the pantry, stocked with junk food, that is completely open to our children when they have friends over.

Magnets allow you to control the environment where the kids hang out. The kids have to be at someone's house. Why not yours? Food, basketball goal, gadgets the kids like to play with, *the wish list that every kid wishes his parents would provide so the guys would hang out at his house.* Go for it! When things are a little chaotic, just be glad it's because of all the healthy normal kids at your house, and not because of dope, alcohol or worse.

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*"If pagans from the most immoral and decadent industry in America have decided that something is inappropriate for children, then please explain to me why Christian parents are allowing this movie to be shown at a church sleepover?"*

—The author, in his usual sensitive way, to the education minister, concerning a PG-13 movie that was shown at a youth lock-in at Church.

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*Famous quote, which all my kids know by heart to the plea, "But Daddy, you just don't understand."*

*Infamous reply: "Yes, darling, I do understand. If I did not understand I would let you do it, but it is precisely because I do understand that the answer is no."*

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*"Dad, one of the reasons my friends like to come over is that you just look them in the eye and talk to them like they were real adults, not dweezels, like all the other parents do."*

—Sam

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*"Dad, do you know what they call us at school?"*

*"What?"*

*"The Brady Bunch."*

*The reason was later explained; we sat down and ate as a family for evening meals (and held hands and prayed!!!!); we took family outings together on weekends; and I, as the father, did weird retro things, like bringing a tray of popcorn and cokes up the kids room when they were working on a school project over at our house.*

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## **2. Spiritual**

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Discipling becomes someone else's job— kind of. What I mean by this is that the transition is gradual and you will still have much input into their lives during the early stages of the transition period. The key to discipling another person is time alone with that person and authority. Now you've got half of what it takes.

But now, when your child most needs your presence and the stability of mature parents in their lives, Mom's career is just getting going again and Dad's is shifting into high gear. Moms are leaving too soon and dads are becoming preoccupied with things outside the home.

*Notice, I said presence and not participation.* During the transition, the child both needs and wants your presence. The child wants you there to provide boundaries, advice, love and stability, which are all very important during this period in the child's life. But within these parameters, the young adult also wants his own life.

In the spiritual development of the child during this period, most parents forget that the child is leaving and that it is possible to lose the child. As with discipling an adult, **the relationship becomes more important than the issue.** Remember that it is possible to win the argument and lose the child. More and more you must begin looking at the big picture as a mentor rather than the micro-management that was possible when you were dealing with a child.

Also, it is important to remember that there are now spiritual professionals who, by nature of their gifts, calling and experience, can actually do a better job of discipling your son or daughter than you can. You must now resign yourself to the reality that although no one knows your child better than you, there are many professionals, called by God, who know young adults better than you do, and know how to minister to young adults better than you do. To our consternation, they know how to communicate to our own children better than we do. Face it. In six to seven years, another is destined to assume the spiritual care of our child and we must work to ensure the transition is both smooth and complete.

There are several keys to this:

**First, a church youth program must have a competent and mature leader at its helm.** When we look at a youth program we look for a mission emphasis over camp. Not that they do not go to youth camp, but that their emphasis— their big program— is the mission trip. The big picture: is it entertainment, or is it ministry? We always want to see a service-entertainment emphasis in a youth program. Summer mission projects, weekend service projects, evangelism and ministry projects all point the selfish teen outward and begin to mature him as a disciple. All these entail time away from home. Yes. It's true. Our children seem to spend more and more time away from home, but it is also true that you are, as well. Isn't that really what you want, for your kids to leave and for you to get your wife back? Neither of you can have your youth back. Cherish the memories, but by all means, let go for both of your sakes.

**Second, cooperate in creating an environment for success.** Give them the freedom to immerse themselves in church activities. After all, when it comes right down to it, when they leave home, don't you want them to get involved with church? Give a little on grades and let them pursue the Lord. In the same way, don't you minister at the expense of your child's social standing.

*I always caution parents not to minister through their kids—* “Johnny, lets have your friends and their parents over for a barbeque and then we can invite them all to Mom and Dad’s Bible study.” Invite your own friends over. Don’t embarrass your kids because you don’t want to run the risk of being embarrassed by the same activity if it was your own professional acquaintances.

*Make vacations real vacations.* I have seen too many of my children’s friends become embittered by the fact that the family vacations were really opportunities for professional development or networking, either secular or spiritual. Dad worked the whole time while Mom handled the family end. You might as well just send them off and stay at home. At least that would be honest. (No pager, no cell phone, no laptop, no portable fax— this is a *vacation*).

*Give your teens experiences that will compete with their peers back at school.* And remember the statement, “Boy, I wish my Dad would do that with me,” is greater than any experience where the child knows, in the back of his mind, that he is being packed off once again, so Dad can get some work done.

In closing, the lesson to be learned is, “Don’t let the world sell you a bill of goods on adolescence that is not supported by Scripture.” In reality, that is the theme of the entire seminar. In obedience to God, we are preparing our children for the future-to leave home and live successfully apart from us, while at the same time we are fulfilling our responsibilities before God as parents, and all in conformity to His Word.

## VII. GRADUATION:

It is over— at some point a parent has to come to the conclusion that his job of parenting is indeed over. This happens for us at high school graduation. It is at this time that the child needs to leave home and take on a life of his own. This can take many forms. They may leave for college, get an apartment and start working, join the military, or begin short- or long-term mission work. For financial reasons, the son or daughter may stay at home for a year and work or go to a local community college. If this is the case, I would still encourage you to charge rent and have him pay his own way. For a short time you may forgo this just to get him on his feet, but there needs to be a savings program and a schedule for getting out of the house.

Your children need to know that when they leave home, the house will always be open to them but it will never again be their home. *They may come and visit whenever they wish, but they no longer live with you.*

When our children return from college or work we have a basic rule. They can stay for two full weeks as a guest but, starting with the third week, they begin to take on household chores and responsibilities.

Should they find themselves in a situation where they need to come home, they need to come with a plan to leave. The unwillingness of a parent to treat the son or daughter as a responsible adult, learning the consequences of his own behavior only hurts the child, strains the marriage and stunts the further growth and development of the family into its next stages.

At this point it is time to face up to the reality that your son or daughter will best learn the lessons of life from the discipline and instruction of God and that you as a parent are only getting in the way. Success at this stage is measured in that your son or daughter wants to come and visit you because of the deep love relationship, but then wants to

leave and get back to their life as an independent, fruitful and fulfilled adult, apart from the parents, yet maintaining a love relationship with the parents.

## VIII. Summary

### I. The Difference in The Relationship Between Children And Adolescents.

#### A. Key Terms For Contrast

1. **“Children”** (Eph. 6:1) vs. **“Sons and Daughters”** (2 Cor 6:18): Discipline yourself to think of your offspring, not as children, but rather as sons and daughters.
2. **“Obey”** (Eph. 6:1) vs. **“Honor”** (Mt 19:17– 19): Discipline yourself to require honor from your sons and daughters rather than obedience
3. **“Under control”** (1 Tm 3:4) vs. **“Glad heart”** (Prv. 23:15; 27:11) Discipline yourself to begin rejoicing in your sons and daughters accomplishments as they grow in independence, rather than continuing to require that they be under your control.

#### B. Goals for Contrast

1. **Training**— building a foundation for the child which will serve him in the future vs. **Cheering**— the future is now, encouraging and motivating the young adult to step out on his own. *Our new goal is to encourage and reward good decision making as the child grows in independence from us.*
2. **Nurturing**— to protect and care for vs. **letting go**— allowing the child to learn to fend for himself. *Our new goal is to slowly, yet consistently, grant children the freedom to fail, to learn from their own mistakes in the school of hard knocks.*

#### C. Objectives for Contrast

1. **To obey quickly the first time** vs. **To think through and make the proper decision** *Our new objective when giving our child guidance and advice is for our sons and daughters to discern the will of God for their lives, as a result of the principles that have been built into their lives.*
2. **To develop specific convictions and life-styles** vs. **to apply convictions in the crucible of life.** *Our new objective in the atmosphere we create in the home is for our sons and daughters to have an environment where they can learn to apply their convictions in the real world, yet have a haven to return to and grow in.*

#### D. The Context of the Ministry

1. **Parents, home and those to whom the parents expose them** vs. **Church spiritual leaders and peers.** *The new context of the ministry shifts from the home to the Christian community as our sons and daughters successfully leave home and lives apart from the parents on their own.*

### II. Eight Questions I Can Ask Myself To See Whether I Am Making These Transitions.

1. Do I think of my adolescent as a child or as a son or daughter?
2. Am I satisfied with honor or do I need obedience?
3. Does their questioning of my beliefs, convictions and philosophies seem stimulating, or do I feel threatened and need to demand conformity?
4. Do their mistakes seem positive or do I still need to protect and nurture them?
5. Am I taking positive steps to prepare them to leave me or am I hanging on to every bit of authority I can.

6. Am I developing and promoting a spiritual authority for them outside the home or does this threaten me?
7. Am I preparing them to be able to choose God's will over my will or do I equate the two?
8. Do I look forward to the day when my children are living separated lives from us or am I threatened by this and seeking to delay it?

### **III. Correlations With Infancy**

#### **IV. Preparing For Adulthood in Five Years**

1. Creation of quality memories which can be relied on in times of stress.
2. Just being there, quantity time, is the greatest thing you can do to prepare your children for adulthood.
3. Praying for your children on a daily and specific basis cannot be over emphasized.

#### **V. Shifting Gears**

1. Discipline
2. Coaching during the last stages of departure falls to the parents.
3. Admonition passes to the Church and other Christian Fellowships.
4. Discipline and punishment pass to governing, societal, and institutional organs.
5. The Rod of Discipline passes permanently to God.

#### **VI. Creative discipline through the transition years, seventh to twelfth grades**

##### **A. What seems to work.:**

1. What does it take for a kid to get in trouble?
2. What cultural influences are definite detriments to your child?
3. What do they hate?
4. What needs to be done around the house that you hate?
5. Let the punishment fit the crime.

##### **B. What does not seem to work**

##### **C. Boundaries**

1. Take the high ground and don't sweat the small stuff
2. Practice saying "yes." Remember, you have to say "no" to so many things, say "yes" whenever you can.
3. Begin to lay down boundaries early. Don't wait until you get there.
4. Slowly lengthen the boundaries as the teen adjusts, while at the same time preparing for your new life without children.
5. Finally, for good or bad, give them their freedom, commit them to God and get on with your life.

##### **D. Issues that arise during these transition years.**

1. Social:
2. Spiritual

#### **VII. Graduation**

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Post-Study Projects

*What follows are a number of projects which you and your wife can complete. Some are to be done separately and the results compared. Others are to be done together. The goal is to come to an agreement on the discipline needs of your child, and then work on them together as a team. Remember, the general rule in decision making in this area is to yield to the more conservative of the couple in arriving at a decision.*

#### **Scripture Memory Verse— Mk 10:29**

*Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.*

*Last Week's Verse— Mk 1:19, 20 And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.*

## QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: THE TRANSITION YEARS

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: LK 15:11– 12

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: MT 4:21– 22

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: MT 19:29**

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD**

**JEREMIAH 15:16**

**THEME: THE TRANSITION YEARS**

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: GEN 2:24**

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: EPH 5:31**

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: 1 SM 1:19–28; 2:11**

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

## Our Expectations In The Face Of The Transition Into Adulthood

The project below lists key terms for contrast. To the left at point 0 is the expectation we have of a small child. To the right, at point 10, is that of a young adult transitioning into full adulthood. Place an **X** where your expectation is, and a **C** where your child actually is. For more than one child feel free to use 1X, 1C, etc. Sometimes, we are treating a child like a transitioning adult. Sometimes, we are treating our transitioning young adult like a child. Be sure to discuss this with your spouse.

<i>Child</i> <u>0</u>	vs.	<i>Sons and Daughters</i> <u>10</u>
<i>Obey</i> <u>0</u>	vs.	<i>Honor</i> <u>10</u>
<i>Under Control</i> <u>0</u>	vs.	<i>Glad Heart</i> <u>10</u>
<i>Train</i> <u>0</u>	vs.	<i>Counsel</i> <u>10</u>
<i>Nurture / Bond</i> <u>0</u>	vs.	<i>Let Go / Leave</i> <u>10</u>
<i>To Obey Quickly The First Time</i> <u>0</u>	vs.	<i>To Think through And Make The Right Decisions</i> <u>10</u>
<i>To Acquire Convictions And Lifestyles</i> <u>0</u>	vs.	<i>To Apply Convictions And To Make Choices</i> <u>10</u>

***Remember, it is just as damaging to expect a child to think through and make the right decision, as it is for a young adult to obey Mommy quickly the first time. This chart is applicable no matter the age of your children. As you reflect on the results of this chart, what adjustments need to be made?***

Are you accepting and preparing for the future changes your family will be experiencing?

## Parents Of Teens and Older Children

***Although this project is specifically geared for the parents of teens and older, those of you with younger children can still think through on your emotional response to these transitions, how your own family handled your transition years, and how you will do things differently. For those with very young children, how your family treated you will probably be the most helpful aspect of the discussion. It is probably unrealistic for young parents of preschoolers or young elementary age children to be giving a lot of thought to this issue, much less to begin to prepare for the transition years to adulthood.***

Do I think of my adolescent as a child, or as a son or daughter?

Am I satisfied with honor, or do I need immediate obedience?

Do their questioning and mistakes seem positive, or do I still need to protect and nurture them through the bumps and bruises of life?

Am I taking positive steps to prepare them to leave me, or am I holding on to every bit of authority I can?

Am I developing and promoting a spiritual authority for them outside the home, or does this threaten me?

Do I look forward to my children and I living separate lives, or am I threatened by this and seeking to delay it?

Reflect back now on your answers. What adjustments, if any, need to be made or prepared for in your life? Do either you or your spouse struggle with a particular issue?