



Two Day Schedule

Day 1 – The Day Preparation

- The day began early with an 1.5 hour drive to Mt. Cheaha. I purposefully did not tell him where we were going, why we were going there, or what he should expect. However, several weeks in advance, I did ask him to block off all day Friday and Saturday from 4:00pm onward. Once we were in the car I outlined the day and explained that we would be preparing for a council conversation with other men the following night. I handed him the “Core Message” sheets and we discussed each as drove. I reiterated the purpose was to prepare him for the council the next day. I was able to ask questions and offer applications.
- Arriving at the Chinnebee Silent trail parking lot, we hiked through the Turnip Seed campground to the creek at the base of the mountain. When we reached the creek, I stopped. “I can’t go any farther. You are on your own from this point forward.” I gave him instructions about how I wanted him to spend the day, outline the trail markers, and the spot I wanted him to visit. He was to be back down the mountain at 3:30. (A great scripture to read at this point *would* have been Luke 4:1-13)
- During his solo hike I asked him **not to engage his phone**. I did have him leave it on so he could call if he needed help. Otherwise, it was a digital free day. The purpose was to **digest the material** for himself and have a solitary day of preparation.
- At 3:30 he returned. On the drive back home I asked him to walk me through his own thoughts, essentially serving as a “mock council.” I did not provide nearly as much guidance, but allowed him to tell me his thoughts.
- The day ended with a meal and some light hearted conversation. By the time we were done I was confident that Cooper was ready.

Day 2

The Dinner

- I invited four men who know Cooper and are a part of his life on a regular basis. We gathered at a friend's house for dinner. Once seated at the dinner table I

asked Cooper to share about the previous day. I invited the men to ask questions, offer their own reflections, and share experiences. I also invited Cooper to ask the men any questions that he may have for them. This time was less formalized, but was still intentionally spent.

- After dinner we had a fire pit already burning and I asked Cooper to come out with me. I gave him the lyrics to the song, "You'll Find Your Way" by Andrew Peterson. I explained why I wanted him to listen to this song, handed him my phone with some earbuds (I wanted it to be immersive) and went back inside to meet with the other dads.
- Sitting down with the fathers, I explained the flow of the night clearly. Each man was to take a "chip" that had engraved a "Core Message" and scripture. I let each man choose the attribute he preferred.
- I gave each man a copy of the blessing I had written for Cooper
- We agreed on the order and all walked out together to meet with Cooper.

The Council

- We gathered around the fire with Cooper
- I read the verse, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me." 1 Corinthians 13:11. I then explained to Cooper how the council would flow.
- From that point, each man asked Cooper about the chip he was responsible for. Cooper responded with his thoughts. The men each offered input and guidance. Once each man was satisfied with Cooper's response, he handed him his chip. Once all of the chips were earned we gathered around Cooper and anointed his forehead with oil, read the blessing I had written, then prayed a prayer over him.
- At the end, we stood, congratulated, hugged, affirmed Cooper, and ate a delicious chocolate cake!

Final Reflections

This was a remarkably powerful experience for everyone involved. Cooper was definitely moved and impacted, but so was each of the man. Personally, I found myself simultaneously overwhelmed with gratitude and absolutely exhausted spiritually and emotionally. One of my key take aways was that I had to **FULLY EMBRACE** my role as **GUIDE**. It was my responsibility to offer a framework during both days, keeping the conversation on track. I had to beware of the tendency to lighten the mood and talk about things other than what needs to be focused on. But, I knew this had to be a different time and space in Cooper's life. In the end, I can't imagine having spent this year any better. Was the year perfect? Nope. Was it powerful? Absolutely.



This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

1 Corinthians 13:11

Cooper, what must you do to be saved?

Who is Jesus to you?

Describe the person you want to be when you graduate high school? How do you want to be known?



Know Your People

Core Message:

You are from an amazing family. You are not on your own.

Remember, you will die. Your time is limited.

Like the ones who came before you, live your life as a servant of Christ.

Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

Psalm 90:10

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

Philippians 2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Hebrews 12:1-2



Courage

Core Message:

**When you live like a man who is pursuing Christ you will meet resistance.
Use your strength for the good of others, not yourself.**

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:20-21



Habits

Core Message:

You must purposefully spend your time in order to shape your life towards Christlikeness. Your habits matter and they will require discipline.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Philippians 4:8

“These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.”

Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

Matthew 15:8-11

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”

Luke 22: 39-40

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2



Purity and Relationships

Core Message:

Purity in your relationships with women is a witness of Christ to the world.

Sexual desire is a beautiful, but powerful force in your life.

Run towards purity. It is life.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:26-28

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9



Grit

Core Message:

Life is hard, but God is with you.

Perseverance is needed to grow, to live, and to flourish as God intends.

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;

through painful toil you will eat food from it

all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you,

and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow

you will eat your food

until you return to the ground,

since from it you were taken;

for dust you are

and to dust you will return."

Genesis 3:17-19



Cooper's Blessing

Cooper,
You salt. You are light.
You are strong. You are courageous. You are protector.
You are from a people who serve humbly and live boldly.
The Lord of the universe knit you together
And He rejoices over you with singing.
You are dearly loved.

"You'll Find Your Way"

By: Andrew Peterson

When I look at you, boy
I can see the road that lies ahead
I can see the love and the sorrow
Bright fields of joy
Dark nights awake in a stormy bed
I want to go with you, but I can't follow

So keep to the old roads
Keep to the old roads
And you'll find your way

Your first kiss, your first crush
The first time you know you're not enough
The first time there's no one there to hold you
The first time you pack it all up
And drive alone across America
Please remember the words that I told you

Keep to the old roads
Keep to the old roads
And you'll find your way
You'll find your way

If love is what you're looking for
The old roads lead to an open door
And you'll find your way
You'll find your way
Back home
And I know you'll be scared when you take up
that cross
And I know it'll hurt, 'cause I know what it costs
And I love you so much and it's so hard to
watch
But you're gonna grow up and you're gonna
get lost
Just go back, go back

Go back, go back to the ancient paths
Lash your heart to the ancient mast
And hold on, boy, whatever you do
To the hope that's taken hold of you
And you'll find your way
You'll find your way
If love is what you're looking for
The old roads lead to an open door
And you'll find your way
You'll find your way
Back home