



FAMILY CONVERSATION GUIDES

Graduation is a major milestone for a teen and family to walk through together. In a lot of ways, it's the last major milestone for teenagers before they venture into adulthood. As your child prepares to leave the nest, there are some key conversations you should have which will best equip them as they transition from living under your roof into their new, independent life. These conversations will include:

- **OUR STORY** (Communication/Define the Relationship) This involves determining what your relationship is going to look like moving forward. Realistic expectations and honesty are key.
- **MY STORY** (Identity/Vocation) This will detail what your child is interested in doing and who they are interested in becoming.
- **GOD'S STORY** (Decision Making/Grace) This will walk your child through the importance of inviting God into their decision making, while highlighting His grace when they make mistakes.

But before that, Graduation:

FAMILY GRADUATION DINNER: FROM MEANINGLESS TO MEMORABLE

Cap and gown ordered for the graduate? *Check.*

Graduation announcements mailed to friends and relatives? *Check.*

Plan developed for a family dinner after the graduation ceremony? *Check.*

Plans made about *what to do during that dinner* to appropriately honor your graduate? *Oops. Not a chance.*

As parents, we're juggling so many details on graduation day, we're just thankful if everyone who is supposed to attend the day's events actually shows up. And thankful if there's a minimal amount of drama. At the end of the day, a graduation dinner is a wonderful way to wrap everything up and tie it all back together. It's a chance to relax and reminisce.

Yet oftentimes, the arrival of the graduation dinner instead instills panic, because that's when it hits us: *this should be meaningful, but we didn't even think about it...until now.*

The good news is with just a little bit of planning, you can make this meal feel significant and memorable in the best way possible.

WHAT QUESTIONS CAN HELP US HAVE MORE MEMORABLE CONVERSATION OVER DINNER?

First Things First:

- Choose a dinner location that's quiet, so everyone around the table can both hear and contribute. It may be better to have homemade lasagna on paper plates in your living room than dine at a five-star restaurant where it's too loud to hear anyone. If higher style is your preference, see if you can reserve a table ahead of time that offers some level of reduced noise.
 - Let dinner attendees know ahead of time that you'd like them to reflect on one or more of the questions that you've selected from the following list. There's no pressure for your guests to go through all of them, just the questions they feel most equipped to answer which would best honor your graduate.
1. What do you most appreciate about the graduate?
 2. What's one characteristic of the graduate you want to mirror in your own life?
 3. What story about the graduate captures their unique and admirable qualities?
 4. What's one way you have seen God at work in the graduate's life?
 5. What's one thing you hope the graduate contributes to the world?

HOW CAN WE MAKE THE FAMILY DINNER EVEN MORE MEMORABLE?



Take a group photo of all who attend the dinner and frame it for your graduate.

Conclude your dinner with a time of prayer, laying hands on the graduate if appropriate.



Distribute index cards as guests arrive and ask them to write one reason they love the graduate, one word that describes the graduate, or a fun fact about the graduate. Toward the end of the dinner, collect these index cards and read them aloud. After the dinner, place the cards in a special box that you give to the graduate so they have a tangible takeaway of what others appreciate about them.

Ahead of time, ask friends and family to let you know what they appreciate about the graduate in just a few words. Use a website like wordle.net to create a unique and artistic display of all those phrases, and then frame the masterpiece and give it to your graduate.



Chances are good the people at this dinner will have been in your graduate's life for a while. Ahead of time, print photos of the graduate with each person attending the dinner—either group or individual shots. These can be photos from eight days ago or eighteen years ago. Mail these photos out with invitations to the dinner, with instructions for each attendee to write a note on the back of the photo with a sharpie (so it doesn't ruin the photo) and sign their name on the front. The notes can be about a memory with the graduate or about one of the questions in the section above. Invite them to share the photo and message with the graduate at the dinner, and collect these in a special box to give to the graduate. Or skip the ahead-of-time part and ask folks to write messages at the meal.

Compose an original song you can play and sing to your graduate at the meal, expressing your love for them and how much they mean to you. Just kidding—give yourself a break! A little bit of effort goes a long way—even without an original composition.