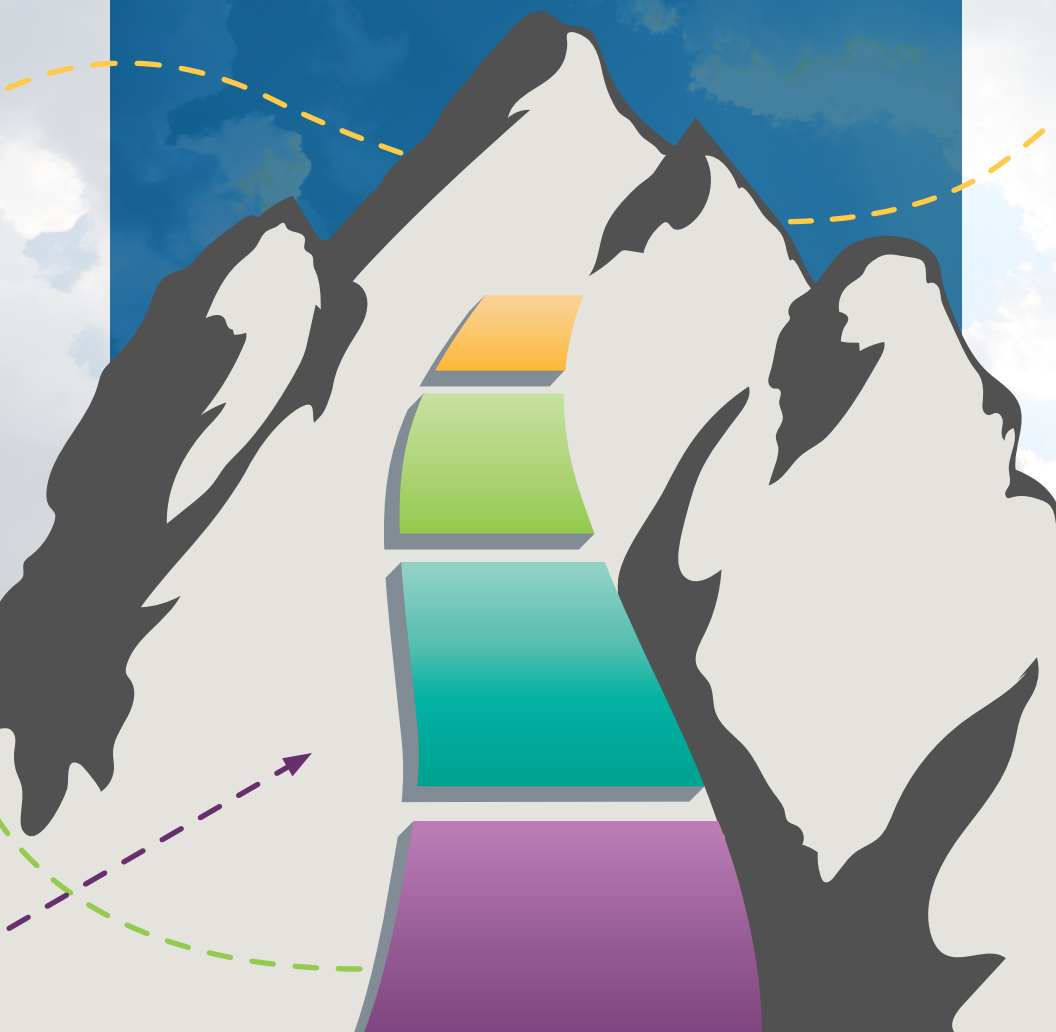


# PARENTING PATHWAY

A GUIDE TO DISCIPLING YOUR CHILDREN  
THROUGH THE STAGES OF LIFE



CROSSBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY CHURCH



## INTRODUCTION

God's special privilege for you is to be the spiritual leader of your child's life. While it seems daunting at times, he's promised to give you everything you need to be successful. At CrossBridge, we're committed to partner with you every step of the way. We're here to encourage, to equip and to support one another. After all, we're the Church. We're God's family, so we are not meant to do this alone.

Every family is different and there innumerable variables that make your family unique. This booklet is designed simply to encourage you and to share some practical ideas for discipling your children. God is for you! As you seek to get to know Jesus better and better, you'll find new power and joy in the important job of parenting.

In this book you'll discover The Parenting Pathway. It is a valuable tool to help you love and lead your children at every stage of their development. While you can simply find the section that corresponds to your child's present age and jump right in, we recommend reviewing all the stages. After all, a child's development is a lot like building blocks. Each stage adds to the one that came before it, so it may be necessary for you to address your foundation in other stages to be more fruitful parenting in the present. Trust the work of the Holy Spirit to place His hand of blessing on your family as you devote yourselves to God.

# PARENTING PATHWAY

## A GUIDE TO DISCIPLING YOUR CHILDREN THROUGH THE STAGES OF LIFE

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### STAGES OF PARENTING

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*"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."*

*- Deuteronomy 6:5-9*

## A Letter From Pastor Kirk

*The most important thing Debbie and I do as a parents is to genuinely follow Jesus personally. Following Jesus doesn't mean we're perfect, it means that in our hearts we want please him and know him more—we want to do things his way. Jesus loves a heart like that and is eager to bless it. In fact, the Bible tells us that Jesus is drawn to the humble hearted person who seeks him. (James 4:6). He's looking at the disposition of our heart because from it flow our thoughts, words and actions. When our heart is right with Jesus, everything else follows.*

*Keeping my heart right is another way of expressing what Jesus told us to do, "Abide in me." Here are three basic activities that help us abide in Jesus. As we continue in them, our children reap the harvest of having parents who live under God's hand of blessing.*

**1. Identity:** *By spending time with Jesus through the Word and the Holy Spirit, I put myself in a position for him to renew my mind. He loves to remind each of us who he is and who we are—his dearly loved children! When I feel loved by him, it always leaks out in good ways onto my kids. He also desires to point me in the right direction. When I obey him, I experience his blessing—and so do my kids!*

**2. Belonging:** *By actively engaging in a life group, I surround myself and my children with the people of God. The Holy Spirit loves to bless us through each other. In fact, there are some blessings he only gives to us as we walk in community with other followers. We can't really experience this kind of community in our Sunday gatherings because there are so many people. This is why a life group is essential.*

**3. Purpose:** *My purpose in life is to reveal Jesus to others. I ask Jesus to include me in loving others. I always have people in my oikos for whom I'm praying, caring for, and with whom I'm sharing about Jesus. As I center my life around Jesus' purpose, my kids see it and begin to know that God's has a significant purpose for their life. Everyone wants to know that they matter. Living for Jesus' priorities is the most fulfilling life we can show our kids.*

*No matter what stage of parenting you're in, the moment you start abiding in Christ, your children will begin to experience the blessing of it. Walking with Jesus is the best life for us and our children.*

*Kirk*

In the following pages you'll find information about:

**God's Heart for Marriage:** By investing time, love and prayer into your marriage, you will not only gain the benefits of a fruitful union with your spouse, but model to your children God's heart for the church that is represented through marriage.

**God's Heart for Parenting:** God has expressed his plan for parenting in the Bible (Deuteronomy 6). As parents, our goal is to follow his plan. This model expresses the Father heart of God, and his desire for his children to pass on a godly legacy. The kingdom of God expands one heart at a time from one generation to the next. This occurs as you disciple your children:

1. In the Home.
2. In the Church.

**Understanding Your Child's Development:** Your child's time in the home can be viewed as four growth stages. Understanding these four stages will help you embrace your role during their development. In learning about these stages, you will be helping your child appropriate Jesus' answer to three basic human needs of knowing their identity, belonging and purpose. In the book you discover things which are important for your child to:



**KNOW:** Your child will learn about who God is, who they are, and how to connect with the world around them during their development from baby into adulthood. We refer to this as what the child should **KNOW** answering the question of who they are in their identity.



**FEEL:** You want to shepherd your child's heart in a way that they experience heart transformation, not behavior modification. This is where true character is developed. We refer to this as what the child should **FEEL**, answering the question of where they belong.



**GROW:** As your child matures in Christ, you can expect them to grow emotionally, spiritually and mentally, eventually becoming thriving adults. We refer to this as how the child should **GROW**, answering the question of what they are made for in their purpose.



## GOD'S HEART FOR MARRIAGE

In his amazing creativity, God created your marriage to be your most special relationship on earth. God wants you to enjoy your marriage. Sure it takes a lot of work, but when we follow God's path for marriage, it's also rich, fun, and a life-time blessing. It's also a picture to the rest of the world. As a husband and wife love and serve each other, other people see an expression of how much Jesus loves his people and how much they love him back.

Marriage was created by God, and for the glory of God. He purposefully created man and woman to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:27-28). It's important to understand God created men and women different. They have different roles, but equal value. In doing so God also displayed His glory through marriage patterned after Christ's covenant commitment to His church.

When we understand how much God values marriage not only because it's a loving union, but a *holy* one about Him revealing His own glory, we can know the importance of loving, protecting and serving in the unique roles of husbands and wives in God's design. It's where submission and sacrificial love abide like it's modeled between Jesus and the Church.





## KNOW:

- "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she **respects** her husband." - Ephesians 5:33
- **Husbands:** Your wife needs to know that she is loved (desired, pursued, valued).
- **Wives:** Your husband needs to know that he is respected (trusted, valued, affirmed).



## FEEL:

- Since we know that God is love, He has given us his love languages to communicate his divine love through our actions and words to our spouse. In your marriage, you can express this through:
  - Words of Affirmation
  - Gifts
  - Quality Time
  - Physical Touch
  - Acts of Service
- **Husbands:** Through your actions and words, your wife needs to feel intimacy and connected to you. Show her that she is the most desired and central person in your life. This includes prioritizing her, serving her, and having a healthy work/family balance. Your daily thoughtfulness communicates her worth to you.
- **Wives:** Through your actions and words, your husband needs to feel honored and connected to you. Your awareness and responsiveness show him that he holds the most important place in your life. This includes speaking positively of him in public and private, acknowledging his ethics, integrity, and thanking him for the sacrifices he makes.



## GROW:

- Ephesians 5:22-25 (Submit to one another, wives to husbands, husbands love like Christ loves church)
- **Husbands:** Grow as the spiritual leader by loving sacrificially like Christ demonstrated in laying down his life for the church.
- **Wives:** Grow in your submission to Christ, which helps you trust his plan in submitting to your husband.
- **Together:** Grow in partnership and teamwork which demonstrates the unity of two different individuals being one in Christ. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." - Ephesians 5:21



## 4 MARRIAGE MUSTS



1. **Abide:** The more consistently you walk with Jesus, the more loving and honoring you will be towards your spouse resulting in a more peaceful home.
2. **Intentional:** Godly marriages don't just happen, they must be cultivated. Marriage is like a garden that needs time, intention and hard work. Be a student of your spouse constantly learning and changing together. The personal value is enjoying a lifelong intimacy with your spouse. The big picture value is seeing God express Christ's heart for the church.
3. **Humility:** Is the KEY ingredient to a healthy God glorifying relationship with your spouse. You'll need humility to:
  - Recognize the enemy of your marriage is satan and our own selfishness. Your spouse is NOT the enemy.
  - Remember conflict is inevitable. Resolve to listen first and be more concerned with the relational health than being right.
  - Race to ask for forgiveness. Never go to bed angry.
  - Seek to see situations through your spouse's eyes. Seek to understand, not just be understood. Own your part, not theirs.
4. **Communicate:** Your expectations and be flexible. Problems are the gap between reality and expectations. The bigger the gap, the bigger the problem.

# MARRIAGE PATHWAY

We must create intentional and consistent rhythms into our family



1. **Pray together:** Consistent routines of prayer in morning, dinner, and bedtime. Even texting prayers / scriptures throughout the day.
2. **Regular date nights:** Put into your calendar to protect and alternate planning them. Limit distractions and technology. Include physical intimacy.
3. **Daily Face time:** Daily face to face time. Give each other 30 minutes or more of uninterrupted time (no phones, kids, TV, etc). Share your heart with your spouse, and not just the daily events.
4. **Thoughtful exchanges:** Thoughtful exchanges throughout the day to communicate love and value. Texts, bring home surprises, special treats, etc.
5. **Culture of Honor:** Speak encouraging positive words into your spouse both in public and private.

1. Multi generational Lifegroup is how you share struggles and victories in your marriage. As you walk in transparency and authenticity you will find greater fulfillment in your marriage, and encourage others in theirs.
2. Disciple making groups with a few other men or women.
3. CrossBridge marriage conferences, classes, online tools and mentoring.
4. CrossBridge Men's and Women's Ministry events and retreats.
5. Freedom Prayer (Sign up on our website)

## MARRIAGE RESOURCES:

- *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman
- *Experiencing Christ Together: Finding Freedom and Fulfillment in Marriage* by Neil Anderson
- SYMBIS Online Marriage assessment and couple mentoring
- RightNow Media—Video Bible studies and Marriage resources



## GOD'S HEART FOR PARENTING -ABIDING IN CHRIST-

Every human longs in their heart to know who they are, where they belong and why they are here in the world. As parents, you model and impart these three basic needs through God given instincts of love, protection and provision. Making connections to your child's heart, and helping them connect to God's heart, will assist them in a lifelong journey of embracing his answers to:



**IDENTITY:** Parents model the Father heart of God so the child understands their identity and feels loved.



**BELONGING:** Parents model the character of Christ so the child understands sin, conviction, how the body of Christ belongs together, and the child feels trust and safety.



**PURPOSE:** Parents model the work of the Holy Spirit that gives them purpose in the kingdom of God, and the child feels the power to overcome darkness and walk in freedom.



Scripture refers to the believer's relationship with the triune God experiencing His identity, belonging and purpose as "abiding in Christ". John 15 reveals an illustration of Jesus as the vine and God's people as the branches. As the believer remains connected in Him, answers are found to these three critical basic human needs and we receive His power to live them out. This is why our transformational power to be like God happens through the:

1. **Word:** The Truth of God's Word (*IDENTITY*)
2. **People:** The interdependence with the People of God. (*BELONGING*)
3. **Spirit:** The empowering of God's Spirit (*PURPOSE*)

If parents are not abiding themselves, you are unable to fulfill God's plan for the spiritual shepherding of your children's hearts. The building blocks for your child's foundation in Christ and their discipleship begins at home. The church will partner with you in the raising up of your children as followers of Christ, however, it is your abiding in Christ that will ultimately be pillars for your children's faith.



## PARENTING PILLARS

- **Parents are covered by God's grace.** We recognize that due to life's circumstances, many of you may come into the pathway at various stages, and may not be invested in this particular church for the entirety of your child's first 18 years. We invite you jump in right where you're at as we partner with you. Trust the work of the Holy Spirit to place His hand of blessing on your family as you devote yourselves to God in your personal relationship with Jesus, Life group, and discipleship. He's with you!
- **Parents are God's chosen disciplinators.** Parents have the primary role as the spiritual leaders in the home. The Church plays a role in supporting and equipping you with events and small groups. Together and in community is the way God has established to grow and bless your children. We can step into our calling and anointing as parents with confidence in God's plan, even when we mess up. (see above)
- **Parenting is a heart to heart connection.** While it is important to teach your children things they need to know. The real essence is "How do I connect my heart to my kids' heart?" and then "How do I connect their heart to Father God's heart?"
- **Parenting is a life of devotion and sacrifice.** Your personal devotional life with Jesus is what is fundamental to your child's life in God. At the heart, discipleship is imitation. So, your faith lived out every day is what your children will imitate. This includes your example of connection in Life groups and deeper relationships in the Church.
- **Parenting is a Kingdom perspective.** "Be in the moment, BUT parent the moments out of the bigger picture". In other words, keep the bigger picture of God's Story and His Kingdom as your focus in raising your kids; However, Be present. Stay in the moment realizing each moment matters.
- **Parenting is intentional.** People do NOT drift to salvation or maturity in Christ. It is the result of the cumulative value of consistently modeling and pouring into your kids daily. Each stage holds significance in shaping your child's heart and each stage builds upon each other.





## 6 PARENTING MUSTS

**Put God First:** Show your children the priority of putting God first as they make decisions, choose what to be involved in and who to develop closer relationships with.

1. **Abide:** Experience walking with Jesus in a way that cultivates your identity, belonging and purpose in Christ. Personally abiding in Christ grounds us in our faith in the good times and bad. Know your need for God, and live it in a way that the child learns their need for God.
2. **Lead:** Leading means modeling. Embrace that parents are the PRIMARY spiritual influence with the goal of passing on a legacy of faith that loves God, loves people, and makes disciples. Your kids will follow what you do more than what you say!
3. **Invite Jesus Into Everything:** Whether you are at the dinner table, driving in the car or putting your kids to bed, bring Jesus into everything you do. Through any issue or question your kids have, create a family culture that through prayer and scripture, we can ask Jesus anything.
4. **Foster Teamwork:** Coach your kids to build up and champion one another. Help your children see their role in the family, and grow in their ownership of their responsibilities.
5. **Outward Focus:** Your goal as a parent is to teach your child about receiving the Father's love, and growing to love like Jesus. This means you're representing God's love as you pour into them, and by helping them consider others more than themselves.
6. **Celebrate:** Foster a culture of celebrating God's values in your child's life. This shows with a heart of thankfulness and a spirit of worship.

## PARENTING PATHWAY

We must create intentional and consistent rhythms into our family life.



1. **Consistent routines:** Find ways to include Jesus into morning/dinner/bedtime routines.
2. **Family Fun times:** Family Game nights, special vacations, and even errands can be made fun creating a game out of anything! Don't under estimate the value of laughing together.
3. **Family Responsibilities:** Tackle chores and projects together and include the kids and encourage whatever they contribute.
4. **Family Meals:** Each person share their highlight, low point of their day and Where did you see God working in you, around you, through you today?

(Cont. on next page)

1. Multi generational Life Groups
2. Freedom Prayer for children ages 4+.
3. Immerse: Worship/Prayer Nights
4. Backyard Bible Club
5. New Christian Class
6. Baptisms
7. Parent Equipping Classes
8. Art of Parenting Class
9. Mission Trips- local and international

### PARENTING RESOURCES:

- RightNow Media—Video Bible studies and resources
- *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman
- *If Jesus Were a Parent* by Hal Perkins
- *The Art of Parenting* by Dennis and Barbara Rainey

## IN THE HOME (continued)

5. **Special Family Traditions:** Plan ahead and look to make holiday times meaningful with special traditions that espouse your values and include Jesus into them with a thankful heart. (Advent calendar at Christmas, Resurrection Eggs at Easter, 4th of July BBQ, even Christmas in July)
6. **Creative expressions of God's love:** Be known as a family that lavishes love consistently giving and receiving God's five love languages: Physical touch, Words of affirmation, Gifts, Acts of service, and Quality time.
7. **Teachable Moments:** Always be aware of these to leverage ordinary moments into life lessons.
8. **Car Rides and Wait Times:** Make the most of this time by engaging your child with questions. Find out what is important to them and then ask "Tell me more about that"
9. **Family Ministry Times:** Get into the Bible together. Go to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to speak. Practice stillness and waiting (age appropriate) Then share what they felt came to mind. Simply build these into your routines and a part of your family life. Jesus loves to speak!
10. **Serve together:** Find neighbors that need help, local charity, or serve on a Sunday morning ministry together. Take a family short term mission trip.

## PARENTING PATHWAY STAGES





# LOVE & DISCIPLINE YEARS

## BABIES-2 YEARS

### Parent Role: Nurturer

(1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, Zephaniah 3:17)

The parent models Father God's by creating and nurturing your children. In this stage, you are the primary person to care for the growth and development of the baby. Nurturing is done when the parent comforts the baby through gentle touch, soft talking and sounds, slow movement, and joyful interactions. Below is how you connect to your child by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



**KNOW:** The baby recognizes mom and dad as their safety, protection and provision. The child learns they are safe as basic needs are met through the parent(s) such as food, clothing, shelter and love.



**FEEL:** By meeting the child's basic needs, they are able to feel loved, safety and comfort though the main source this is given- the parents, and primarily the mom. Consistent schedules allows your child to feel safe and secure.



**GROW:** Bonding/Trust: When the babies needs are met through the parents as the primary source, the baby is able to depend upon the parents creating trust and bonding. These are foundational to forming healthy relationships both with the parent(s), and future relationships even into adult years.

# PARENTING PATHWAY (BABY-2YRS)



- 1. Regular physical touch:** Hold and caress them often. Give hugs and kisses. Rocking and feeding them to express God's love and affection for them.
- 2. Comfort them:** Be the loving and calming presence for your baby as they are upset or in need. Representing God's presence and peace.
- 3. Speak Truth and Blessings into them:** Pray scripture over them, read Bible stories to them, Worship with them dancing and twirling to worship songs.
- 4. Consistent face to face interactions:** Get close and encourage eye contact, smiling, cooing, and laughter. This expresses God's delight in them.
- 5. Praise often:** Find creative ways to express your approval and pride in them for even little accomplishments. Cheering and clapping for them or even giving them a reward.
- 6. Consistent schedule:** Babies thrive on consistency in their routines. Establish them and stick to them, but also build in some flexibility at times to help them adapt and learn to be flexible.

1. Sunday Morning—BabyZone A,B,C
2. Multi generational Lifegroups
3. Men's and Women's Discipleship
4. MOPS- Mothers of Preschoolers
5. Baby Dedications
6. Art of Parenting Class

### RESOURCES: (See Family Resource Center)

- Baby Prayers (scriptures to pray over your baby)
- *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Ted Tripp
- RightNow Media- Video Bible studies and resources
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible*
- *Loving the Little Years* by R. Jankovic
- *If Jesus Lived Inside My Heart* by Jill Roman Lord





# LOVE & DISCIPLINE YEARS

## 2-5 YEARS

### Parent Role: Establishing Boundaries

(Hebrews 12:4-11)

The parent models Father God's heart by disciplining your child in a loving and honoring way. As your child begins to exert their own will, teaching your child boundaries in the areas of personal safety and appropriate behavior requires loving discipline and restoration. It is the role of the parent to establish the boundaries, enforce the consequences consistently and restore the relationship with them afterwards. Below is how you connect to your child by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



#### KNOW:

- Childlike dependency and faith in God as Creator and Savior.
- God is the perfect loving Father who protects, provides, and disciplines for their best.



#### FEEL:

- Safe: physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually.
- Connected: They belong to your family and God's family.



#### GROW:

- Healthy Boundaries and age appropriate consequences: We want our children to be able to explore their boundaries and grow to a place of making healthy choices with them while learning to accept consequences for their own actions. This produces obedience and submission to the parents loving authority.

## PARENTING PATHWAY (2-5 YRS)



### IN THE HOME

### IN THE CHURCH

1. **Teach them to pray:** Use a simple acronym to help them engage God: PRAY. (see page 21)
2. **Creative expressions of God's love:** Be known as a family that lavishes love consistently giving and receiving God's five love languages: Physical touch, Words of affirmation, Gifts, Acts of service, and Quality time.
3. **Consistent routines:** Find ways to include Jesus into morning/naps/dinner/bedtime routines.
4. **Teach them God's Word:** Use the Jesus Storybook Bible (see resources). Be creative using object lessons and crafts ([www.sermons4kids.com](http://www.sermons4kids.com)). Creatively integrate the Bible into your family rhythms ([www.226parenting.com](http://www.226parenting.com))
5. **Sunday class follow up:** Make it a regular habit to engage your child on the way home from Sunday services asking them about what they learned, objects and lessons studied, and their favorite part of their class.
6. **Catch them doing good:** Look for positives and celebrate good behavior and responses with behavior charts or rewards. Speak out your excitement and affirmation over them. This is powerful!
7. **Loving discipline:** Connect choices with consequences. Use time outs, behavior charts, and discipline. Consistently enforce consequences and always restoring afterwards by consoling and affirming your love for them.
8. **Play Games together:** Use age appropriate board games or card games to help them learn to follow rules of a game while still having fun!

1. Sunday morning—Pre-K, A, B, C
2. Multi generational Life groups
3. Men's and Women's Discipleship
4. MOPS- Mothers of Preschoolers
5. Art of Parenting Class
6. Kinder Transition Class

### RESOURCES:

(See *Family Resource Center*)

- RightNow Media- Video Bible studies and resources
- *Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood* by Jim Fay
- *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline* by Becky A. Bailey, Ph.D.
- *Parenting with Grace and Truth* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Townsend
- *If Jesus Lived Inside My Heart* by Jill Roman Lord
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible*



# TRAINING YEARS

## KINDER-3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE

### Parent Role: Character Builder

(2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

The parent models God's heart by demonstrating Christ's loving character with your actions and words. Character is often formed through life's challenges. Traits like courage, empathy, humility, fortitude and loyalty are developed when they are used to overcome those challenges. One way you encourage character building is by letting your child participate in activities in which they are not instantly successful, and may require perseverance and practice. It is vital that the parent models good character for the child through your own response to challenge. Below is how you connect to your child by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



### KNOW:

- Who Jesus is and What He has done for them.
- How to listen and recognize God's voice, and experience His presence.



### FEEL:

- Valued in who they are and in their relationship to you, rather than what they do (sports, activities, etc).
- They belong as an important member of the family unit and God's family. This emotion manifests when the child experiences acceptance through family and peers.
- A sense of God's presence through comfort, peace and joy.

### GROW:



- The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5)
- Self Awareness— The child recognizes their own impact on others, and how they are coming across in relationships.
- Giving and receiving love from God, in relationships and in service to others.
- Giving and receiving forgiveness by initiating steps to reconcile when offended.
- Growing in making better choices, and owning their own consequences.



### PRAY acronym (continued from page 19):

P- Praise- Thank God for who He is and What He has done

R- Repent- Show them to confess wrong, turn away from it and turn to Jesus

A- Ask- Ask God to meet their practical needs and concerns in their hearts

Y- Yield- Tell God you are following Him and He is the leader and His ways are the best.

# PARENTING PATHWAY (K-3<sup>RD</sup>)



## 1. "What Would You Do?"

**Game:** Proactive response game that assists your child to respond like Jesus and teach empathy. Ex: "What would you do if you saw a friend fall off their bike?"

## 2. Two Way Conversation Game:

Using a tennis ball, toss the ball to a family member asking a question (Ex: *What was one interesting thing that happened today?*), they answer and then toss and ask someone else a new question.

## 3. Teach them Gods' Word:

Use the Jesus Storybook Bible (see resources). Be creative using object lessons and crafts ([www.sermons4kids.com](http://www.sermons4kids.com)). Creatively integrate the Bible into your family rhythms ([www.226parenting.com](http://www.226parenting.com))

## 4. Family Meals (HI/LOW/

**GOD):** Each person share their highlight, low point of their day and *Where did you see God working in you, around you, through you today?*

1. Sunday morning—KidZone
2. Multi generational Life groups
3. Men's and Women's Discipleship
4. BackYard Bible Club- VBS in Summer
5. Children's Camp- Week long Summer stay (2nd- 4th grade)
6. Art of Parenting Class
7. Immerse Worship Nights
8. MomsNext (meets with MOPS)
9. New Christians Class
10. Mission Trips- local and international

## IN THE HOME (continued)

5. **Family Meetings:** Gather on floor with heads facing each other. Go around taking turns sharing *encouragement* (one thing you like or admire about...), *offenses* (one thing that bothers you or hurts your feelings when...), and then have them pray for each other as siblings.
6. **Bedtime Heart Cleaning:** Ask "Did anyone say or do anything that hurt your heart today?" Pray to ask Jesus to clean that hurt out and forgive where needed.
7. **Family Holiday Traditions:** Involve your kids in learning to celebrate and make holidays meaningful and enriching.
8. **Serving Together:** On Sunday services, mission trips and in the community.
9. **Car Rides:** Resist the temptation to use technology as a distraction on short trips. Even on long trips, use movies and technology sparingly, instead engaging in singing, playing "I Spy" or other games or using the time to converse with each other.
10. **Plus Minus Chart:** To encourage positive behavior, try catching them when they do something good- a plus, while enforcing when they make a bad choice- a minus. When they get to 3, they get a prize or reward you know they will really like. The key is to catch them doing right early so they get the idea of the rewards and make good choices.

## RESOURCES:

(See Family Resource Center)

- RightNow Media- Video Bible studies and resources
- *Parenting with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay
- *Parenting with Grace and Truth* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Townsend
- *Josh McDowell's Book of Family Devotions*
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible*





# TRAINING YEARS

4<sup>TH</sup>–5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## Parent Role: Equipper

(I Timothy 4:7-16, Proverbs 22:6)

You model Father God's heart by helping your children experience Jesus through the Word, prayer, and walking with Jesus daily. During the "training years", children are growing in their independence through choices they make and developing their personality. Children in this stage need to be prepared with tools to navigate their faith and friendships independently from their parents while more time is spent away from the parent's direction. The parent should impart wisdom, skills and experiences that guide the child to begin to assimilate and own their faith for themselves. You equip your children by including them in what you are doing, and asking questions that encourage independent thinking. Below is how you connect to your child by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



### KNOW:

- Assurance of salvation based in Truth (Bible) and also experienced in relationship with Jesus.
- God gives special purpose and meaning to the child's life.
- How to listen and recognize more deeply to God's voice.



### FEEL:

- Confidence in who they are, and what they contribute.
- Freedom in accessing God in prayer, and connecting to His presence.
- Sense of Belonging: Assurance of being loved by God, and the child feeling connected to their family and God's family.



### GROW:

- Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5)
- Ownership of faith and nurturing their personal relationship with Jesus
- Growing in making better choices, and owning their own consequences.



# PARENTING PATHWAY (4<sup>TH</sup>–5<sup>TH</sup>)



## 1. What Would You Do?"

**Game:** Proactive response game that assists your child to respond like Jesus and teach empathy. Ex: "What would you do if you saw a friend fall off their bike?"

## 2. Two Way Conversation

**Game:** Using a tennis ball, toss the ball to a family member asking a question Ex: "Tell me one thing that made you smile today?", they answer and then toss and ask someone else.

## 3. Family Word/Spirit Time:

Engage in a Discovery Bible study together and then wait on the Lord. Reflect on God and people by asking the child questions about Godly characteristics displayed, or negative human sinful traits. Show your child how to embrace God's ways in prayer and journaling.

1. Sunday morning—Faith 45
2. Multi generational Life groups
3. Men's and Women's Discipleship
4. BackYard Bible Club (VBS in Summer)
5. Summer Children's Camp (2nd - 4th grade)
6. Art of Parenting Class
7. New Christians Class
8. Agape Trail Retreat (5th grade)
9. 5th Grade Transition Class
10. MomsNext (meets with MOPS)
11. Mission Trips- local and international

## IN THE HOME (continued)

4. **Family Meals (HI/LOW/GOD):** Each person share their highlight, low point of their day and ask "Where did you see God working in you, around you, through you today?"
5. **Family Meetings:** Gather on floor with heads facing each other. Go around taking turns sharing *encouragement* (one thing you like or admire about...), *offenses* (one thing that bothers you or hurts your feelings when...), and then have them pray for each other as siblings.
6. **Bedtime Heart Cleaning:** Ask "Did anyone say or do anything that hurt your heart today?" Pray to ask Jesus to clean that hurt out and forgive where needed.
7. **Family Holiday Traditions:** Involve your kids in learning to celebrate and make holidays meaningful and enriching.
8. **Serving Together:** On Sunday services, mission trips and in the community.
9. **Car Rides:** Resist the temptation to use technology as a distraction on short trips. Even on long trips, use movies and technology sparingly, instead engaging in singing, playing "I Spy" or other games or using the time to converse with each other.
10. **Technology Expectations:** Discuss and set expectations including cell phone, video games, and social media. DO NOT assume or compare with other friends. Communicate when is the right age for each mode of technology and why.

## RESOURCES:

### (See Family Resource Center)

- RightNow Media- Video Bible studies and resources
- *Passport to Purity:* Interactive weekend experience with parents and kids exploring God's call to sexual purity and holiness preparing for adolescence.
- *Parenting with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay
- *Parenting with Grace and Truth* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Townsend
- *Josh McDowell's Book of Family Devotions*
- *The Action Bible*



# COACHING YEARS

6<sup>TH</sup>–8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## Parent Role: Coach

(Prov. 3:5-6, Galatians 5:16-17)

During the preteen and early teen years, you model Father God's heart by asking questions, providing Godly perspective by giving options, and sharing encouragement as they make wise choices. Coaching is asking the right questions and guiding, rather than direct teaching that you may have employed in previous parenting stages. This involves less telling, and more letting them process and make decisions for themselves, much like riding a bike with training wheels. This is walking with the Spirit, and learning to allow Him to guide and lead their decisions and not rely on themselves. Below is how you connect to your child by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



### KNOW:

- Truth according to God's Word and recognize satan's lies
- Confidence in who they are and Whose they are. (Identity ownership)
- How to guard and restore freedom by using Spiritual First Aid tools.
- Their body is changing in growth patterns, sleep needs, attitude, moodiness, hormones and self absorbed.



### FEEL:

- Secure in being loved and accepted by God and parents as you connect to their heart by championing the value of who they are.
- Understood by parents. "You get me".
- Courageous to try and not afraid to fail

- More independence from parents. Learning to be their own person, but still submitting to parent's loving authority.



### GROW:

- Treating self and others with grace
- Honoring and blessing others (especially those in authority)
- Healthy conflict resolution- learning to self advocate in school and social settings. (Instead of parents handling everything)
- Setting and keeping their own boundaries
- Growing in making better choices, and owning their own consequences.





# PARENTING PATHWAY (6<sup>TH</sup>–8<sup>TH</sup>)



1. **Be patient:** As your child is changing physically and with potentially lots of emotional swings, they might be reactive, fickle, and short tempered. As the parent, your new role requires you to respond with patience, grace, and understanding. Be careful not to shame them, but to maintain healthy expectations in how they treat others and relate in the home.
2. **Technology boundaries:** Be clear and in unity as a family on the expectations and implications of all forms including cell phones, gaming, social media. Ex. (Create a cell phone station in the kitchen and no usage in their bedroom or past a certain time. Also consider internet monitoring software.)
3. **Sexual identity and purity:** Help them develop healthy friendships with the opposite sex and talk about healthy expectations for dating. Communicate the destructiveness of pornography and cultural gender perversions.

1. Sunday morning- Ignite
2. Ablaze- Wednesday night Student Life groups
3. Special Events- Disciple Now, Fall Retreat and Global Impact
4. Multi generational Life groups
5. Summer- Middle School Camp and Missions experience
6. Art of Parenting Class
7. 8th Grade Transition Class
8. Mission Trips- local and international

## IN THE HOME (continued)

Agree on a plan for purity that includes loving accountability. Take a weekend and do Passport to Purity together.

4. **Model and Encourage:** Let your kids catch you spending time with Jesus and in the Bible. Emphasize and encourage their own personal devotional life with Christ.
5. **Family Meals:** Maintain healthy relational connection and respect among family members. Protect family time and model the importance of Godly priorities. Ex. Balance sports, church, activities, friends, etc.
6. **Open communication:** Be in their world, but don't take over their world. Know their friends, what is important to them, and the cultural influences that want to shape them. Agree that there is nothing off-limits to discuss together. Axis Culture Translator, is a weekly email showing how teens are influenced by the unique culture they are growing.
7. **Still parent:** They are wanting more independence, but they still need you! Give them space, but stay involved. They need to feel from you that they are worth fighting for their heart, and being their advocate. You play an important role as guardian of their heart. If you back off all together as the parent, someone else will fill that space as the influencer. You still hold a high degree of influence, even if it doesn't seem like it or your kids acknowledge it.
8. **Learning to make good decisions:** When it's possible, give them room to make their own decisions. When a decision arises, it's good for you to pre-determine in your own mind whether:
  - a. Your teen is free to make any choice they desire.
  - b. Your teen is free to make the decision, but you want to encourage a specific decision.
  - c. Your teen is not free to make the decision and needs to submit to your decision.
 Deciding this in advance will help you determine how to help your teen.

## RESOURCES: (See Family Resource Center)

- RightNow Media: Video Bible studies and resources
- *Passport to Purity*: Interactive weekend experience with parents and kids exploring God's call to sexual purity and holiness preparing for adolescence.
- *Passport to Identity*: Interactive weekend experience with parents and kids discovering their God given identity, and calling for their lives.
- *Axis Culture Translator*: Weekly emails / modules showing culture influence on teens. Great conversation starters for parents.
- *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay
- *Parenting with Grace and Truth* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Townsend



# COACHING YEARS

## 9<sup>TH</sup>–10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

### Parent Role: Coach

(Jeremiah 29:11-13, Romans 8)

You model Father God's heart by allowing your teen to make their own decisions, and think for themselves through God's perspective. This is done as they walk by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit, and use the bible as their foundation for truth and authority. As they grow in this, they will mature in their ownership of their identity and purpose in Christ much like riding their bike without training wheels.

As the parent in this stage, you will lead your teen by having honest/frank conversations filled with God's truth, but do so in a way that doesn't give them a reason to rebel. Teens must understand their need for God or they will be sunk by selfishness, the stresses of culture, temptation and grip of emotions/pain. Give your teen room to ask questions, wrestle with them and seek truth.

The parent should recognize the teens' gifts, and affirm what you see in them by speaking blessings, not curses. Seek God's heart and direction in how to assist cultivating those gifts, and call out how He sees them and has wired them for His purposes. Below is how you connect to your teen by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



### KNOW:

- The truth according to God's Word and recognize satan's lies.
- How to guard and restore freedom by using Spiritual First Aid tools.
- God's ordained plan for kids to still honor, submit, and obey parents
- How to handle growing responsibilities and relationships.



### FEEL:

- Secure in being loved and accepted by God and parents
- Courageous to try and not afraid to fail.
- Confidence in their identity, not in their image (body or status).
- Healthy Fear of the Lord.
- Deeply encouraged and trusted by you as parents in words and actions



### GROW:

- Treating self and others with grace
- Honoring and blessing others (especially those in authority)
- Healthy conflict resolution
- Personal Integrity: Handling their own responsibilities, and matching their words to their actions (relationships, work, school, etc.)
- Conquering temptation and evil with spiritual power



# PARENTING PATHWAY (9<sup>TH</sup>–10<sup>TH</sup>)



1. **Be in their world:** Peer pressure ramps up, so it is important to know your child's friends, social world, and what interests are starting to show that is taking their time and attention. (See resources section for the Axis Culture Translator.)
2. **Technology boundaries:** Be clear and in unity on the expectations and implications of all forms including cell phones, gaming, social media.
3. **Sexual identity and purity:** Develop healthy friendships with the opposite sex and expectations for dating. Communicate the destructiveness of pornography and cultural gender perversions. Agree on a plan for purity that includes loving accountability.
4. **Model and Encourage:** Their own personal devotional life with Christ, and the value of the parents loving and respecting one another as husband and wife. Speak deep encouragement into them by calling out God's activity, gifting, and work in their lives.
5. **Quality time:** Maintain healthy

1. Sunday morning: High School Discipleship classes
2. Immerse Worship Nights
3. Ablaze- Wednesday night Student Life groups and Leadership teams
4. Special Events: Disciple Now, Retreats and Global Impact
5. Multi generational Life groups
6. Summer Youth Camps
7. Art of Parenting Class
8. Mission Trips- local and international

## IN THE HOME (continued)

relational connection by scheduling regular one on one time outside the home. Ex: Take them with you for errands and also special times out.

6. **Healthy relationships:** Modeling healthy communication, forgiveness, and grace in your marriage and parenting relationships. This will set them up to help them go after this in their own relationships.
7. **Still parent:** They are wanting more independence, but they still need you! Give them space, but still stay involved. They need to feel from you that they are worth fighting for their heart, and being their advocate. You play an important role as guardian of their heart. If you back off all together as the parent, someone else will fill that space as the influencer. You still hold a high degree of influence, even if it doesn't seem like it or your kids acknowledge it.
8. **Serving Together:** On Sunday services, mission trips and in the community.
9. **Invest:** Block out a weekend to do Passport to Purity or Passport to Identity together.

## RESOURCES: (See Family Resource Center)

- RightNow Media: Video Bible studies and resources
- *Passport to Purity*: Interactive weekend experience with parents and kids exploring God's call to sexual purity and holiness preparing for adolescence.
- *Passport to Identity*: Interactive weekend experience with parents and kids discovering their God given identity, and calling for their lives.
- *Axis Culture Translator*: Weekly emails / modules showing culture's influence on teens. Great conversation starters for parents.
- *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay
- *Relentless Parenting* by Brian and Angela Haynes





## RELEASING/FRIENDSHIP YEARS

### 11<sup>TH</sup>–12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

#### Parent Role: Consultant— Guidance and Kingdom perspective

(Proverbs 22:6, Matt. 6:33)

You model Father God's heart by sharing His wisdom and perspective in love when asked or at the appropriate time. Your kids are becoming young adults and experiencing a desire to spread their wings and fly on their own. Your encouragement and expressing belief in them will spur them on to step into their God given calling.

In this role, you are still present; however, they are choosing to lead the direction of their life, much like exploring on their own while they ride their bike. Your role is to help them by acting as bumpers keeping them on track.

Resist the urge to tell them what to do, but rather to offer them options or help them think through their decisions by asking legitimate questions such as, "Are there any other options?" or "What do you think the outcome will be if you do or say that?", not to "tell them", but offer your counsel and give them options. Without sounding churchy, encourage your teen to ask Jesus what he thinks about this, or if there's anything in scripture that speaks to the particular situation.

Learning to make wise decisions will set them up for college or life on their own. Eventually they will need to embrace taking personal responsibility for their own life, relationship with Jesus, and priorities. Below is how you connect to your teen by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



#### KNOW:

- Dependence on Jesus and Interdependence on God's people (Church)
- How to guard and restore freedom by using Spiritual First Aid tools.
- The wisdom of the Lord is the best. Walking in obedience produces the most life, not just talking about it.
- Healthy relational patterns as they become less self focused and aware of others.



#### FEEL:

- Intimacy of closeness in relationship with Jesus
- Sense of awe and reverence with a healthy fear of the Lord
- Healthy shift of less parental influence to more personal ownership



#### GROW:

- Ownership of walking in personal freedom in Christ- *"Above all else guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life"* Prov. 4:23
- Personal responsibility in their own life. Hearing and following Jesus.
- Balancing activities / life- Keeping priorities straight- Distinguish between the urgent vs important.
- Life of intentionally loving and blessing others for Jesus' sake.



# PARENTING PATHWAY (11<sup>TH</sup>–12<sup>TH</sup>)



1. **Quality time:** Maintain healthy relational connection by scheduling regular one on one time outside the home. (Ex. Take them with you for errands and also special times out.)
2. **Healthy relationships:** Modeling healthy communication, forgiveness, and grace in your marriage and parenting relationships. This will set them up to help them go after this in their own relationships.
3. **Serving Together:** On Sunday services, mission trips and in the community.
4. **Technology boundaries:** Be clear and in unity as a family on the expectations and implications of all forms including cell phones, gaming, social media. (Ex. Create a cell phone station in the kitchen and no usage in their bedroom or past a certain time. Also consider internet monitoring software.)
5. **Sexual identity and purity:** Develop healthy friendships with the opposite sex and

1. Sunday morning: High School Discipleship classes
2. Immerse Worship nights
3. Ablaze- Wednesday night Student Life groups and Leadership teams
4. Special Events: Disciple Now, Retreats and Global Impact
5. Multi generational Life groups
6. Summer Youth Camps
7. College Prep Class- parents and students equipping class for what to expect in college transition
8. Graduation Ceremony for seniors
9. Mission Trips- local and international

## IN THE HOME (continued)

discuss expectations for dating. Communicate the destructiveness of pornography and cultural gender perversions. Agree on a plan for purity that includes loving accountability.

6. **Model and Encourage:** Their own personal devotional life with Christ, and the value of the parents loving and respecting one another as husband and wife.

## RESOURCES: (See Family Resource Center)

- RightNow Media- Video Bible studies and resources
- *Axis Culture Translator*: Weekly emails / modules showing culture influence on teens. Great conversation starters for parents.
- *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay
- *Experiencing God for Teens* by Henry Blackaby
- *Relentless Parenting* by Brian and Angela Haynes



## RELEASING/FRIENDSHIP YEARS COLLEGE-ADULT

### Parent Role: Friend

(3 John 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:2)

While always a parent, this is a beautiful stage of reaping the rewards of investing well in your kids. Healthy friendship, supporting and encouraging them in their own Kingdom lifestyle. You model Father God's heart by being a Prayer Warrior and Advocate for them even when they are not living with you. Let home be the safe place to come and get a love recharge. Below is how you connect to your adult child by what they should learn to know, feel and grow in:



### KNOW:

- Joy and sacrifice of following Jesus
- Life of discipleship and mission is my calling
- Value of prioritizing relationships over tasks (*seek first the Kingdom of God* Matthew 6:33)



### FEEL:

- Conviction of living wholeheartedly for Jesus
- The joy of the Lord is their strength as they abide in Christ, seeking His presence and power for their life. Our pride and joy in them, unconditionally loving them always. *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."* 3 John 1:4



### GROW:

- Life long learner- always growing and maturing in Christ.
- Importance of passing on an outward focus to serve and love others
- Significance of their role in community life in the Body of Christ. Connecting deeply, using their spiritual gifts and wholeheartedly engaging in the church.





# PARENTING PATHWAY (COLLEGE-ADULT)



## IN THE HOME

1. **Intercessory prayer:** Knowing their needs and committing to daily intercession. In your own time with the Lord, ask for a word of encouragement, comfort or strength for your adult child. Email or text it to them.
2. **Touch points:** Create a family group text to help you stay connected. Periodically text a picture or word to let them know you're thinking of them when you are out. (Ex. Daily spiritual encouragement— Each family member take a day to share via text.)
3. **Special place called "Home":** Anytime your kids come home, have their favorites, carve out special time for games or fun times to bond over.
4. **Healthy expectations:** Discuss Quantity of interactions or visits and best way to allow freedom for all to experience the blessings of shared time without pressures to commit to doing too much.
5. **Deep spiritual encouragement:** Be quick to speak specific words of encouragement

## IN THE CHURCH

1. Sunday morning services
2. Multi generational Life groups
3. Disciple the younger generations
4. Mission Trips - local and international
5. Serving in Children's and Youth Ministry

## IN THE HOME (continued)

over your kids. Share how you are noticing the power or love of God in their lives. Praise them in front of them and on social media. Be creative in ways to express how proud you are of them and the love you feel for them.

## RESOURCES: (See Family Resource Center)

- RightNow Media- Video Bible studies and resources
- *The Hero Maker* by Dave Ferguson

