

# T W E L F T H G R A D E R I T E O F P A S S A G E

## THE SECRETS

If you have utilized some of these Rites of Passage experiences over the last few years, then, hopefully, you have had some good conversations with your students about really important and practical things. You have spoken love into their lives, you have talked to them about things about them that have changed over the years, but soon, that little baby of yours will walk out of your door as their own person, an adult.

You may find over the next year, that they start to act like they don't need you anymore and that might hurt. But to be honest, isn't that what you want? I know the answer to that is yes and no. As you look forward to seeing your student fly off on their own, you are also afraid and nervous and sad. But the point of this Rite of Passage is about transition. Taking your relationship and moving it into the next phase. Where you become more like a parent/ friend hybrid. You are still their parent and they still need you to be... but soon they are going to be calling all the shots in their life, whether you like it or not. So the goal is to make that transition smoother.

And the best way to do that is to start asking more questions. And so we have provided you with 52 questions to ask your graduating senior. That is one for every week of the year. You can do this by setting aside a time every week, at your family dinner. Or you can take them out every month for coffee and run through 4 or 5 of them interview style. But the point, like most of these experiences is to spark good conversations. Maybe you just want to pick out 12 of your favorite questions from this list and do it once a month. That is totally fine. Whatever works best for your student and you.

But if you plan on doing this Rite of Passage you will need to make sure that you have a plan and you do it consistently.

\*Just a Note: Most of these questions came from a teachthought.com called "50 Questions Every Student Should Be Able to Answer Before They Graduate High School" by Terry Heick.

<https://www.teachthought.com/critical-thinking/questions-every-student-should-be-able-to-answer-before-they-graduate-high-school/>

- 1. What are people 'for'? What should a person 'do'? What is your life philosophy about people and work and knowledge and relationships?**
- 2. Who and 'where' are you? Who or what do you depend on, who or what depends on you? What are my physical, digital, and emotional interdependences?**
- 3. What do you know, and what can and should you do with what you know? What are the limits of what you know/my knowledge, and how can those limits inform your behaviors?**
- 4. What do you love? How has that changed over the course of your life so far? What contributes to love and affection? What are its causes and effects? How should love guide your life—and how should it not?**
- 5. What kinds of questions should you be asking on a daily basis—of yourself and the people and world around me? Where can you find reliable sources of information to answer your questions?**

**6. What kinds of conversations should you be having with whom, and how? What does it mean to truly listen to someone, and how should that impact your conversations with them? What are the strengths and weaknesses of certain forms of communication and technology? Compare conversation versus texting versus a phone call versus a threaded social-media-based debate.**

**7. When are you at your best? Your most creative? Where is your genius? What are the patterns in the kinds of things you tend to be interested in and curious about and is there anything you should 'take away' from those patterns? What are your habits, and what are the results of those habits? What are the habits of the person you want to be, and how can you adjust accordingly?**

**8. What do you 'believe'? Where do your beliefs come from? How do your beliefs frame and influence what you believe you 'see,' and vice-versa?**

**9. What's the difference between a fact and an opinion? Why are they easy to get confused? Why is it important to know the difference?**

**10. How can you discuss something with someone you disagree with? How can you disagree with someone while learning from them? How can you 'make a point without making an enemy'? How can you separate a person from an idea? Are there times when that is easier/more difficult?**

**11. What is the relationship between your thinking, your beliefs, and your behavior (e.g., work/career, what you read, your priorities, who you hang out with, etc.)?**

**12. What sorts of thinking and information should go into a decision? Where should you tolerate uncertainty and where should you try to insist on 'being sure'?**

**13. What are logical fallacies and thinking traps, and how can and should you avoid them to do better work, have healthier relationships, and create a sense of well-being so that you can experience contentment and happiness?**

**14. What influences you, and how can and should you control those influences to your advantage?**

**15. How do you apologize to someone? How do you know when to do so—and what words and tone and medium to use?**

**16. What's possible—for you in your life? What can you dream? Imagine? What should you read, watch, and create? What can you learn from watching others—looking 'out'? And what can you learn from looking within? How can the two work together?**

**17. Where do your morals come from? If you have a clear 'ethical system,' what is it and what are its influences? And if you don't, why not? What do you risk/gain by not having one that is at least somewhat defined? What do you risk/gain if you do?**

**18. What is the difference between learning and education, and how should each serve you in your life?**

**19. When should you lead and when should you follow? When should you talk and when should you listen?**

**20. What role can creativity play in your life? Innovation? Disruptive thinking?**

**21. What are your priorities, and how do your choices and behaviors reflect/not reflect those priorities?**

22. How do you define 'success'? What, if anything, has been holding you back from success (or even more success than you've already experienced), and how should you respond?
23. What is the best way to research something? What's the difference between 'research' and 'Googling'?
24. What is the relationship between a thought, a belief, and behavior? What does each affect?
25. How can you decide if something is true or false?
26. What are your goals? How can you categorize those goals? And in light of those goals, what's the best way to spend the next five years of your life? How have your goals changed over the last five years and why?
27. How can you learn something from everyone you meet?
28. What is the difference between your 'work,' a 'job,' and a 'career'? What's the best way to perform a 'job search'? How do most people go about this, and how can you do better?
29. How do you respond to challenging situations? How can you reframe your thinking in certain situations, and to what effect?
30. What are your sources of stability, and how can you serve and protect them—and use them to grow?
31. What seems to make you happy? And how do you distinguish between contentment, joy, and happiness?
32. How does timing affect living?
33. Who in my life do you owe what, and why? How should you respond as a result? What are you accountable for? And to whom? What does the world need from you? What do you need from the world?
34. What should you read and why?
35. What role can art, music, and theater play in your life?
36. How can you be more aware of your 'self' so that I have a clear and accurate view? What you believe and do? Your values? Your shortcomings—those you should accept, and those you should work to improve?
37. What lessons can you take from us, your immediate family, as you prepare for 'the real world'?
38. Whom do you consider inspirational/heroic and why? What effect might this have on your ambitions and potential?
39. Where have you succeeded/struggled academically and why?
40. What's the problem with the word 'smart'?
41. What is the relationship between knowledge and critical thinking?

- 42. How can you understand different 'situations' in my life, and how you can use knowledge and critical thinking together to do so?**
- 43. What is the value of another person's opinion? Does it change depending on what that 'opinion' is about—if it's about you versus a political issue versus how to raise children or buy the 'right' house, etc?**
- 44. What are the most important things you've learned in school? What can you do with those things that you've learned?**
- 45. What/which concepts and ideas have you not learned about—or much about—that you should have? What knowledge gaps are most and least important for you in light of who and where you are and where and you want to 'go'?**
- 46. What/which skills and competencies come naturally for you, which not so much, and how should you respond?**
- 47. What is a digital footprint and how can you analyze and revise yours to align with who you believe you are and want to be?**
- 48. How can you stay safe—online and offline—by using your ability to think, adapt, and communicate?**
- 49. What is the difference between learning math and science and history versus thinking like a mathematician, scientist, and historian? What can you learn from these differences?**
- 50. What effect do you want to have on the world, and where should you start?**
- 51. What do you tend to pay attention to and notice on a daily basis? What are the effects of that focus? Should it be refined? How will you know? What are your thinking 'blind spots'? Cognitive biases, cultural biases, tendencies towards confirmation bias, etc?**
- 52. How does God factor into your life from here on out?**

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**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL**

**Letting go is wonderful and painful all at once. Don't be afraid to enter into that discontinuity.**

## **FRAMING UP OUR PURPOSE:**

### **Identity**

It's possible to go a little crazy in your parenting during your teen's senior year. 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 senior 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 become?" 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 adventure 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 Rites of Passage 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 wholeheartedly loved them. That will just about sum up anything that needs to be said!

**//IDEAS FOR RELEASING YOUR SENIOR WELL**

Make college visits and intentionally discuss what God can do in their lives there.

Plan and pay for five adults who are significant in your teen's life to take them to lunch during their senior year and to pray for their future.

Encourage your teen to find a mentor the first semester of college.

Make sure your teen knows how to do laundry and knows how to change a tire (Really!).

Ask your teen what they need from you during their senior year in order to finish well.

## **rites of passage phase check**

12th grade is the phase when your emerging adult pulls away, gets closer, does things for the last time and you both start asking, "What's Next?"

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Wisdom teeth may begin to "come in" (17-21 years).

Has difficulty falling asleep before 11 pm (it's biological).

Needs 9 hours of sleep and one hour of exercise per day.

Girls have likely reached adult height and body development.

Guys may continue to grow in height, and develop muscle mass, body and facial hair.

Stress is a very real physical struggle as they work, perform in school, and prepare for the future.

### **EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Becoming more emotionally stable, but needs support and grace.

Often thrives in a particular area of interest.

Values being true to themselves.

Frequently demonstrates initiative for personal interests.

Exhibit impulsive behavior with friends and peers.

More capable of taking care of others.

### **RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Increased interest in sexual expression (64% of twelfth graders report being sexually active).

Less available for family time.

Wants to feel ownership in personal decisions.

Shows respect for others' opinions and able to compromise.

More at ease around adults.

Friends that share beliefs, values, and interests are sought.

The relationship with parents is more of a support system.

### **MENTAL DEVELOPMENT**

They have much less interest in the student ministry activities and need to be connected to adult activities in the church.

Role models are developed that inspire them either toward or away from faith.

May overly romanticize or catastrophize

Open to discussing current affairs or social issues.

Capable of complex, multi-step problem solving.

Still struggles with long-term planning.

There is a temptation to "have their fun now" and be responsible later.