

MANHOOD/WOMANHOOD CEREMONY

This year our Birthday Faith Experience is all about unleashing your teenager well out of your home with their identity in Christ understood and embraced.

Framing Up Our Purpose

It's possible to go a little crazy in your parenting during your teen's last year in your home. All the transition from dependence on you to independence within themselves comes to a jarring climax sometime during this year. And the reality that the baby you once held will soon live a life fairly separate from yours can be overwhelming. So we go a little crazy. First it looks a little like smothering. Then it can revert to parenting like we did when they were ten. It might have an extra dose of sadness or anger to it. Or it may look like an erratic attempt to cram in every lesson you haven't had the chance to teach. No matter what, chances are during your teen's eighteenth year, they may think you've gone a bit loco!


No worries, though...as long as you recognize the insanity and realize all that unexplained behavior is often rooted in the fear of letting go instead of trusting God to get His work done in our teens' lives. If we see that, we'll be able to keep these truths in front of our seniors as they anticipate the thrill of the journey ahead!

Identity is about knowing whose we are rather than trusting solely in what we can do.

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained; what is man, that you think of him? What is the son of man, that you care for him? For you have made him a little lower than God, and crowned him with glory and honor." --Psalm 8:3-5

The most frequent questions our seniors in high school will get are "Where are you going to college?" and "Have you chosen a major?" or "What do you want to do with your life?". And while none of these questions is inherently the wrong question, none of them is the most important question. What if we spend more time asking our teens, "Who do you want to be-come?" Chances are they won't even use their college degree in the same field or stay with the same career for more than seven years. So why set them up for an identity crisis that is based on what they choose to do?

Why not help them shape their plans for the future based on a truth of whose they are and who that makes them? If they know they are a child of God, created to do good works, no matter where their feet land, they will not question their purpose or identity. They will enjoy the ad-venture of living out that identity and purpose in creative ways.



God loves to surprise us with a different plan than we had in mind.

“Passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you into fishers for men.’” --Mark 1:16-17

This may be one of the hardest truths for parents to walk out. We feel safer when our kids have a normal, safe plan for their lives and look like they can take care of themselves. But Jesus is not a “safe” Redeemer. He is dangerous and often unpredictable. He is dangerous because He calls us to step out of our comfort zone. He loves to challenge us to do a 180-degree turn.

God calls us to trust His plans, not our own. Sometimes His plans for our teens mean they won’t go to college right away, or ever! Yikes! His plans sometimes mean they will need to live simply, because their income won’t make them wealthy or even middle-class comfortable.


We can help them build a healthy identity if we help them answer the question, “Who do I want to become?” Help them make a list of answers to that question and then show them you aren’t afraid to wade into the answers they come up with.

The final test has one vertical question and one horizontal question.

*“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. A second likewise is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”
--Matthew 22:37-40*

If you are having trouble coming up with words to share with your senior at this Birthday Faith Experience, you can’t do much better than the words of the two greatest commandments. Remind your teen that if they don’t do anything else in this life, there are two things you want to make sure they do.

First, make sure their vertical relationship with the Creator and Savior is the most important love they ever give away. Second, be sure to give the same love that flows from their vertical relationship with God to their horizontal relationships with others. May they love others as God has fully and whole-heartedly loved them. That will just about sum up anything that needs to be said!



Guide for Planning a Manhood/Womanhood Ceremony

Top 10 ways you can maximize the moment:

- Discuss the ceremony with your eighteen year-old. Should it be private, public, formal, or casual? They can help choose the format, but they can't choose whether or not they will receive the Blessing of the ceremony.
- Decide who to invite. Send them not only the details of the evening but give them an idea of what you expect them to share with your teen at the ceremony. That will give them time to prepare.
- Be ready for questions. Your teenager might see this as strange or awkward, which is actually pretty typical. It will be something that will be more easily understood when experienced. Learn to be comfortable with questions and utilize the answer, "You'll have to just wait and see" quite a lot.
- Prepare to give them a symbol. Decide what you will give them and what meaning you are going to attach to it. If you can, try to make this a surprise for them. Surprises are typically pretty fun.
- Write down what you plan to say. Not only will it calm your nerves to read it, but you can also give a written copy of it to your 12th grader for them to keep.
- Bless identity, not performance.
- Be creative. Every ceremony is completely different because it comes from the heart and mind of the parents leading.
- Pray. Give all of the guests an opportunity to pray over your teenager.
- Scriptures of Blessing. Here are some Scripture references that you might want to read during the ceremony:

<i>Isaiah 49:25</i> <i>Isaiah 44:3-4</i> <i>Psalms 112:2</i> <i>Psalms 127:3</i> <i>Proverbs 4:18</i> <i>Proverbs 4:22</i> <i>Psalms 119:11</i> <i>Jeremiah 32:38-39</i> <i>Deuteronomy 6:7</i> <i>Proverbs 1:8-9</i> <i>Psalms 128:1-6</i> <i>Hebrews 12:9-11</i>	<i>Isaiah 54:13</i> <i>1 Corinthians 13:11</i> <i>Proverbs 20:7</i> <i>Numbers 6:24</i> <i>Proverbs 27:11</i> <i>2 Timothy 2:22</i> <i>Proverbs 2:20</i> <i>Proverbs 4:8 (good for womanhood ceremony)</i> <i>Zechariah 9:11</i> <i>Psalms 91</i>	<i>Psalms 144:12</i> <i>Psalms 127:3-5</i> <i>Psalms 139-13:16</i> <i>Proverbs 22:6</i> <i>Ephesians 6:4</i> <i>Jeremiah 29:11</i> <i>1 Peter 2:9</i> <i>Genesis 18:19</i> <i>Jeremiah 1:5</i> <i>Psalms 127:1</i> <i>Proverbs 23:24</i> <i>Joshua 1:6-15</i> <i>Romans 8:28</i>
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Risk vulnerability. If the ceremony is cold or unfeeling, it won't work. This will be significant when you are willing to open your heart and hold a mirror up to the soul of your teenager so they can see their identity in your words. YOU CAN'T MESS THIS UP....Relax and enjoy the moment!

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY EIGHTEEN YEAR-OLD?

Congratulations! You have an eighteen year-old! It is time to finish strong in the adolescent journey. In order to do that, let's take a look inside the mind and heart of your ~~teenager~~ adult!

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- They have developed physically into their adult bodies.
- Sexual desire is awakened, and the temptation to be sexually active is common.
- Stress is a very real physical struggle as they work, perform in school, and prepare for the future.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your eighteen year-old may:

- Begin to be very sentimental as they anticipate life change
- Experience calmer moods than in previous years
- Exhibit impulsive behavior with friends and peers
- Be more capable of taking care of others

RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Integrating both physical and emotional intimacy into relationships begins.
- Friends that share beliefs, values, and interests are sought.
- The relationship with parents is more of a support system.
- They begin to feel freedom to express themselves as individuals.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- They can handle the responsibility of most service positions in the church.
 - They have much less interest in the student ministry activities and need to be connected to adult activities in the church.
 - They have a greater interest in serving others and in making a difference in the world.
 - Role models are developed that inspire them either toward or away from faith.
 - There is a temptation to "have their fun now" and be responsible later.
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