



Start a Conversation about... **College Prep**

Young people naturally and regularly go through transitions in life. These times of change can provide opportunity for growth in one's relationships with Jesus and His Church. They are also times where Satan can pull young people away from God's promises, His means of grace and Christian relationships. Our 2017 Research on Millennials and the LCMS found only 55% of active LCMS young adults agree that their home congregation ministered to them during times of life transitions. Those who left the LCMS for another denomination or left the church entirely reported even lower numbers of support.

We saw this impact particularly after high school graduation. Our study found those no longer attending church report that their weekly worship attendance dropped from 68% to 16% after graduation and did not improve over time. Transitions such as graduation are critical moments where congregations and parents can support a young person's relationship with Jesus as they find a new church home or establish a new, adult relationship with their existing congregation.

Below are some suggestions on how you can form a discussion around the transition to college with your high school students. While we know that not every student goes onto college, this is primarily focused on those students who are considering college as their next step. Wording can be easily adjusted for any transition.

Potential Activities

- Have students look for congregations and campus ministries on LCMS.org. The locator on the website will allow them to practice finding LCMS ministries in their area and they can even be encouraged to reach out if they find one close to where they are headed. It also can be possible to experience worship at these churches if they have put worship services or sermons on their website/social media.
- Have an evening where students are taught or reminded about adult life skills. Often things like changing a tire, basic cooking, or clothing repair are not taught to students. This could be tied in with a larger conversation about vocation and how we do everything, even the smallest task, to the glory of God.
- Create an opportunity for high school seniors to meet with older adults, parents, and those who have recently graduated. Mix up the ages and have them share conversation around how to manage faith in transition, what life lessons they have learned, and how God has shown His faithfulness to them through scripture and connection to worship and community within the congregation.

Discussion Questions

For these questions, refer to the scriptures below for guidance and direction.

- What are you most looking forward to when you move to college? What are you most nervous to do for the first time on your own?
- What sort of friends do you hope to make as you move into college? What are some of the best ways to find and develop those friendships?

- What are some ways you will grow as a disciple of Jesus as you move into college? What are some ways to ensure you continue to worship, pray, read scripture, and connect with other Christians daily and weekly?
- As you move into a new congregation, what do you think will be different? The same? What might be hard in this transition?
- We all have vocations (student, friend, neighbor, etc.) that connect us to other people. What vocations are going to change for you as you make this transition?
- How will you stay in communication with your current friends? Family? Home congregation?
- How do you hope to reflect the light of Jesus to others while you are in college?
- What adults can you call or text when you are struggling with sin, feel like a failure, or need to talk about a challenge you are facing?

Bible Verses to Consider

For these questions, refer to the scriptures below for guidance and direction.

Joshua 1:8-9

God is with us wherever we go and desires for us to stay connected to His word.

1 Timothy 4:12-16

In this much used verse, young believers are exhorted to be examples in how they live their lives. This includes devoting themselves to faithful practice and remembering what they have learned. While this verse can become a lot of law, it's important to remind young people that when they fall short, there is forgiveness and the Holy Spirit will give them what they need to shine the light of faith.

Proverbs 3:5-8

Often young people want to lean on their own understanding and wisdom. These verses remind us that if we acknowledge God and trust in Him, God will guide and refresh them.

Colossians 3:23-24

There are lots of choices and things young people can do with their lives. As they begin to make choices about who they will become, it's important to know that everything they do is for the glory of God. We achieve, grow, and learn we do as servants of Jesus, knowing the inheritance of forgiveness and eternal life are mine.

Philippians 1:6-11

The first part of this scripture may describe how we hold young people in our heart and pray for them. It's always good to remind young people of how they are loved by a faithful community. Our prayer is that they would abound in love, knowledge and discernment because of what Jesus has done for us.

Other Resources

- LCMS U, the campus ministry of the LCMS, has a podcast and other resources for college students. You can find them at lcms.org/lcmsu.
- Youth E-Source has a piece with all the details for a college card ministry that helps students stay connected to a family or older adult in your congregation. You can find it at: www.youthesource.com/2016/01/28/college-card-ministry.
- Listen to Gathering Sessions on "Preparing for Life after High School" with Rev. Marcus Zill or "College is the Kairos of your life" with Rev. Johnathan Ruehs as a podcast.
- CPH has "College 101: a Christian Survival Guide" and "Blessings and Prayers for College Students" available.