



## Labyrinth: Parent Cue

### 1. Be a Student of What They are Learning

Not everyone has it together when it comes to knowing what God wants for their lives. But sometimes it certainly feels like everyone else does—and we don't. And when your student feels that way, it can make them feel pretty left out and uncertain about their relationship with God and where their life is going. But what if hearing from God isn't about exclusivity—who's in and who's out—but rather inclusivity, meaning that everyone gets to play in the game of God's plan? When it comes to those not-so-easy life decisions, God has given us a very clear-cut grid based on His love for us, our love for Him and our love for others. So, knowing God's will is less about signs and more about knowing the narrative of His great story and how we fit into it. God's great love for you student is the most important factor in discovering His will for their life. So, when they wonder why they can't seem to connect with God, we can encourage them that God does speak to them and wants them to be encouraged by His purpose for their lives.

### 2. Be a Student of Your Student

Do you remember when you left home? What it felt like the first time you paid your own bills, got your own gas and made your own dentist appointment? Do you remember what it felt like when the realization came that you were finally on your own? You were an adult, for better or for worse. For a lot of us, this feeling came when we packed our bags and headed off to college. Or, maybe it was when we graduated from college. Maybe for some of us, it was after we spent a few months at home following college graduation before we got our feet on the ground. But, for the most part, when we look back and try to recall the journey into adulthood, most of our journeys look the same. We packed our bags and we headed out.

Maybe you've noticed that things don't look that way anymore. And if you have noticed that, there is a reason. Adulthood for students today is taking a lot longer to reach than it once did. In fact, recent studies show that adulthood isn't reached until teenagers are in their mid to late twenties. Not eighteen, not college graduation, but years beyond. And there are many reasons why.

Historically, adolescents went through something called "stage development." This meant that a student went through a progression of stages until they finally reached adulthood—until they were completely independent and self-sufficient. And, this was considered healthy, normal adolescent development. The problem is that these developmental stages don't recognize what's going on with kids today. Let's take a look back. In the United States in 1900, the average age of puberty for young women and men was 14.5 years of age and at the age of 16, one was considered to be an "adult." Now, let's fast-forward a century to 2005. The average age of puberty drops to 11.7 but the mid to late twenties are now the new adulthood. The ever-expanding gap between early physical maturity and late emotional/developmental maturity can be very difficult for our students to navigate.

So, with this research, it is fair to say that there is an extension of adolescence. Our kids brains are taking longer to mature and develop, so their ability to take on the responsibility that adulthood requires isn't just something they are neglecting to do well, but something they can't

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necessarily do well for several more years. This means that the finish line we have for our kids—the one that says out of the house by eighteen and financially independent by graduation—may need to change. So what does this mean for parents of mid-to-late adolescents? How can we help our kids reach adulthood equipped with what they need to be successful?

We may need to see our job as parents as one that extends farther than it did for our parents when we were in our kid's shoes. We may need to open our doors back up after college while we work with them as they ease into the reality of the real world. We need to be their advocate. We need to be on their team. We need to be a partner to help them become the most confident and capable adults they can be—even it takes longer than we think it should. We need to be willing to move the finish line and allow our students the time they need to become the mature, well-rounded adults we know God is shaping them to be.

### 3. Action Point

It can be hard for many of us to think of resetting the finish line for our students and extending it past the commonly accepted milestone of high school graduation. Yet, today's students are developmentally in a very different place than most of us were at the age of 18. For this Parent Cue, you are going to set aside some time to sit down with your student and help them set some spiritual, educational, personal and any other specific goals that they would like to see themselves reach at the age of 25. As you begin to set these goals, ask yourself the following question: **How can I begin to help my student along the path of attaining these goals?**

As well, as you and your student begin to dialog about these future goals, ask them **what practical things would they like you to do to help them on their journey towards adulthood?**

Remember, this exercise is not about *your* goals for your student, but rather their own goals for themselves. Be sure to listen to what their hopes and dreams are. If their goal is to have traveled the world by 25 instead of received their Master's degree, be sure to encourage that dream while providing them with the wisdom you have gained from your own life experiences.

As well, as you help your student set his or her goals and as you begin to dialogue about how you can help, keep in mind that while this is an exercise in partnership, this is not meant to be an area that you take ownership over. Encourage healthy responsibility while recognizing your student's need for extended support so that they have the best chance to become a spiritually healthy, emotionally well-rounded adult.

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