

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



**Episode One**

**An Introduction**

What three words would you use to describe your children?

What is being stirred in you as you listen to this podcast?

What are your fears?

What would you say you want most for your sons or daughters in this season of life? In their growing up years?

Talk about your own experience with middle school dances? What were you wearing? What music do you remember? How did you feel?

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**Episode Two**

**Stage One: The Explorer & The Discovery Years**

**He or She Is**

For Fun: What was your favorite costume when you were a little boy or girl?

How would you describe yourself as a little boy or girl in this stage?

What did you want the most from your parents?

What are some of your favorite memories of this stage?

How did you feel when you found out you were having a son or daughter?

What were you excited about? Afraid of?

How do you see boys and girls differently in this stage of development?

*For Parents of Boys:*

When does your son most seem himself? When is he the most content? The happiest?

How does he invite you to connect with him? How do you respond?

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Reminding yourself that he's wired for activity and movement, where could you fold in more opportunities to honor this? If the weather doesn't allow for as much outdoor time, how could you create more opportunities for this in your home and in other indoor places?

Where do you see evidence of his need for power and purpose? How could you honor those needs in a healthy way in this season?

Where are you taking time to engage this curious, tactile creature? What makes it difficult? Where could you do more of it?

*For Parents of Girls:*

How have you noticed your daughter's hunger for relationship? How does she express that hunger currently?

When and with whom have you seen her as caretaking? How could you draw out her care taking more than her control (particularly with younger siblings?)

What emotion does your daughter express most naturally? What patterns do you see in how and when she expresses her emotion?

How could you help her find appropriate words and actions to express those emotions?

What do you want more for your daughter in this stage? What do you want more for yourself with her at this stage?

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### Episode Three

#### Stage One: The Explorer & The Discovery Years

##### What He or She Needs

What kinds of needs does your son or daughter express the most to you? How does he or she express those?

If whatever we give attention to as adults is most reinforced in the kids we love, what is being reinforced in him or her right now?

*For Parents of Boys:*

If boundaries create security, evaluate his current boundaries. Do you have clear, consistent boundaries in place for him? How could you better communicate those to him while appealing to all of his senses?

What are you learning from being a student of your son in this season? What is God revealing to you about his unique bent?

Identify an area where he could experience a healthy sense of risk in this next season, allowing him to feel strong, courageous, competent and brave.

Explorers can be stubborn and strong-willed as they search for power and significance. Is there an area(s) that holds little relevance, where you could give him more ownership and choice?

Parenting an Explorer is a full contact sport. It's a very physical task, where parenting a Wanderer will be a more emotional journey. It's normal to feel exhausted. Choose one thing

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to do this week that involves you being a person and not a parent. What's something that would replenish or refuel you in the coming week?

### *For Parents of Girls:*

Do you naturally lean toward boundaries with your daughter or away from them? What about the other primary adults in her life?

What kind of boundaries do you believe she needs in place now? How could you set those boundaries with strength and empathy?

Does your daughter struggle with what we would consider normal childhood fears? Does she lean toward worry? Anxiety? What kinds of patterns do you notice in her worries?

When do you see her show bravery? How could you help reinforce bravery in her more?

What are three things about your daughter right now that are places you could delight in her? How could you communicate that delight to her directly?

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**Episode Four**

**Stage Two: The Lover & The Adventurous Years**

**He or She Is**

For Fun: What was your favorite birthday party as a child?

How do you see boys and girls differently at this stage?

What stands out to you from the podcast so far?

What is one of your strongest memories from these years growing up? What feelings are associated with that memory?

What did you want most from your parents?

*For Parents of Boys:*

What do you believe your son wants most from you in this stage? What do the two of you enjoy doing together? What is something you could do to spend time just the two of you?

How much time does your son have to engage in play? How often is he given the opportunity to build, create within his room, romp in the outdoors, and use his imagination?

In this stage, where do you see him experience a sense of purpose?

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What activities allow him to test his strength, be active and to experience validation for his abilities?

If he plays sports, what are the objectives for the league and for his individual coach?

*For Parents of Girls:*

What kinds of fears do you see in your daughter at this stage of her development? How could you unintentionally be reinforcing those fears?

What could you do to help her find more confidence in herself and in her faith as an antidote to worry?

What do you believe your daughter wants most from you in this stage? What do you the two of you enjoy doing together? What is something you could do to spend time just the two of you?

Who does your daughter enjoy outside of home? What kinds of friends does she gravitate toward? How could you help her strengthen her friendships?

Does she lean toward strength or kindness? How could you help her grow more balanced in the two?

How have you seen your daughter's responsiveness to others play out? How could you give her more opportunities to show her compassion and responsiveness?

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### Episode Five

#### Stage Two: The Lover & The Adventurous Years

#### He or She Needs

What kinds of needs does your son or daughter express the most to you? How does he or she express those?

If whatever we give attention to as adults is most reinforced in the kids we love, what is being reinforced in him or her right now?

*For Parents of Boys:*

What opportunities for service and outreach could you explore as a family? How could you expand his opportunities within this area?

How could you restructure his afternoon/evening rituals to best honor his need for reprieve and routine?

Where could you fold in more visual cues? How could you honor his wiring as an experiential learner? Keep paying attention to less talk and letting the consequences do the teaching, when it comes to discipline.

What kind of healthy boundaries/limits do you have in place with technology?

Go back to the challenge of just enjoying him in this tender, imaginative stage when boys are full of some of their best stuff. Where could you offer more enjoyment and experience more connection in the Lover stage?



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*For Parents of Girls:*

What did the idea of “protection” bring up for you? Did your parents have conversations with you about your body? What do you wish they had done differently?

How are you talking to your daughter about her body? What would you like to do differently?

How does your daughter handle her emotions? What emotions does she express the most at this stage of her development? How could you help her develop more perspective?

What did you learn about failure from your parents? What about grace? How do you handle failure as a person today?

How do you handle failure as a parent? How would you like to handle it differently? How could you incorporate more grace into the life of your family?

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### Episode Six

#### Stage Three: The Individual & The Narcissistic years

#### He or She Is

For Fun: What was a theme song from your teenage years?

How do you see boys and girls differently at this stage?

What stands out to you from the podcast so far?

What is one of your strongest memories from these years growing up? What feelings are associated with that memory?

*For Parents of Boys:*

What are his current strengths and struggles? Where do you see those connected to his search for masculinity and identity?

Are you engaged in an ongoing conversation with your son about his growing body, his developing emotions, and understanding relationships with the opposite sex? What books or resources have you discovered that could make those conversations more fruitful?

What safeguards do you have in place within your home to protect his mind and heart? What are your family rules on media and technology? What other parents do you trust and could consult with in this area?

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What are two to three things your son enjoys within this season of his development? Set aside time to be about those things with him.

Let your son teach you something about one of his areas of enjoyment—play a video game with him, inquire about a book he is reading, have him show you a new skill or move he’s learned in a sport he loves, listen to some music he’s enjoying or let him teach you a new guitar lick. What would this look like?

*For Parents of Girls:*

What do you believe your daughter wants from you relationally in these years? What are you offering her in relationship?

What other adults does she enjoy? Which friends does she seem to connect with the most?

How could you invest more in her friendships and validate the importance of her friends? Where do you have concerns in regard to her relationships?

Do you remember feeling insecure at this stage of life? How did that insecurity play out?

Where do you see your daughter’s insecurity? When do you see evidence of confidence in her?

What is one way this week you could remind her of who God has uniquely made her to be?

How have you seen her ambivalence directed at you? What do you believe was really going on at the time? How would you like to respond next time she’s ambivalent?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



### Episode Seven

#### Stage Three: The Individual & The Narcissistic Years

#### He or She Needs

What kinds of needs does your son or daughter express the most to you? How does he or she express those?

If whatever we give attention to as adults is most reinforced in the kids we love, what is being reinforced in him or her right now?

If you had to choose three words to describe what you were like as a teenager, what would those words be?

*For Parents of Boys:*

Consider the outlets discussed. Identify what each of those look like for your son in this season. Where does he have an outlet to test his strength? His mind? Where does he experience a healthy sense of risk or adventure?

How are you as a family modeling outreach, service and giving? What opportunities exist for him to feel a sense of purpose?

Is he spending enough time outdoors and unplugged? Where do you need to make adjustments to better honor his developmental need for this?

Consider purchasing a copy of *Flight Plan: Your Mission to Become a Man* by Lee Burns and Braxton Brady and *Guy Stuff: The Body Book for Boys* by Cara Natterson and Micah Player to read with your Individual. What stirs in you as you spend time with the content?

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Identify an area (academic, athletic, chores) where you can take a step back, creating more opportunity for your son to develop responsibility or strengthen resilience, and allowing you to be less involved.

*For Parents of Girls:*

What kind of grade would you give yourself in terms of offering understanding to your daughter?

What kind of pressure do you see her living with today? What do you think would be hard about being an adolescent in the world today?

How could you communicate more understanding?

How are you doing in terms of showing her strength in her more teenager-y moments? What makes it hard to be strong? What would you like to do differently?

Name one front door and one back door example of how you have or could connect with your daughter. As a challenge, attempt to have a back door moment between now and the next time you use these questions. Report back on how it went.

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### Episode Eight

#### Stage Four: The Wanderer & The Autonomous Years

#### He or She Is

For Fun: Share an awkward adolescent moment you remember.

How do you see boys and girls differently at this stage?

What stands out to you from the podcast so far?

What are you learning about yourself?

What is one of your strongest memories from these years growing up? What feelings are associated with that memory?

Read Luke 15:11-32. How do you see your son or daughter in the story?

*For Parents of Boys:*

Where do you see evidence of his individuating? Consider the possibility that you've lost sight of the role this important developmental task plays in what you're experiencing with him this season.

We discussed him being in biological chaos in this stage, experiencing surges of testosterone pouring through his body every day. What athletic or active outlets does he currently have in place that provide a physical release while this biological phenomena is at play?

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We laughed together in discussing boys in Stage 4 being at their best when they are exhausted and employed. They need the physical outlets to accommodate the biological surges, and they benefit greatly from volunteering and having a part time job. In these contexts, he's moving outside of himself, experiencing a sense of purpose, getting valuable feedback from other authority, and learning valuable skills like time management, financial stewardship, etc. Where is your son experiencing these types of outlets? If he's dragging his feet in finding these opportunities (as many Stage 4 boys do), where could you leverage freedoms in order to lock that into place?

Where could you engage the "Back Door" approach we introduced as a way of furthering your communication and connection?

*For Parents of Girls:*

How do you see her longing for relationship in this stage of her development? With whom is she closest? What do you think she is looking for in her closest relationships?

How would you describe your relationship currently? How would you like it to be different? How do you think she would like it to be different? (We would encourage you, at this stage, to ask her the same question).

When do you enjoy each other the most? How could you find more time to connect, in a back door way? How could you connect with and help her know that you value the people who mean the most to her?

What have you communicated either directly or indirectly about the idea of body image? What would you like to do differently?

How have you noticed your daughter's body changing? How does she seem to feel about it? How could you help remind her of her beauty?

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Would you describe your daughter as intuitive? When have you noticed her intuition? How could you describe and remind her of her gifts of intuition as a woman (in a back door, or at least not so intense type of way)?



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### Stage Four: The Wanderer & The Autonomous Years

#### He or She Needs

What kinds of needs does your son or daughter express the most to you? How does he or she express those?

If whatever we give attention to as adults is most reinforced in the kids we love, what is being reinforced in him or her right now?

What was your relationship like with your parents as a teenager? Did you feel pressure to be or do something specific from them? Do you see yourself leaning in the same direction?

#### *For Parents of Boys:*

It's important to parent in community throughout our kids' growing up—with parents who are like-minded in their approach. It's vital in this season of development as you negotiate technology, driving, and dating, and as you face difficult hurdles such as sex and substances. Who are parents you trust and seem like-hearted in their approach to parenting adolescents?

Who are the trusted other adult voices in your son's life (teachers, coaches, youth pastors, scout masters, etc)? Consider writing a note to those individuals thanking them for their investment in your son.

What are practical ways you could practice mercy with your son—apologizing first, owning your mistakes, etc?

Where could you take a step back in some area of his life (academics, athletics, chores) to support greater independence for him as he prepares for young adulthood?

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Reach the chapter on Stage 5 of a boy's development in *Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys* by Stephen James and David Thomas. It will help you keep development in perspective and cast an encouraging vision for where he's headed. Identify a parent you trust with a son in Stage five. Invite them to coffee and share their journey of a parenting a Wanderer.

*For Parents of Girls:*

How are you doing on giving her room to learn?

How is she doing on responsibility? Maturity?

Has she earned, from a trust perspective, more privileges? What are one (or more) places you could let out the rope a little to communicate that you trust her and believe in her today?

How do you feel about the idea of grit? Did you have it when you were her age? How did you gain it, if so? What would have helped, if not?

How could you help her gain more grit? What is a time recently you've seen grit in her that you could point out to her?

What are three things you admire in your daughter? How could you tell her?

Pick one strength and write a note this week to your son or daughter and leave it somewhere for him or her to find.

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### Episode Ten

#### A Parent's Perspective

What was one fear you had at the beginning of this podcast? How do you feel about it now?

What's one area that you've had the realization: "My son's normal!"?

If you wanted to remember three primary things from the podcast, what would they be?

Why do you think God specifically chose you to be the parent of your child?

What is one strength you bring to the table to offer your child?

Final Suggestions:

Plan a time with your son or daughter this week that is solely about enjoyment and not instruction.

Pick a birthday coming up for your child and plan a celebration. Involve important voices in his or her life.

Write down three strengths you see in your son or daughter today, and be intentional about pointing those out in the next week.

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Write down three strengths in your own parenting and look back on that note often. You're doing great. God chose you for the little people in your life, and we believe in you immensely.