



2024 Rite of Passage (ROP) Information Letter

Dear Parents and Young Adults:

Thank you for your interest in in “Rite of Passage (ROP).” ROP is tremendous time where parents and the church recognize a young person’s passage into young adulthood. ROP is a powerful Scriptural tool in the shaping of young lives for God. It is a specific time when parents blend loving words and caring actions with the help of the church into a meaningful ceremony designed to leave a lasting memory and an indelible mark on their lives. This time in their lives can provide a stabilizing point for the rest of the young person’s life. Perhaps most of all, it gives our young men and young women the tangible knowledge that their parents’ blessing and the Lord’s is with them as they continue to grow and mature as young adults. **(Please feel free to grab a copy of my book on ROP in the Decision Room. They’re free.)**

If you choose to allow your child to participate in this ROP, please understand there will be work involved in preparation of the banquet and the ceremony service to come. We will discuss these requirements at an interest meeting on **Wednesday evening, May 8th** in the Fellowship Hall at 5:30 pm. In the meantime, you will find attached are 20 questions that we expect the young man or young lady to complete and turn back into me by **Wednesday, August 7th**. If this material is not turned in on that date, they will not be allowed to participate in the banquet on: **Saturday, August 10th** at 5:30 pm at **Center 5:20**. (This is a catered meal.) We’ll be recognizing the participants this year during the **Sunday, August 11th** services. This is a fairly rigid schedule; but please understand, I cannot think of a more significant or potentially “life changing” experience your child could be possibly be involved in other than their salvation experience.

What is it that we’re hoping to accomplish through all of this?

- To affirm the claims of Christ in his/her life.
- To discern the true values of life according to Scripture and to be able to live by them.
- To practice the presence of Christ every day by having a consistent time of Bible study and prayer to the Lord
- To be able to accept himself/herself as God created him and to take joy in it.
- To experience the love of others and to know how to give love to others by being mannerly, respectful and obedient to authority, particularly you, their parents.
- To be an exemplary role model so that other people will want to know the Lord Jesus because of his/her testimony.

We, the church, are going to do all we can to integrate our young men and women into every facet of “church life.” Our young adults can sing in the choir, be ushers and greeters, work in the kitchen, carry chairs, apprentice for the praise teams, help teach children’s Sunday School classes, work in our various church, mission projects and community outreaches, etc. We’re not asking for our young people to become substitutes for adults. We recognize they are young adults and need training and mentoring. Rather, they are essential complementary components to our more seasoned adults. They will learn what it means to truly be a Christian adult through this training and mentoring (Titus 2).

What I’ve described is basically an apprenticeship program that will involve our young people into the life of the church. This process will enable them to have a better understanding of the basic ministries of the church and will cultivate within them an interest in using their talents for God. The key here is **INVOLVEMENT**. The youth learn best by “doing,” not by being entertained. We should also involve our young people in the religious life of the home. Give them a role in the family devotions. Each one should have his or her own Bible and participate fully in the Bible Study and memorization and at times lead out in both. They should begin seeing themselves as a significant part of God’s family and as making an important contribution to their church and their home.

In essence, we must return to what the Scriptures teach about raising our young people and dismiss the patterns of this world. Paul tells us, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ.” (Colossians 2:8) We must raise the bar and the expectations or we will continue to watch a slow, steady decline in the commitment of our young people. It may not be so anywhere else, but we believe we can raise a generation of young people that will live for the Lord Jesus. Paul tells our young people, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). So, what we are talking about is really nothing “new.” It’s simply getting back to something that is Biblical and thus, “tried and true,” because we’re simply using the Word of God as our guide.

We are excited about the upcoming banquet (as mentioned above). This will be a formal event. We’re not talking about tuxedos and prom dresses here, but we are talking about wearing attire that is nice. If our young men have ties, put one on. Ladies, we’d ask you to wear a dress. At the banquet, we will have a time of testimony and fellowship among families. There will also be a time of sharing among individual families that will be very memorable.

To make the evening even more special, we are asking you, the parents, to do something for your young adult. We would like to ask each parent to write a letter to your child telling him/her what the Lord has meant to you in your life through your own experiences with Him. In other words, to tell them what faith in Christ has meant to you. This would be a simple, heart-to-heart testimonial about the challenges of growing up and how the grace of God is sufficient to meet any challenges. Would you also consider asking others that are close to your young man/woman to do the same (i.e.; grandparents, older siblings or aunts/uncles, a coach, teacher, etc.) You may want to include some family history for your child. Old pictures of his/her birth, pictures of grandparents and even great grandparents if you have them. Document where he/she “comes from,” as sort of a family history of the men and women who came before your son or daughter.

The church provides a nice leather pouch to keep the letters and other items we will be giving your young adult at the banquet. I believe they will cherish these letters forever. There will be a time during the banquet to present these letters and for you, as parents, to read yours to your child (not publicly...just at your table as everyone else is doing the same at the other tables).

Finally, on Sunday, **August 11th**, we will have a special ceremony during the three (3) morning worship service, where we will call our young men and women forward along with you, the parents, and the rest of your family. (PLEASE LET ME KNOW WHICH SERVICE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WILL BE ATTENDING). During that service, we will ask you to place your hands on your young adult and then I'll lead us in prayer for his/her empowerment to serve God mightily as a young adult in the home, church and community.

What a wonderful time of learning and celebration this will be. I'm extremely excited about what the Lord is going to do to shape our young adults for His glory (Proverbs 4:11-12) and to build a foundation that will build our homes, our church and the future! To God be the glory!! 3 John 4 says, "I have no greater joy than to hear my children are walking in the truth." Amen!

Pastor Kevin

"Rite of Passage" Preparation Questions

Parents, you are encouraged to help your young adult with these questions...but NOT to do it for them. They will get out of it what they put into it. This will be a special time for them and your family. If done right...this process will require 8-10 hours to complete (on average).

Preparation Questions

1. How does a person become a Christian (a born again, believer and follower of Christ)? Use Scripture references to support your answer. Also, describe in detail your salvation experience and what led to you surrendering your life to the Lordship of Christ. Please be detailed and specific.
2. Describe your relationship with Christ. Indicate what you are doing to grow in your knowledge and understanding of Christ. Indicate if you have a daily time of personal prayer time and Bible study. In other words, when, where and how do you spend time with the Lord? (Please note, if you are spending little or no time praying and reading your Bible, you are more than likely not ready to proceed with ROP at this time.)
3. What does it mean to act like and behave like an adult? (For the young man, please read: 1 Tim. 3:1-11, Judges 3:12-30, 2 Tim. 2:22-25, Titus 1:6-9, Titus 2:1-8. For the young woman, please read: Prov. 31:10-31, 2 Timothy 2:22-25, Titus 2:1-8.)
4. Explain in your own words Luke 2:41-52 and the example set forth by Jesus in this passage.
5. What do you believe about the Bible? What role should reading the Scriptures on a consistent basis play in your life? Why? (See 2 Tim. 2:15, 2 Tim. 3:14-17.)
6. How do you know the Bible is truly the Word of God and not just another "holy" book like the Koran or the Book of Mormon? (See 2 Peter 1:20-21. I would also encourage you to visit these websites at the links below. gotquestions.org: <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-should-I-believe-the-Bible.html> Sean McDowell's website: <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/7-fascinating-facts-that-make-the-bible-unique> or John Stonestreet and J. Warner Wallace: <https://breakpoint.org/from-reliable-to-divine/>
7. Please review in detail these Scriptures about heeding instruction and correction from your parents: Prov. 10:17, Prov. 12:1 and Prov. 15:32. What does it mean to be obedient and to honor your parents? (Eph. 6:1-3.) What is promised to you if you honor and obey your parents? Give examples of how you specifically honor your parents.
8. In light of your understanding of the passages listed in the question above, how should you speak to your parents and others (i.e., tone of voice, body language, facial expression, etc)? Please see Prov. 15:1, Prov. 17:14 and Prov. 30:17, James 1:19-20, Prov. 29:20, Prov. 17:28, Prov. 12:22.
9. What does the Bible say about parents disciplining their children? Please read the following Scriptures before answering: Heb. 12:5-11, Prov. 3:11, Prov. 12:1, Prov. 13:1, Prov. 13:18,

Prov. 13:24, Prov. 15:10, Prov. 16:20, Prov. 19:18, Prov. 20:6, Prov. 22:6, Prov. 22:15, Prov. 23:13-14, Prov. 29:15-17).

10. After reading the following passages, explain what the Bible teaches about espousal, courtship, relationships and marriage. List each of these passages of Scripture specifically in your answer with explanations to follow. (1 Thess. 4:1-8, Matt. 1:18-25, Gen. 24, Gen. 39, Titus 2:14, Eph. 5:3, Gal. 6:7-10, 1 Cor. 10:13, 2 Cor. 11:2, Prov. 4:23, Prov. 5, Prov. 6:20-35, Prov. 7, Rom. 13:11-14, 1 Cor. 7, 2 Cor. 6:14-16, Eph. 5:21-33.) Parents I encourage you to get my book, **"To Date or Not to Date"** from the Decision Room. It's a concise 35-page book on what the Bible says about relationships.
11. After reading the following passages: Prov. 23:4-5, 2 Cor. 8:1-15, 2 Cor. 9:6-15, Luke 6:38, Matt. 6:19-34; Luke 12:13-21, 1 Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19: please answer these questions: What does it mean to be responsible with money? What can happen to a person that is greedy for money? Do you give of your money to God's work? Why or why not?
12. Is there a cost to following Christ? See Matt. 10:32-39, Matt. 16:24-26, Luke 14:25-35. Be specific please.
13. What does the Bible teach you are to do if you have offended someone (even if it's unknowingly)? See Matt. 5:21-26. What should you do if someone sins against you? See Matt. 18:15-20.
14. What type of friends should a young adult have? Answer in relation to the Scriptures recorded in Psalm 1, Prov. 13:20 and 1 Cor. 15:33.
15. What specific characteristics does the Bible say a young adult should have? See 1 Tim. 4:12, Psalm 119:9-11. (1 Tim. 4:12 is perhaps one of the most important you will explain in the ROP process. I encourage you to memorize it.)
16. In light of the above question, write a detailed description of what it means to be a young man or young woman who is 100% committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives. In other words, what would that young person look like, act like, talk like and be like? Please think about you answer carefully. As you write the answer to this question, honestly evaluate if you are this kind of dedicated follower and disciple of Christ.
17. If you were told you were going to die in just two weeks, how would you spend the remainder of your life? What would you do? What specific changes or adjustments in your priorities do you need to make in order to draw closer to Christ and be what he wants you to be?
18. Statistics show 70% to 92% of all Christian young people, who were raised in church, will abandon their faith by their 20th birthday. Why do you think this is so and do you think this could happen to you? Why or why not?
19. What is it that you sense the Lord desires for you to do to become an active participant in this church? In other words, how has God gifted you that you may be used to further His work in this church and this community?
20. Discover your family history. Find out more about whom you are by learning about, where your great-grandparents were from and who they were. Document your great-grandparents names, where they were from and what you can find out about them. If possible, locate pictures of them and make copies of them. List something you didn't know about your family.

Adult-Centered Youth Ministry at MPBC

For 15+ years I taught the Youth class here at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church (MPBC) and when I started my ministry here at MPBC I served as Associate Pastor with responsibility for all Youth and Children activities. However, as the years went along, I had to stop and think and really take an honest and objective look at the results we were getting and had gotten over the past 15+ years. In all honesty, I was disappointed in what I was seeing. I had also during that time become convinced we do not need more programs, more bells and whistles or more activities. I was seeing statistics put out by Pew Research, Gallup and George Barna that showed we were losing our Christian young people

by and large by the time they turned 20 years of age. Why? Well, there are myriad reasons, but I became convinced we must raise the bar and integrate our young adults (teens) into the total life of the church.

The Lord began to reveal to me that in order to hold on to our young adults, we needed to concentrate our full, undivided attention on holding them responsible and accountable for their attitudes and behaviors. For sure, I knew some people wouldn't understand. But on the other hand, I knew what the Lord was showing me in His Word regarding moving children to adulthood.

I sensed the Lord directing us to "raise the bar." A truly Biblical and Christ-driven approach can and must form the core for a revolution of our youth and in my opinion any youth ministry today. And that core is this: the overall objective in youth work must be to lead teenagers to Christian maturity (1 Tim 4:12). If we are not leading them to mature Christian adulthood, we are spinning our wheels, spending a lot of money on activities and staff, but ultimately are failing to accomplish God's objective for teens: maturity that leads to adulthood.

I will try to point out in the paragraphs to follow what we are doing here at MPBC. What I sincerely hope to detail is a process for leading teenagers to Christian maturity that involves at least four basic commitments on our part as a church.

1. Resist the temptation to give in, promote and push an "adolescent" approach to youth ministry.

I want to share some background at this point briefly. In my own life, I realized several years ago that something was really desperately wrong in how many of the young persons I had taught for their entire high school careers had dropped off the Christian scene by the time they were sophomores in college. I began to study and read what the Scriptures teach about childhood and adulthood. I was introduced to the work of Dr. David Black (Professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC). In fact, I consider Dr. Black a dear friend and a mentor of mine. I have a deep respect for Dr. Black and his book *The Myth of Adolescence* really changed my understanding of youth ministry and raising my own four children.

The book really details and defines what the Bible teaches about the stages of life. The Bible has nothing to say about an "adolescent" stage in life. In Scripture, there are babies, children and adults. Unfortunately, in our society, adolescence has become a waiting period of leisure with few responsibilities and little or no meaningful contact with adults for our young people. This isolation from adults is one of the most harmful developments of adolescence and has provided a breeding ground for the rampant feeling of alienation among our youth today.

According to Dr. Black, the way you can tell that someone believes in an adolescent approach to youth ministry is by the programs they develop to segregate youth from adults. He goes on to say, "Most youth ministries have their own Sunday School, youth missions, youth small groups, youth worship, youth evangelism teams, youth choir, youth discipleship programs, youth retreats, and youth outings. Youth leaders that have swallowed the myth of adolescence assume that by isolating the youth into their own independent subgroup in the church they will be better able to instill in them Christian values. The truth is that this solution is worse than the original problem."

As I indicated earlier, studies have shown that most teens leave the church and frankly begin to lose interest in church during the ninth through twelfth grades. This is because they have been "entertained" by their youth leaders, but nobody has ever integrated them into the real life of the church (which involves responsibility, not just fun and games). At MPBC, we have chosen to focus on helping young people make the transition from childhood into adulthood spiritually, emotionally, and

mentally. We do not have a Children's Pastor or Youth Pastor, because we believe the Bible teaches that the ultimate responsibility for raising our children spiritually is that of the parents (Ephesians 6:1-4, Deut. 6:1-10, Hebrews 12:5-11). The church is available to come along side to help and encourage the family do this important work. The church helps integrate young people who don't have parents active in the church by "adopting" them into families within the church who can help mentor them (Titus 2) and thereby show them what a family structure should look like in our culture.

2. Integrate teens with adults in every typical church setting and activity.

This is a step that most churches are afraid to take. Why? Because the culture has split our children into "graded" categories in everything they do...from school, to teams and to the church. However, this step must not be overlooked! Why? Well, as one experienced youth pastor has written (Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry* [Downers Grove: IVP, 1994] p. 49): "Teenagers will not learn the skills required of mature adults in a peer-centered youth only environment. They will not learn these skills by talking with their friends. The process occurs as the less mature repeatedly have opportunity to observe, dialogue and collaborate with the more mature."

We have chosen to integrate our young adults into the "body life" of MPBC. We are convinced that as our young adults see places to serve in the church such as: teaching, Sunday School, to being on the Audio-visual team, to helping prepare meals on Wed. nights, go on mission trips, usher, be a greeter, serving on the Hospitality or Parking Teams, sing in the choir, play/sing in the Praise Team (there is a try-out), help with our Sports Leagues (Soccer and Flag Football), Trunk or Treat, Independence Celebration, Christmas Celebration, Easter Egg Hunt, Passion Play, etc.

The wonderful thing is the transformation we have seen in our young people. They have "ownership" in what is going on. If a young person, or anyone for that matter, feels like they are making a difference and have a stake in what's going on, they will be much less likely to abandon the church when they leave the church for college or work. We believe we must not deny young people this kind of involvement with adults. It's my sincere belief if we do, we will be sending our teenagers into the world mentally, socially, and morally unprepared for the challenges of adulthood. Ultimately, if they relate only to their peers, they will remain trapped in immaturity. On the other hand, young people who have been fortified with significant adult relationships are consistently the ones who exhibit responsible behavior and who are able to resist involvement in negative behaviors such as rebellion, drug abuse, and promiscuity.

Thus, the most important foundation a youth ministry can have in its work with teens is providing them with opportunities for significant dialogue and relationships with mature Christian adults, which will lead to belonging, involvement and service. This is especially important for those teens who do not come from Christian homes and who therefore need a circle of adult Christians to model the Christian life for them. Again, as shared earlier, we "adopt" youth that come to our church without parents into families that have a desire to mentor that young person while they're at the church and "show them" what a family looks like Scripturally.

3. Reject the myth that healthy development among youth requires a strong break with their parents.

Although peers exercise some control over a teen's choice of dress, music, and entertainment, only when parents are extremely negligent do peers exercise more control over the teen's choice of beliefs and relational styles. It remains a fact that in the vast majority of cases parents remain the single most important influence in the development of a teen's character and personality. A recent study showed that young people desire experiences with their parents (*Journal of Research on Adolescence*). Specifically, the study concluded that (1) equating the youth years with inevitable rebellion is inaccurate; (2) the predictable disintegration of parent-teen relationships is false; and (3)

teens are more likely to support parental values than to be in conflict with them. This means that more of our programs in church need to be designed for the youth themselves to serve and lead while providing them with mature mentors.

To implement the ideas I've detailed above, we at MPBC have implemented a "Rite of Passage" process for our young people when they turn twelve. This program has been invaluable in letting our young people know what the expectations are of their parents, the church and most importantly the Lord God, via Scripture as they become young adults. Again, we do not have a "youth" pastor, because we don't see this role depicted in Scripture. In fact, we believe, according to the Bible, there really should no longer be "youth pastors" but "pastors to families," since their main strategy should be to encourage parents in raising a new generation of champions for Christ. Parents, particularly fathers, are going to be held responsible by the Lord in how they teach train and raise their children in the ways of Christ (Eph. 6:4).

An adult-centered youth ministry is not a program to be added to a church's educational ministry plan. It is a *foundational* model with one primary goal: to equip all believers (youth included) to grow toward mature and responsible Christian adulthood. If this is the first priority, it will radically affect one's philosophy of understanding youth ministry. Instead of trying newer and newer gimmicks to get youth to attend our "programs," and instead of trying harder and harder to make traditional programs work, we have focused our efforts on those programs that equip parents to nurture their children in the Christian faith and those that give teens the opportunity to be with mature adults.

4. Finally, note this model is not something "new," but something "old" that comes from the Bible, the Holy Scriptures.

What I'm describing is not a "new" model or philosophy for youth ministry. It is simply a return to God's design for the church as detailed in the Bible (Luke 2, Deut. 6, Heb. 12, Eph. 6, and the Proverbs). Jesus had no organizational chart or curriculum. His priority was to call his youthful disciples "to be with him" (Mark 3:14). Jesus' ministry was relational, and ours should be the same. The Christian faith becomes real to teenagers when they see it lived out in real life situations. In short, an adult-centered youth ministry is not about creating special programming for young people. The goal is to provide them with the kind of foundational relationships with Christian adults that will lead to spiritual maturity. In so doing, we seek especially to connect youth from non-traditional homes, (divorced, blended, etc.), with adult mentors. If our youth ministries are to become Biblical and have a meaningful impact, they must reject the modern model of highly programmed activities and entertainment and instead give the central place to connecting young people to mature Christian adults. Why? Because if we don't, we will continue to lose our young people to the culture as they leave our churches in droves in their 20's.

We are seeing wonderful results from implementing the Scriptures in the model described. Why? First and foremost because it is Biblical. Also, because we are committed to strengthening families by keeping them together as much as possible. We don't over-schedule so we can allow families time to truly be families during the week. We believe in keeping things simple for our families and let you be a family and not keep you at church every night of the week. We have also found when teenagers are treated with the respect and significance and are encouraged to participate in ministry and not the self-absorption of immaturity in a room off to themselves, they rise to the occasion and spiritually flourish. Our teens function in every possible position of service. We work very hard to provide activities that allow participation with adults and in family-oriented settings. The goal is NOT just to group the young adults together for "play" or "entertainment" or that would reinforce to them that they have an identity separate from the rest of the adult community, but instead to the body-life of the church. It is not the belief of MPBC that God does not work in youth groups, but rather that He can

accomplish the same ministry—and much, much more—when teens are elevated to their high calling within the general body of believers.

During their teen years, when young adults are told they are not needed by society, they have a special need to “belong” to a community. Thus, while waiting for “adult” status as defined by their culture, they need to have a sense of belonging to a group of people they respect and from whom they can receive recognition. We believe here at MPBC, if we, as adults make the church a community to which young people want to belong, we will be helping our teenagers move more smoothly into mature adulthood. Ultimately, the Body of Christ can be a significant factor in the moral and spiritual development of youth of any age! To God be the glory!

Pastor D. Kevin Brown