

Help Teenagers Put the Future in God's Hands



As another school year wraps up, graduating seniors are contemplating the next stage in their lives. Whether kids are heading to college, the military, or full-time employment, this important milestone brings a mixture of excitement and uncertainty.

Those feelings aren't reserved for high school seniors. Whether they're 13 or 19, most young people question what the future holds for them. "What does God want me to do with my life? Should I go to college? If so, which one? What should I study? What do I want to be? Should I get married? If so, to whom?" Such questions can feel overwhelming, especially when they're combined with all the other emotions and pressures today's teenagers face.

Teenagers who know that God has their lives all planned out still might not know which particular direction he wants them to take. When big choices loom, Christians can bring their questions to God in prayer and can rely on the loving support of family members and friends.

As parents, your presence and guidance during times of decision-making is crucial. Although you can't make choices for your teenagers, you can help them recognize their talents and interests, research their options, set short- and long-term goals, and then get settled in the next stage of their lives. Use the information in this issue of "The Parent Link" to help your teenagers rely on God as they contemplate the future.

Assistance in Aisle Three

Share with your teenagers this insightful excerpt from Group's Live Bible:

Yesterday I saw something new—a huge dog right in the middle of Wal-Mart. He was a seeing-eye dog, and he was leading his master through the perilous twists and bends of the personal-hygiene department. The man still had a mind of his own. He had an idea of the general direction to head toward and of the things he wanted. But he needed a good set of eyes to guide him.

That's a pretty clear picture of Jeremiah 29:4-14. God creatively weaves the Israelites through the hidden roadblocks they are oblivious to. He knows where to take them and how to make it safely through. We can fully expect God to do the same for us. God has a plan for each of us and a good set of eyes. God can easily create a path for us, even when we can't see the way.

Try closing your eyes tight and feeling your way around the house in the dark. As you do, imagine the things in your future you feel uncertain about: college, relationships, career path. Then pray. Thank God for his creative plans for you and for his gentle leadership guiding you safely through.

Pulse

Decisions, decisions. Teenagers seem to face one big choice after another. Check out these stats about teenagers and the future:

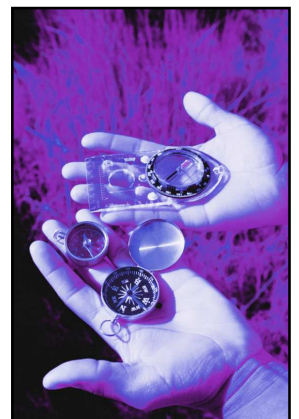
- 44% of teenagers say their top worry is getting good grades, and 32% say their top worry is getting into a good college.

(The Parent Institute)

- When teenagers were asked whether they wanted to follow the career path of their father or mother, 79% responded "neither."
(USA Today)

- 32% of teenagers expect to be famous someday.
(Psychology Today)

- According to various sources, about 80% of teenagers say they expect to get married someday.



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Use these discussion starters as you help your teenagers ponder and prepare for the future.

1. When you think about your future, how do you feel? What are you most excited about and most scared about? Explain.
2. How certain are you about what you want to do with your life? Do you think your goals match up with God's plans? Why or why not?
3. If God already knows how our lives will turn out, why do you think he often lets us struggle with decisions?
4. What one question about your future would you most like God to answer, and why?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. God will guide your kids as they contemplate his will for their lives.
2. Your teenagers will be receptive to your support and guidance as they make big decisions.
3. Your teenagers will make choices that are pleasing to God and that glorify him.
4. God will protect and bless your teenagers as they grow and prepare to leave your "nest."

Verse of the Month

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me." (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

God, the architect of the universe, has drafted detailed "life plans" for each of his children. Although the Bible may not tell your kids what classes to take or which job to accept, it assures them that he holds each of their futures. God promises to provide good, hope-filled lives for teenagers—and for you.

What's Up With Kids

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, author Katie Brazelton writes about helping your teenagers discover and fulfill their life purpose. To read the entire article, visit SimplyYouthMinistry.com and enter "The ABC's of Parenting on Purpose" in the search box.

I am the first to admit that I didn't know how to go about planning my life for God. My mama never told me how. I wish she had. She did teach me a few things, like "Floss. Don't let your roots show. And wear clean underwear in case of an accident." But none of those things helped me figure out what God expected me to be and do. For me, discerning my purpose in life was a grueling process of hit and miss, of pouring my heart out to strangers, and of shedding buckets of tears. I wouldn't wish my method on anyone. By sharing these 26 lessons with your teenagers, you'll save them some frustration and legwork.

Acknowledge your abilities. **B**e willing to forgive yourself and others. **C**oncentrate on your character. **D**evelop a servant's heart. **E**mbrace God's dream for your life. **F**ace your fears. **G**ive God the glory. **H**old onto hope. **I**nvoke humility into your life. **J**ust offer your weaknesses to God. **K**eep going back to your Bible as the ultimate, unchanging truth. **L**ove God and your neighbor. **M**otivate toward your life mission. **N**ot about you. **O**bey. **P**ray all day long. **Q**uit being so serious. **R**each out for healthy relationships. **S**erve where you are called today. **T**ell others about the numerous, gracious miracles God has done for you! **U**nderstand your uniqueness. Invite **V**ision. **W**alk with an accountability partner. **E**Xpect an extraordinary purpose. **Y**earn to please an audience of one: Jesus Christ. **U**nZip your zeal.



MUSICSPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: Although U2 has been around since 1976, its sound has evolved and matured over time. The band has sold more than 145 million albums and won 22 Grammy Awards—more than any other band. *No Line on the Horizon* debuted at number one in the U.S., the seventh time U2 has done that.

Albums: *No Line on the Horizon* (2009), *Achtung Baby* (1991), *The Joshua Tree* (1987)

What Parents Should Know: Lead singer Bono is passionate about human rights and social-justice issues. People like to question the sincerity of his faith, but worshipful songs such as "Magnificent" and "Moment of Surrender" should end speculation.

What U2 Says: Bono acknowledges facing many temptations over the years. "There's a part of me that thinks, 'Wow, I'm just an inch away'.... I have a wild streak and I'd be very capable of setting fire to myself. So...I don't go to church for the view."

Discussion Questions: Read Matthew 5:27-30. How often do you face temptation? How do you overcome it? Does Jesus really expect us to cut off parts of our bodies? Why or why not? What are some practical ways to follow Christ's instructions here? How can a closer relationship with God make it easier to fight temptations?

Christian Artist

Background: This worship band formed in Belfast, Ireland, in 2004. During a mission trip to Pattaya, Thailand, the city's poor conditions inspired Bluetree's hit song "God of This City." The band's new album climbed to the top of the Christian praise-and-worship sales charts.

Albums: *God of This City* (2009), *Greater Things* (2007)

What Parents Should Know: Bluetree has been active in the UK for a few years but is just now getting attention in America. The talented band members love the Lord, and the estimable worship leader Chris Tomlin has covered "God of This City."

What Bluetree Says: Lead singer Aaron Boyd says Bluetree's worship songs are about action. "We are [Jesus'] hands and feet in the world. Let's not just ask God to change everything, but let's be a blessing and speak words of life into people's difficult circumstances."

Discussion Questions: What's the biggest problem you're facing, and how are you dealing with it? What big problems do other people face worldwide? Read Galatians 5:13-14. How does serving others give you "freedom"? How does reaching out to help others affect your problems—or your perception of them?

FILMWATCH

Movie: *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*

Genre: Action-Adventure, Sci-Fi Thriller

Rating: Pending, but almost certainly PG-13

Synopsis: This begins a string of films explaining the backstories of popular superheroes from the *X-Men* films. James Logan (Hugh Jackman) is Wolverine, a mutant who seeks revenge on his half-brother Victor Creed. Creed, the mutant known as Sabretooth, killed Wolverine's girlfriend. Wolverine uncovers a larger plot that threatens all mutants.

Discussion Questions: Think of a time you've wanted to get revenge on someone: How did the situation turn out? Read Romans 12:19-21. Why do you suppose God wants us to leave revenge up to him? Would you rather be judged by God or by other people, and why? Must Christians stand idly by when other people treat us poorly? Explain. What are some helpful ways to get past desires for revenge?



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