

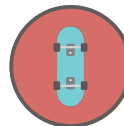
# ***PARENTING PLAN***

***YEAR 15:***

***COMMUNICATION***



# HI FRIEND!



We've heard it through the grapevine that there's a birthday in your family this month! As your child enters into Year 15, we want to focus on **Communication**.

At First Capital, we believe that a child's home is the number 1 faith-building, disciple-making environment that there is. We want to partner with you as you raise your fearfully and wonderfully made child. We've created a discipleship program that goes from year 1 all the way to year 18 when you're launching your child out into the world. We offer this plan that focuses on one thing every year when it comes to following Jesus.

This plan isn't supposed to be a course in everything you need to know when it comes to parenting and raising a child to love and follow Jesus. But we hope that every year, this plan will help you and your family take one step closer to Jesus.

This plan is just one part of many resources that we want to provide for you. Many of those resources can be found on our Parent Resources Wall in the lobby.

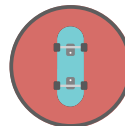
During this first phase of your child's life we label as the **Mobilize Phase**, we focus on starting to put your faith to action.

If you have any questions or just need an adult to talk to anytime this year, we are available to you! You can reach out to anybody on the Family Ministry Team.

Evalina Pinnick - [evalina@churchanywhere.us](mailto:evalina@churchanywhere.us)  
Marianne Rader - [marianne@firstcapitalchristian.org](mailto:marianne@firstcapitalchristian.org)  
Spencer Roberts - [spencer@firstcapitalchristian.org](mailto:spencer@firstcapitalchristian.org)  
Patrick Crawford - [patrick@churchanywhere.us](mailto:patrick@churchanywhere.us)

We are praying for you and your family,  
The Family Ministry Team

# **WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR FUTURE 18-YEAR-OLD**

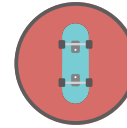


Each year throughout the parenting plan, take time to write your child a letter. Below are some ideas of things to include that will speak life and love into your child, as well as give them an invaluable collection of insights into their upbringing and a storyline of memories to be cherished for the rest of their lives

1. Things I've loved about you this year...
2. Important memories from this past year...
3. Some of my favorite time with you is when we...
4. Your favorite type of music is...
5. Your favorite hobbies are...
6. Things that make you laugh...
7. Your favorite things to do with your friends...
8. I am impressed when you...
9. I've been praying about this for you this year...
10. I've been praying about this for me as a parent this year...
11. Something I hope you learned this year is...
12. A bible verse I have picked out for you is...

You can write them all in a journal or write each letter as a separate piece of paper. Include a photo of your family with the letter to give a year by year collection of memories all in one place. Each year after giving your child the letter, get it back and keep them all somewhere safe. You will give them all to your child in the 18th year for LAUNCH.

# COMMUNICATION

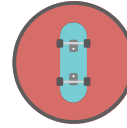


Over the next few years, it may seem like your teenager wants less and less to do with you – maybe it already does. But keeping a clear line of communication open with your child is essential to having a healthy relationship. You still have some critical years of parenting before you launch your young adult into the world. So, how do you keep a healthy level of communication with your teenager?

Surprisingly, it might have more to do with you than with your child. Sometimes your child will barely grunt out a one-word answer to you, and other times they may run on and on about something they are really excited about. They may vacillate between dramatic outbursts and monk-like withdrawal. That's when it's a critical time to remember that we are the adults. They are a hot mess of emotional, physical, mental and spiritual change. We cannot expect them to react and communicate in an adult manner all the time. They might be getting deeper voices, driving with a permit, learning foreign languages and looking more like you in your wedding picture, but they are still not adults...yet. This year we want to focus on building, maintaining or rebuilding good communication with your child as you parent your teenager over these next few years.

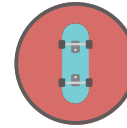
**MAKE SURE YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD:** Sure, they've grown up around you, but it takes intentional effort to know your child as they get older. "Remember, if you don't know who you are talking to, you can't really expect them to listen."\* Take time to read and understand the phase summary included in this packet. Read other developmental material. When it seems like your son can't settle down, just learning the fact that boys do not get a steady drip of testosterone all day long, but rather bursts occasionally throughout the day, can help you deal more effectively with them. Or, to know that your daughter will likely process decisions out loud will help you not freak out when it sounds like they've decided to do something they're only considering. Become a student of your child's development... it will help.

# NOTES



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# COMMUNICATION



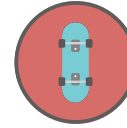
Also, get to know your child's world – check out their music, movies, social media, books, and favorite celebrities. Go to school events and offer for them to invite their friends over for an eating frenzy, pedicures or a Superbowl party. Don't overdo your interaction, but take these opportunities to observe your child's life. "Kids don't learn from people who don't like them. And they will never feel like you like them, if you don't know them." \* (quotes from It's Just a Phase, So Don't Miss It, Orange, 2015)

**BE SAFE!** You want your child to open up to you and let you know what's going on in their life. So make sure that when they attempt to do so, they feel safe. According to our phase summary, you see that this age tends to think like a philosopher. They typically "learn best through open debate, multiple perspectives, and applied reasoning." They actually might really care about what you think, but they want to know that you actually really care about what they think too.

Realize that they are transitioning from a time where they are told what to do a majority of the time, to where they need to make those decisions for themselves. Don't expect that they can process as well as you, who, by the way, has 20 years more experience making decisions (which if we're honest, haven't all been very good ones). They need us to be a safe place to think through their questions, their options, their perspectives and to sort out all of the voices around them giving them all different answers.

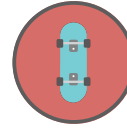
By being a safe person to talk to, you stand a better chance at being someone they come to for advice in life. If we freak out on them, dismiss their youthfulness as foolishness (two separate things), or give them an incessant stream of answers rather than helping them process their questions (or even really listening to their questions), they will begin to find other people to confide in and process life with. Realize that you will not be the only voice they invite into their life for counsel, so when you get invited in, make sure you seize the opportunity for positive interaction.

# NOTES



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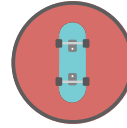
# TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN



**LISTENING AND SPEAKING** When talking with your teen, keep a few things in mind:

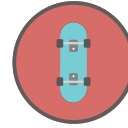
- Don't do all the talking.
- When they do talk, listen. Really listen. Don't be thinking ahead and miss what they are communicating.
- If they say something unwise, don't overreact. Let them finish so that they've been heard.
- Ask lots of questions. If they say something you disagree with, or if they are blowing up about something, keep asking "tell me more."
- Ask questions, without a judging tone, that will help them process things they haven't considered yet.
- Do not belittle, speak in a patronizing or dismissive tone, or attack your child for their opinions... that will forfeit your chance to be heard and help them grow towards a wiser perspective or conclusion.
- When they are done speaking, give them a synopsis of what they said and ask them if you understand them correctly (without any judgement). Seek first to understand, THEN to be understood. Ask them to correct anything you didn't quite understand.

# NOTES



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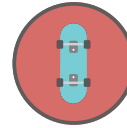
# TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN



**COMMUNICATING DISCIPLINE:** Though your child is getting older, you will still be in situations where you need to discipline your child for poor choices and behavior. It can be easy, as parents, to compound a problem by poorly communicating the discipline that will take place.

- **Make sure you have made your expectations clear before you discipline. If it is a first offense, and it is possible they didn't know what they were doing was against your rules, invest time in teaching them. You might still discipline them, but make sure you have clarified the issue for the next time your child is in that situation. Proverbs 12:15-16**
- **Do not discipline in anger. You need to cool off before you issue a punishment that you later will want to take away. If you feel yourself losing your cool, just say "I'm angry and I'm going to take some time to think it over, but I will need to discipline you for this." Then go calm down. You'll think clearer and be ready to communicate any life lessons your child needs to learn. Proverbs 14:17,29**
- **Discipline is love, so love them enough to train them to live a godly life. Eventually, though it may take a long time, they will appreciate that you taught them right from wrong. Proverbs 13:24 • If your child points to YOUR choices in the past, don't let that distract you from doing the right thing with this situation. Own your mistakes/regrets and assert your authority as a parent. If it fits, use your mistakes to show them the natural consequences of bad decisions.**

# CONVERSATION IDEAS FOR YOUR TEEN



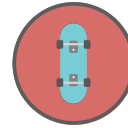
**KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING:** Sometimes you don't have to come up with something to talk about with you child, you just need ideas on how to keep it going. Here are a few ideas from Positive Parenting Connection to keep your conversation from stalling out:

- What else can you tell me about that? - No way! Can you tell me more? - Seriously? Then what happened? - Interesting. Is there more I can hear about? - How do you feel about what happened? - And this is making you think....? - So, now what are you planning to do? - I see. So what's your next step? - So, then how did you feel about that? - I like listening to you. Can we talk more another time?

**CONVERSATION STARTERS:** There are hundreds of conversation starter ideas online. Depending on the personality of your kids, you can find things to start conversations on everything from movies to faith to social issues to ice cream flavors and more. Avoid making every moment alone with your child a heavy conversation, but take advantage of times that come up naturally to have a conversation, like driving to practice or waiting for your table at a restaurant. Turn off your devices and talk. Google ideas for conversation starters and have some ready for when random opportunities pop up.

You might even land on one or two that can become a daily routine for your family. For example, Highs and Lows. Have each person go around the dinner table and give a high and a low for that day. Instead of asking "how was your day?" and having them grunt out a one word answer, this causes them to reflect on the day and give you a peek into what pressures they might be facing and what makes them happy during the day.

# CONVERSATION IDEAS FOR YOUR TEEN



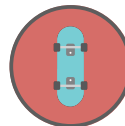
Another idea is to ask them to tell you something they learned that day, which can range from something interesting in Chemistry class to a thought in their quiet time to the daily injury report for their favorite professional team. Just listen and see what they come up with. **DON'T** let anybody off the hook with these, but **DO** allow them to take their turn later if they are truly stumped.

**IMPORTANT TOPICS TO DISCUSS:** Some parents want to make sure they are having the right conversations with their kids while they are raising them. This is an important issue to address as a parent. You have the primary responsibility to raise your child with a Christian worldview, and yet sometimes you might be tempted to assume they'll learn what they need at school or at church.

The most natural way to cover a lot of topics that are formational in the life of your child is to address things as they come up. Here are a few ideas on how to do that:

- Address topics in the news: “Did you hear about ...? What do you think about that?”
- Talk about things in their peers' lives: “How is Ellie handling her parents' divorce? What do you think about divorce?”
- Talk about what they are learning at small group, church or in their quiet times: “What did Spencer preach on today? Why do you think we struggle with that?”
- Talk about controversial issues that come up. “I heard you tell Riley that Derek is taking a boy to Homecoming for his date. What do you think about same sex attraction?”
- Talk about dealing with adversity and set backs: “Our team at work didn't hit our deadline and my boss is furious. This is what our team is planning to do to navigate this problem. Do you have any advice?”

# CONVERSATION IDEAS FOR YOUR TEEN

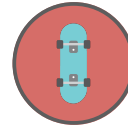


Deuteronomy 6 talks about how we need to parent during the normal rhythms of life. Pray daily for wisdom on how to teach your child to be a godly young person as they come across complicated issues. Be patient with their lack of a mature viewpoint and let it serve as a reminder that though your child is looking more and more like an adult physically, they still need you to learn how to become a well-adjusted godly young adult. The reasoning and decision making part of their brain will be developing for another 10 years. It is also important to be intentional about bringing up topics if they haven't come up on their own. There are a tremendous amount of faith-based topic ideas to cover with your teenager.

Here are some topics to keep in mind: their faith journey (including doubts and questions), sin issues, dreams and their future, dating and sexuality, bullying, friends/relationships, finances, social justice, social media, poverty, suffering, media choices, drugs and alcohol, world missions, identity and self esteem, beauty and self image, violence, internet safety, emotional/mental health, friends with problems/issues, etc.

When our kids were younger, the emphasis was on teaching them WHAT to think. Now we need to teach them HOW to think - and how to think through biblical lenses. If at any point, you feel stuck, search for resources to help you set your child up with a solid foundation on any given topic. Our family ministry team is also here to help in any way we can.

# PROTECTING YOUR KID: TECHNOLOGY HELP



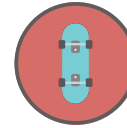
## 3 Steps to Protecting Your Child Online

**1. Talk to your child about using their devices. Discuss how they should never give out personal information or chat with strangers. Have an age-appropriate conversation about pornography. Stress how important it is to let you know if they come across inappropriate content. Make sure they know you are a safe person to talk to about what they've seen. For help in talking with kids about pornography, check out Good Pictures/Bad Pictures and Good Pictures/ Bad Pictures Jr. by Kristen Jenson, M.A. and Gail Poyner, PhD. There are also great resources at [family.org](http://family.org) and [covenanteyes.com](http://covenanteyes.com).**

**2. Set boundaries for internet usage. Require that all internet usage be done in a central area of the house where parents and other family members will be. Do not allow surfing while you are not home, including homework which typically requires a lot of need for google images. Do not allow devices in a child's room - they should not need privacy to be on the internet.**

**3. Protect your devices with a content blocker and report generator. There are several companies that provide these services/software. Focus on the Family partners with Net Nanny and Forcefield. These programs will not only block content, but will also send accountability reports on everyone's usage in the family. You should also go into the settings of each device and determine the restrictions for that device, which is then protected by a 4 digit PIN. Commit yourself to being intentional about being a gatekeeper for your child's heart and mind - no apologies. It will be impossible to protect them entirely, but these simple steps are a good start toward giving them a good shot at never knowing the dark world of a porn addiction.**

# MARRIAGE PLAN



Each year we want to encourage you to make a plan to keep your marriage healthy. One of the most important gifts you'll give to your child is the love you give to your spouse. When mom and dad love each other and demonstrate the traits of a healthy (NOT PERFECT!) marriage, it not only sets a good example of a godly marriage but gives them a greater sense of security and well-being.

- Good marriages require intentionality. Use the plan below to make an intentional effort in your marriage this year. Read *The Best Us* by Ted Lowe (@MarriedPeople 2016) for a full explanation of Have Serious Fun! Love God First; Respect and Love; Practice Your Promise.

## Have Serious Fun! Date Night Scheduling:

- Grab your calendars and mark at least TWO date nights for each month and PROTECT those dates. Remember that you were boyfriend and girlfriend before you were dad and mom, and have fun together! No family administration discussions!

## Love God First - Faith Practices 101:

- Research finds that couples who pray together at least twice a week have a divorce rate of less than 1% (HomePointe). Commit to praying as a couple at least twice a week. Plan which worship service the two of you will attend together each week – don't "divide and conquer" in order to volunteer.

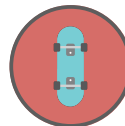
## Love and Respect - Write an Annual Letter:

- Write a letter to your spouse for your anniversary this year, much like the one in this packet that you will write to your child. Write a letter of memories from this past year, affirmations, prayers and promises to each other.

## Practice Your Promise - Personal Growth:

- Set a "secret goal" to grow as a spouse, such as "listening better," "praising her in public," or "initiating romance." Write it down and seal it in an envelope. When you receive next year's packet, open the envelope and assess your progress.

# DOWNLOAD THE PARENT CUE APP



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**Parent Cue  
creates the plan,  
so you can make  
the memories.**

