

PARENT CONVERSATIONS



What messages do you want your children to take with them as they leave home?

In 2017, Rob Guenther wrestled with the question “What does it mean to be a man?” as his oldest son, Josiah, was finishing grade school. Guenther wanted to make sure that he was preparing Josiah well for life. So for one year, Guenther and his son participated in a “Man-up challenge” together to grow stronger physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Now Josiah faces a new milestone. In December, he will graduate from Martin Luther College with a double major in physics and mathematics in secondary education. Read the next installment in Guenther’s ongoing quest to help his son grow into a godly man and consider how you can adapt his advice for you and your family. (Hint: This advice works just as well for women as for men.)

—Nicole Balza

EIGHT YEARS HAVE flown by. Four years at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School and then four more at Martin Luther College. Now you are about to graduate and receive your first call. Here are a few thoughts as you leave home.

GENERAL ADVICE:

- **Keep taking care of *you*.** I love that running and acting are both your hobbies. Running is still a sport for old people (more so than football, anyway). Acting has taught you the art of public speaking, a skill that will serve you in pretty much any profession you pursue.
- **Be a lifelong learner.** Read books. Readers are leaders and leaders are readers. Take classes. Learn survival skills. It’s okay to spend some time on LEGO, Xbox, and Netflix. But don’t just veg out. Learn something new every day. You’d be surprised at how many home and auto repairs you can do yourself by ordering a part from eBay and watching a whole lot of YouTube videos. (And you’ll save a lot of money!)
- **Know when to quit.** Call the plumber or electrician. Sometimes YouTube videos don’t match your skills. Admit it and spend the money to get what you did wrong fixed. Then fail forward. Learn from what you did wrong. How can you do better next time? Can you make a plan?
- **Be responsible.** Know how to cook and clean. Know how to build your EQ (emotional quotient),

not just your IQ (intelligence quotient). Know how to run a meeting smoothly and to fold the bottom sheet. (Then teach those skills to me if you ever figure them out.) Don’t make excuses for incompetence. Learn and be responsible for your own personal growth.

- **Be fiscally responsible.** Give 10 percent first. Save 10 percent second. Live on the other 80 percent. (And if you get into financial trouble, talk to Uncle Jon.) Live frugally so you can give generously. It really is better—and more fun—to give than to receive. (Surprise, surprise. Jesus said that.)
- **Put others ahead of yourself.** It’s called the Golden Rule for a reason. When you serve others ahead of yourself, you build a trust and friendship that will be there for you when you need it. Make friends. Buying someone coffee or lunch isn’t an expense. It’s an investment.

These skills can make you competent. I want that for you. But they can also make you arrogant. I do not want that for you. So shifting gears . . .

CHRISTIAN ADVICE:

- **Don’t just make friends. Make *Christian* friends.** I once read that you are the composite of the five people you spend the most time with (especially your spouse and kids). Your wife will have a greater influence and impact on you than anyone else, besides Christ. Choose her wisely. Choose a Christian (preferably a WELS Lutheran).

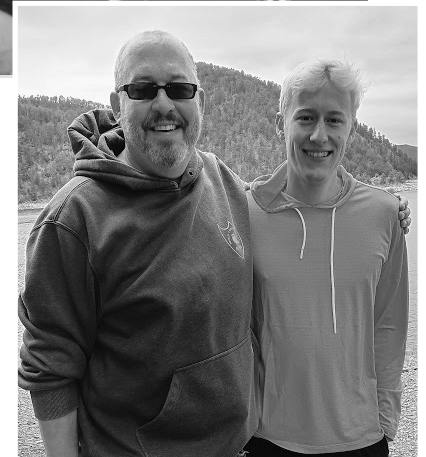
- **Be a Christian friend.** Be a man who is datable. Spend more time on improving yourself than looking for “the right one,” and “the right one” will find you. You’ll surround yourself with friends who will encourage you. You’ll have those five people whom you want to become.
- **Integrity is key.** Don’t be one person when people are watching and a different person when they’re not. That’s a recipe for disaster.
- **Read your Bible every day,** even if it’s just for five minutes. Your devotional life will make a world of difference. God’s Word will call you out when you need calling out.

“One hundred years from now, only two things will matter: Did you keep your faith in Christ and did you help others to do the same?”

- **Repent when you should** (which is and will be often). Admit when you’re wrong. Ask for forgiveness from God and from others.
- **Read your Bible every day,** even if it’s just for five minutes. This one is worth repeating. Your devotional life will make a world of difference. God’s Word will comfort you when you need comfort.
- **Rejoice in God’s forgiveness.** You are not defined by your sin. You are not defined by your mistakes. You are not defined by your failures. You are defined by Christ. You are defined by God’s declaration of grace that you are a sinless son of God!
- **Go live that joy with gratitude.** Serve other people in thanks. Volunteer your time. Give generously. Treat others as you want to be treated. No, strike that—treat them better.
- **Email me, text me, or call me when you want.** I will try to take your calls as priorities. I remember how dumb my dad was when I was 20 and how much smarter he got by the time I turned 30. He learned a lot in ten years.
- **Take care of your dad** when he is old and gray(er). He’ll likely need you. (Mom might too.)
- Finally, and this one is the absolute key: **Keep Christ at the center . . .** of your life, of your rela-



Rob Guenther with his father, Doug, and with his oldest son, Josiah



tionships, of your work, of everything. As my dad told me when I was heading out of the house: “One hundred years from

now, only two things will matter: Did you keep your faith in Christ and did you help others to do the same? You cannot take the boat, the car, or the house with you. The only thing you can take with you are other people.” Wise man.

Thanks, Doug Guenther, for the excellent advice that you gave me when I was young and dumb that I am now trying to pass on to four more Guenther men. And thank you, Jesus, for the daily forgiveness I receive from you and get to share with others.

READ ➤ Guenther’s original *Forward in Christ* article, “How can I help my son grow into a godly man?” at forwardinchrist.net/godly-man.



Rob Guenther and his wife, Becky, are raising four boys in New Ulm, Minnesota. Rob is pastor at St. John’s, New Ulm.



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