

Think, for a moment, about your teens with respect to how well you feel they are prepared for the “real world” after leaving your home. Consider the following:

Life Perspective:

- Do they understand their unique gifts, talents, passions, and worth?
- Do they know how to live life *strategically* and with discipline and purpose?
- Are they committed to making a positive difference in the world NOW?
- Are they focused on God and others before themselves?
- Are they guided by an *honorable* definition of “success?”
- Are they committed to developing a wide range of interests?
- Are they willing to take risks, even if they might not succeed?
- Do they project a positive, can-do attitude?
- Do they accept that life isn’t necessarily fair and avoid complaining?
- Do they understand that successful people plan, practice, and persevere?
- Are they adaptable to changing circumstances?

Character:

- Do they readily demonstrate love, compassion, and service to others?
- Are they guided by integrity in their actions and words?
- Do they stand up for their beliefs and values with conviction?
- Are they committed to giving everything their best effort?
- Do they take full responsibility for their mistakes and shortfalls?
- Do they demonstrate humility in their successes and recognize others?
- Are they open to receiving constructive feedback?
- Do they serve as an encourager, rather than a critic, to others?
- Is their speech honorable when talking about others who are not present?
- Do they act as a role model around younger people?

Relationships and Communication:

- Do they prioritize relationships with others over possessions and power?
- Are they comfortable expressing their feelings and emotions to others?
- Do they build friendships with people who share their values, beliefs, and interests?
- Do they avoid destructive, negative people who don’t have their best interests at heart and understand that not everyone is meant to be their friend?
- Do they know how to make a great first impression?
- Do they understand how to gradually cultivate friendships based on mutual trust?
- Do they demonstrate excellent listening skills and fully engage in conversation?
- Do they regularly show appreciation and gratitude toward others?
- Do they know how to disagree in an agreeable manner?

Spiritual Life and Handling Adversity:

- Do they understand the elements necessary for a thriving spiritual life?
- Do they regularly take matters big and small to God in their prayer life?
- Do they count their blessings and demonstrate a grateful heart even in trials?
- Do they reserve time for daily reflection with God?
- Are they committed to returning a portion of their income to God first?
- Will they prioritize connecting with a worship community after high school?
- Do they have an accountability relationship with a trusted friend?
- Are they committed to keeping the faith even during times of trial?
- Are they prepared to accept that adversity happens, builds our character, and often makes sense after the fact?

- Do they know how to release stress and pain in a healthy and patient manner?
- Are they committed to learning from their mistakes?

Personal Productivity:

- Are they an effective goal setter, planner, time manager, and decision maker?
- Are they a responsible and self-disciplined user of technology?
- Are they comfortable speaking in groups and leading discussions?
- Are they discerning and skeptical of what they read and hear in the news media?
- Do they have a disciplined study method that works in high pressure situations?

Career Selection and Advancement:

- Do they know how to comprehensively assess their interests, skills, lifestyle preferences, and training desires to select a well-matched career?
- Do they understand how to build a winning competitive edge and effectively market themselves to potential employers?
- Do they understand and demonstrate the qualities employers value in their star employees?
- Do they know the secret to a glowing performance evaluation and how to become an indispensable employee?

Love and Marriage:

- Do they understand the difference between “love” and “lust,” and that love takes time and the right timing?
- Do they know that the keys to responsible dating involve being *discriminating, discerning, and deliberate*?
- Will they approach marriage as a truly *forever* decision?
- Are they committed to fully examining their compatibility before marrying?
- Do they understand that marriage is a partnership in which their spouse comes *first*?
- Do they know the key qualities of successful, long-term marriages?
- Are they committed to having children ONLY when they’re married AND financially and emotionally ready?
- Do they understand that the three best ways to avoid poverty are to graduate from high school, not marry before 20, and only have children *after* they marry?

Financial Management:

- Do they understand the basics of being financially literate and how to be a wise steward, productive earner, prudent consumer, cautious debtor, disciplined saver, and cheerful giver?
- Do they know how to live within their means and manage a budget?
- Do they know how to prudently use credit and to pay off their balances monthly?
- Do they know the importance of investing early, regularly, and as much as possible in a disciplined and diversified long-term investment program?
- Do they understand the workings of the economy and financial markets?
- Do they know how to invest and manage their bank accounts?
- Do they know the importance of giving first, investing second, and spending last?
- Do they know how to build a solid credit rating?
- Do they know the ways to avoid identity theft?

Parenting Style and Upcoming Transition:

- Are you adapting your parenting style from “control” to “influence?”
- Do they know how much you love them, value them, and *believe* in them?
- Are you actively finding ways to seek out their opinions and help with decisions?
- Do you regularly share time together at the time and place of *their* choosing?
- Are you prepared to let them go and be their “encouragers in chief?”
- Have you shared the key transition risks (i.e., “potential de-railers”) with them: social impatience, lack of study disciplines, damaging recreational habits, lack of a support network and spiritual life, excessive personal performance stress, and financial irresponsibility?