

Copyright © 2014 Timothy Andrew Brown

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

EQUIPPING PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN  
USING FAITH MILESTONES AT CORNERSTONE  
EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
BRIGHTON, MICHIGAN

---

A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

---

by  
Timothy Andrew Brown  
December 2014

**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN  
USING FAITH MILESTONES AT CORNERSTONE  
EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
BRIGHTON, MICHIGAN

Timothy Andrew Brown

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Timothy Paul Jones (Faculty Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael S. Wilder

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dedicated to my beautiful wife, Sarah,  
a beloved heir in the grace of life,  
a faithful mother to our children,  
a helper suitable to me.

“Here am I with the children the Lord has given to me  
to be signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts  
who dwells on Mount Zion.” Isaiah 8:18

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose.....	1
Goals .....	1
Ministry Context .....	2
Description of the Faith Milestone Plan.....	5
Rationale .....	6
Definitions.....	9
Limitations .....	10
Research Methodology.....	10
2. THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL SUPPORT .....	14
Theological Prolegomena on Family .....	14
Deuteronomy 6:1-9 .....	18
Psalm 78:1-8.....	25
Ephesians 6:1-4 .....	31
Ephesians 4:10-16 .....	36
Conclusion.....	39
3. THEORETICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL SUPPORT .....	40
Sociological Research: Parents Matter.....	40
Parental Engagement Is Diminishing.....	45

Chapter	Page
The Family Equipping Model .....	50
Milestones: A Method of Family Equipping .....	52
Conclusion.....	61
4. DETAILS OF THE PROJECT.....	62
Description of the Project.....	62
Planning Phase: May through December 2013 .....	63
Promotion Phase: December 2013 and January 2014.....	64
Project Implementation Weeks .....	65
Conclusion.....	75
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT .....	77
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose .....	77
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals.....	77
Strengths of the Project .....	81
Weaknesses of the Project.....	82
Suggested Improvements .....	86
Theological Reflections .....	86
Personal Reflections.....	87
Conclusion.....	88
Appendix	
1. CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT.....	90
2. MILESTONE IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT .....	92
3. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY.....	98
4. CURRICULUM .....	104
5. TABLES OF SURVEY RESULTS.....	170
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	178

## PREFACE

This project has been one carried by a passionate purpose—to help church leaders join me to equip parents intentionally to disciple their own children effectively. Of course, passion alone would result in only wishful thinking. This project came to be because of the impact of unsung heroes, whom God has used in a significant way in my life to encourage, support, and guide this venture. They each deserve special recognition.

First of all I thank the Lord Jesus Christ, who has called me by his great mercy to know, love, and serve him. I am humbled that he would use me. All glory to God!

Second, I would like to thank my beautiful and faithful wife, Sarah. She is a constant source of encouragement and help. She has been the one to handle our large household on innumerable evenings while I wrestled with great authors in my reading and wrestled with my own thoughts at the keyboard. No one else on earth knows me as well as she knows me and loves me. She lives up to the Hebrew word for helper, *etzer*. I am also grateful to our seven children for their patience with me while I have been “in school.” “Hey kids, school’s out! Let’s get some ice cream!”

Third, I would like to thank the leadership of Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brighton, Michigan. From the beginning Dr. Alberta and the elders of Session have encouraged me with generous financial support, much needed time during the week, and encouraging prayer. I also heartily thank the whole congregation of Cornerstone. This is already my fourteenth year as one of your pastors and the time has flown by. Thank you for your prayers, conversations, and encouragement. I hope and pray that your investment in me will result in a fruitful yield for Cornerstone and for the Kingdom of God.

Fourth, I would like to thank the Generational Discipleship Team. Bonny Linder and Sally Jo Friday deserve special recognition for helping lead both the children's ministry and student ministries to adopt, embrace, and implement Faith Milestones at Cornerstone. Without their partnership, this project would not have been all that it was. Thanks to their partnership, we are equipping parents more fruitfully and changing generations one household at a time.

I would also like to thank my proofreaders, Anne Gilmore and Donna Alberta. They have made this project better. The credit goes to them, and any blame comes to me.

I am extremely grateful to my professors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. They have helped me to think great thoughts about God's Word and God's people. They have positively impacted me and improved my ministry to others. In particular, Dr. Timothy Paul Jones has been a source of inspiration and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank the families who participated in Faith Milestones, especially those who participated in the research components so willingly. May Jesus Christ receive the glory in our homes and in the church! Amen.

Timothy Andrew Brown

Brighton, Michigan

December 2014

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement an effective process to equip parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children in the home through the strategy of Faith Milestones at Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brighton, Michigan.

#### **Goals**

Three goals were established for this project. The first goal of the project was to develop curriculum used to train parents for the three distinct milestones. The curriculum was written to provide biblical vision, practical steps, and resources to equip parents to engage in discipleship practices with their children as they approached a specific milestone. This goal was measured by asking three observers from our congregation to evaluate all three curricula according to the criteria of the curriculum assessment. This goal was considered successfully met if the results of the evaluations reflect that the curriculum had, on the whole, completed the aims identified, attaining a raw score of 30 out of 40 points, on the curriculum assessment (see appendix 1).

The second goal of the project was to implement effectively the first three Faith Milestones in the program according to predetermined aims. These aims included the following: communicating the vision of equipping parents, providing training, providing support and accountability for the parents through small groups, planning a milestone celebration for the family, and encouraging parents in ongoing practices. This goal was measured by having six observers each complete an evaluation to assess the

attainment of the objectives of one of the three milestones. This goal was considered successfully met if the results of the evaluations reflected that the ministry leader had, on the whole, completed the aims of the five objectives, attaining a raw score of 60 out of 80 points, on the milestone implementation assessment (see appendix 2).

The third goal of the project was for parents to demonstrate improved perceptions and practices in family discipleship as a result of participating in one milestone of the Faith Milestones program. This goal was measured by administering the Family Discipleship Survey (see appendix 3) to parents in the congregation before and after the milestone project. This goal was considered successfully met if a *t*-test for dependent samples displayed a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-tests among parents who participated in the milestone program.

### **Ministry Context**

This project was conducted and evaluated at Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brighton, Michigan. Cornerstone is a large, vibrant church situated in the southeastern corner of Livingston County. In its 25-year history it has grown from a Bible study meeting in an area home to a congregation of 2,000 members. Describing the ministry context of Cornerstone will provide necessary background for the rationale of the project.

A significant opportunity exists in the community at large to influence households with children in the home. Approximately 33 percent of the households in Livingston County are family households with children under 18 years of age (22,571 of 67,380 households) as of the 2010 census.<sup>1</sup> Cornerstone has a similar proportion of

---

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, “American FactFinder—Results,” accessed June 11, 2012, [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_10\\_DP\\_DPDP1](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1).

households with children—approximately 34 percent.<sup>2</sup>

### **Ministry Approach**

Cornerstone’s ministry approach was forged during its rapid growth in the 1990s. A robust array of ministry programming was developed to include the following: worship ministry, children’s ministry, student ministries, adult discipleship, men’s ministry, women in ministry, caring ministry, a Christian school, and various other programs. These program ministries have been designed to help specific groups of people, with each functioning as a smaller realm where discipleship can focus on a more homogenous unit of age, stage of life, or common experience. The leaders of these program areas meet weekly as a leadership team, report to either the senior pastor or the executive pastor, and are all overseen through a matrix organizational structure that includes a leadership triad, committee meetings, and elder oversight through the church’s session. While there is a considerable level of camaraderie and cooperation throughout the staff, at times there can be both redundancy as well as gaps in ministry discipleship plans for individuals and families between programs. Additionally, the success of the ministries in their particular age or stage has led, at times, to the unintended consequence of disconnecting generations.

In 2009, a growing desire to sharpen Cornerstone’s ministry to families began to be expressed among the pastoral and program leadership. Five ministry areas were called together to cooperate and coordinate around the goal of helping parents to become equipped as the primary disciple-makers of their own children. Rather than simply creating another new ministry to reach families, as a separate column or silo, the strategy enacted was that several key program areas—children’s ministry, student ministries, adult

---

<sup>2</sup>In the spring of 2012 there were 333 households identified with children under 18 years of age out of a total of 970 households at Cornerstone.

discipleship, men's ministry, and women in ministry—would participate together in the larger goal of building up families at Cornerstone. This cooperative endeavor, named Generational Discipleship, exists to make disciples by connecting generations—within households and throughout the congregation. The stated purpose of Generational Discipleship at Cornerstone is to promote and enjoy healthy family life, equip parents to disciple their children, adopt those without a spiritual support system, and connect generations within our church.

Throughout the past four years healthy progress has been made as Generational Discipleship has composed a mission and vision statement (2010), conducted a three-month prayer initiative to seek God's favor for our families (2011), hosted a consultant on family ministry (2011), emphasized the importance of classes and worshipping together (2011), created a faith talk resource through the gospel of Luke (2011-2012), and hosted a nationally recognized speaker on parenting (2013). Throughout this time, program leaders have sought to include other generations in various ministry events and have also equipped parents through on-going programming such as a Sunday morning class for parents of teens.

All of these actions have helped to create momentum and allowed the leaders to learn what works or does not work in ministry to families. One observation is that some good actions may have had limited success because they stood alone. Some initiatives provided resources but did not include training or support. Other initiatives provided training but did not connect parents to relevant resources.

The aim of this project was to create a tangible endeavor at Cornerstone that advanced the mission of Generational Discipleship by combining training, resources, and support to equip parents effectively at strategic intervals in the Christian formation of their child along a coordinated path. These parent-equipping opportunities were set at stages throughout the children's ministry and student ministries in order to not only enhance Cornerstone's existing ministry as a family-based ministry model, but also to

further incorporate elements of the family-equipping ministry model.<sup>3</sup>

### **Description of the Faith Milestone Plan**

At this point it will be helpful describe some particulars of how Faith Milestones was enacted at Cornerstone. This brief overview will be expanded upon in chapter 4. Faith Milestones is a ministry program at Cornerstone that adapts a strategy successfully implemented in other contexts.<sup>4</sup> Using Faith Milestones, church leaders equipped parents to disciple their children at four strategic intervals that span from birth to junior high.

The children's ministry partnered with parents to help them lead their children through the first three milestones and Student Ministries partnered with parents to help them lead their children through the fourth milestone. The milestones conducted during the project included the following: Gospel Promises (Infant Baptism/Dedication), Gospel Beginnings (Kindergarten), Gospel Truth (Second Grade Bible Reception), and Gospel Business (Sixth Grade Rite of Passage). Two additional milestones are planned for future development. They are Gospel Maturity (Preparing for Manhood/Womanhood—Sophomore year) and Gospel Partnership (Preparation for Church Membership—Junior or Senior year).

Parents were invited to participate in the milestone training as their sons or daughters approached the age of the specific milestone. During the training phase parents participated in weekly classes and were asked to engage at home using provided resources to prepare their child for the milestone. They were provided with support and

---

<sup>3</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 130-35.

<sup>4</sup>Brian Haynes, "The Integration of Church and Home: A Strategic Partnership for Spiritual Formation" (D.Min. thesis, Liberty Theological Seminary, 2006); Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2009). Chapter 3 will review more fully the development of the milestone strategy in various contexts.

accountability through small group time in the training, invited to celebrate the accomplishment of the milestone at a special ceremony, recognized for the milestone in front of the congregation, and encouraged to maintain practices they have begun during the milestone preparation with resources for the future.

Through the process of the milestones church leaders helped parents to develop perspectives, skills, and habits to help them to become more effective disciple-makers for their children. Parents became activated to help their child exercise faith appropriate to their cognitive development, physical maturity, and spiritual formation.

### **Rationale**

Faith Milestones was a strategic initiative at Cornerstone for three primary reasons. First, it employed a biblical model of church leaders intentionally equipping parents to disciple actively their own children as the primary faith-influencers. This biblical model is evident by linking the exhortations to parents throughout the Scriptures together with the New Testament model of equipping the saints found in Ephesians 4. God's word repeatedly exhorts parents to teach their children diligently, to train them in the fear and discipline of the Lord, and to influence by personal example (Deut 6:1-9, Ps 78:1-8, and Eph 6:4). Additionally, God has called leaders in the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. According to Ephesians, the Lord Jesus Christ "gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). Often, we associate "equip the saints" with preparing people in general to serve within the church at large, but the scope of equipping the saints surely includes parents in a congregation. After all, Christian parents are saints, and they clearly have a ministry! By equipping parents to lead their children effectively in Christian formation at strategic points of their development through Faith Milestones the church was enabled to embrace the model of equipping in order to help parents live out the biblical model to disciple their children.

Second, the project was strategic in order to provide practical training and equipping for parents so that they could engage more actively in their role as the primary disciple-maker of their children. While some churches do exhort parents to this role, that exhortation is not accompanied by the training and support necessary for most parents to accomplish their purpose successfully. Based on his research, Timothy Paul Jones concluded that, “even as parents admit their responsibility to function as primary faith trainers in their children’s lives, most are doing little, if anything to fulfill this role.”<sup>5</sup> Parents have read the Scriptures that charge them to teach their children and have heard pastors acknowledge it, but since they lack training, parents remain inactive. Jones clarifies by stating,

When it comes to planning for spiritual growth in their children’s lives, parents have received little or no guidance from their churches. Most have never even been asked how their churches might help them to disciple their children. Parents in this category need to be acknowledged and equipped to guide their children’s spiritual growth.

In the simplest possible terms, parents must be told, trained, and make the time.<sup>6</sup>

Reminding parents about their biblical role is necessary but insufficient. If ministry leaders are serious about the church and home working in fruitful partnership, there must be a concerted effort to train parents somewhere in the church’s ministry plan. Faith Milestones was designed and implemented to help equip parents to fulfill their role successfully to disciple their own children. Through the process of providing practical training, supportive small group relationships, and celebration, our church’s ministry sought to exhort, train, and encourage parents so they could take proactive steps and thus set a new pattern in their home. The practical training sought to give parents guidance. The supportive small groups sought to provide accountability and encouraging relationships. The celebrations sought to motivate parents to engage in the proactive

---

<sup>5</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 99.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 112.

steps with a specific attainable goal in mind and see the benefits of their involvement.

Third, this project was strategic because it was a good fit for Cornerstone, given its goals and present ministry model. Generational Discipleship began because ministry leaders agreed that parents are the most strategic disciple-makers. However, those implementing the mission of Generational Discipleship lacked a strategy that focused upon equipping parents in the context of a segmented-programmatic/family-based model.<sup>7</sup> Cornerstone is like many churches where programming to specific age groups can subtly undermine the message of parental responsibility. In part, parents might assume that well-designed programming for their children is sufficient to develop their children as followers of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, much church effort and resources are put into programming for children and youth, but considerably less into equipping the parents of those children and youth. How can one deliver an effective process to train and support parents as disciple-makers in such a context? It was the conclusion of this author that the best means to provide parent-equipping effectively and consistently was by leveraging our age-segmented ministries to provide training for parents at four developmentally appropriate milestones that spanned across those ministries. Such a strategy encouraged the strong ministry programming of children's ministry and student ministries to continue, but added parent-equipping at strategic, predictable intervals. This strategy also enabled multiple ministry areas to emphasize parent-equipping simultaneously so that there might be momentum within the congregation and progress through discernible stages of discipleship growth for children and for their whole family. The celebrations for parents and children, complemented by church-wide recognition, sought to provide a place for church leaders to acknowledge the role of parents in family

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 131–32; See also Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 23.

discipleship before our entire congregation.

Faith Milestones was thus a strategic project for Cornerstone because it employed a biblical model of equipping parents, offered practical training and support so parents might successfully influence their own children, and capitalized on structures of existing programming so that the stated mission and vision of Generational Discipleship might be more fully realized within our congregation.

### **Definitions**

A few terms require clarification for successful communication of this project.

*Faith talk.* “A faith talk is a time set aside each week for families to gather around the Bible, its application to life, and the worship of Jesus.”<sup>8</sup>

*Family discipleship.* “The process which takes place when parents guide their child(ren) through regular and intentional practices which focus on knowledge of Scripture, reverence for God, and obedience to Christ.”<sup>9</sup> Since discipleship may be defined as “a personal and intentional process in which one or more Christians guide unbelievers or less-mature believers to embrace and apply the gospel in every part of their lives,”<sup>10</sup> family discipleship denotes parents who engage in discipleship practices with their own children.

*Family ministry.* This is “the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their

---

<sup>8</sup>Brian Haynes, *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting* (Nashville: Randall House, 2011), 47–48.

<sup>9</sup>W. Ryan Steenburg, “Effective Practices for Training Parents in Family Discipleship: A Mixed Methods Study” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 8.

<sup>10</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 17.

children's lives."<sup>11</sup>

*Generational Discipleship.* This is the cooperative effort across several program ministries (children's ministry, student ministries, adult discipleship, men's ministry, and women in ministry) at Cornerstone to engage in family ministry.<sup>12</sup>

### **Limitations**

This project was limited by time and delimited by which milestones will be observed. The primary limitation was that the duration of the project was 20 weeks from the church-wide Family Discipleship Survey (January 2014) until the last milestone celebration (June 2014).

A delimitation of the project was that while the Faith Milestone program is designed to have six milestones eventually, only four milestones were operational during the first year of the program. Additionally, the project was limited to assessing the project goals for just the first three milestones: Gospel Promises, Gospel Beginnings, and Gospel Truth. As a result, while participants in the fourth milestone, Gospel Business, were visibly included in Faith Milestones, that milestone simply continued as it has previously without intervention by the author.

### **Research Methodology**

In order to assess the success of the project, an appropriate research tool was created or selected to measure each of the three goals. The first goal, to develop curriculum used to train parents for the three distinct milestones, was measured by having three observers complete the curriculum assessment (see appendix 1). Each observer completing the assessment was a member of Cornerstone and evaluated all three curricula

---

<sup>11</sup>Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 15.

<sup>12</sup>Cornerstone EPC, "Generational Discipleship," accessed September 4, 2014, <http://www.cornerstoneforlife.com/generational-discipleship>.

for Faith Milestones that were part of the project. This assessment was distributed and given to the observers during week one of the milestone project.

The second goal, to implement effectively all three Faith Milestones in the program according to predetermined aims, was measured by having six observers each complete the milestone implementation assessment for one of the three milestones (see appendix 2). For each milestone, one observer was the Cornerstone elder responsible for the staff member implementing the milestone and the other observer was a Cornerstone member who was outside of the process (i.e. not a participant in that particular milestone). Each observer evaluated the implementation of one of the Faith Milestones in the project. Each observer attended at least one training class as well as both the celebration and recognition times. The milestone implementation assessments were completed at the conclusion of each milestone celebration and no later than June 9, 2014. The raw scores generated by both sets of assessments were used to assess the success of the goals.

In order to measure the third goal of the project, for parents to demonstrate improved perceptions and practices in family discipleship as a result of participating in one milestone of the Faith Milestones program, a quantitative research methodology was selected. All parents with children in the home at Cornerstone were invited to take the Family Discipleship Survey (see appendix 3) before and after the program was conducted. The survey data of parents who chose to participate in the program functioned as a pre- and post-test.

### **Selection of the Survey**

The survey selected to measure the third goal was *The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey*, authored by Timothy Paul Jones.<sup>13</sup> There were several

---

<sup>13</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 200–3.

advantages to using this particular survey. First, it was created to measure the very results we were looking for in participants—change in both perception and practice of family discipleship. Second, it is a well-designed research tool that had already undergone review by an expert panel and field-testing for validity and reliability.

According to Jones developing the survey involved the following:

An expert panel of six persons in the field of family ministry revised the items and approved the content validity of twenty items. Eight of these items—items 9 through 16 in the instrument’s final form—gathered objective data related to the frequency of particular practices and experiences. Twelve items had to do with parental perceptions. It was necessary to validate these items statistically.

The twelve items related to parental perceptions were first field-tested with a group of 117 parents in three evangelical congregations. Principle component factor analysis revealed that four items related weakly or negatively to the primary component; these four items were eliminated. The remaining eight items exhibited strong internal consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha coefficient, 0.88). Two research projects conducted with larger samples after the field test resulted in similarly strong coefficients, suggesting a stable and reliable instrument.<sup>14</sup>

Third, because this same survey was conducted at Cornerstone in the summer of 2011, our church already had a baseline from a sample size of 295 respondents.

### **Distribution and Collection of the Survey**

This survey was made available online to all parents in our congregation with children in the home. At the conclusion of the survey parents were given the opportunity to register for a specific milestone if one was available for the age of their child. If a parent attended a milestone training without completing the survey, a physical copy of the survey was given to that participant. If a person volunteered to participate in the study by completing the survey, that survey had to be fully completed prior to the start of the first class.

---

<sup>14</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, “The Family Discipleship Perception and Practices Survey,” *The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 1, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2011): 50.

### **Observing Data from the Survey**

The pre- and post-tests of participating parents were matched enabling the results to be tabulated for a *t*-test for dependent samples. Standard statistical computations were used to confirm whether or not the change was significant. This goal was considered successfully met if a *t*-test for dependent samples displayed a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-tests. These results were evaluated by looking at individual results, overall results and results in each of the milestone groups.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>All of the aforementioned research instruments were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL SUPPORT

In Scripture God used congregational leaders such as Moses and Paul not only to exhort parents to act as the primary disciple-makers of their children<sup>1</sup> but also to equip parents to fulfill their role. The exhortation and instruction of these congregational leaders flow from a broader theological theme of family woven throughout God's revelation. Following a brief theological prolegomena on family in the Bible, four principle texts of Scripture, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and Ephesians 4:10-16, will be examined to demonstrate the thesis of this chapter. Both the theological and exegetical observations will support the project's purpose for the church to develop and implement an effective process to equip parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children at home through the strategy of Faith Milestones.

#### **Theological Prolegomena on Family**

While typical systematic theology headings include topics such as Scripture, creation, providence, anthropology (man), ecclesiology (church), and the like, they rarely include a section on the theology of the family. Yet there is such a significant amount of biblical teaching on the subject of the family that Köstenberger and Jones have written an entire volume “to sketch out the contours of a *biblical theology*’ of marriage and the family.”<sup>2</sup> This brief prolegomena will observe God's self-revelation as Father, Son and

---

<sup>1</sup>The terms “primary faith-influencer” and “primary disciple-maker” will be used interchangeably, but since discipleship is a New Testament concept, “faith-influencer” will be used when speaking of Deuteronomy and Psalms.

<sup>2</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

Holy Spirit, God's adoption as a primary result of redemption, and God's establishment of the institution of the family.

First, God has revealed that his divine essence consists of three persons who relate to each other in familial terms as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At Jesus' baptism a voice from heaven, the Father, declares, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:16-17). In the gospels, Jesus repeatedly calls God his Father (Matt 11:25, 18:10-35; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:29; John 5:17, 5:22-27, 10:29-38). When God chooses to communicate his relational essence he reveals himself as relating interpersonally with the fellowship, intimacy, and unity of a father-son relationship. Families on earth owe their existence to God as the origin of fatherhood as Paul prays to God the Father, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:15).<sup>3</sup> Attributing fatherhood to God is no mere anthropomorphism to help our forefathers to understand God. Rather, fatherhood and the family are the result of God's fatherly essence reflected in the creation of humans made in his likeness.

Second, the benefits of salvation through Jesus Christ are communicated to mankind in familial terms. Christians understand their permanent position in God's salvation through the act of adoption. Scripture reveals that, "[God] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," (Eph 1:5; see also Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5-7). We become adopted children, included in the family of God as beloved children and heirs with Christ, such that we are now brothers and sisters in the family of God. Our own relationship with God in history and throughout eternity is described through the reality of adoption.

Third, God establishes, blesses, and protects the human family as an institution throughout redemptive history. In the beginning God created Adam and Eve as male and

---

<sup>3</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 255–56.

female to be our first parents (see Gen 1:26-28; Acts 17:22; Gen 3:20). The family is the first institution in creation. The church and state are subsequent to the fall of man, but the family existed as the primary social unit of humanity even in the time of man's innocence (Gen 1-2). God blesses Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:28).

Throughout the law, the prophets, and the writings, the establishment of healthy families is central to God's ongoing purpose to reveal himself and bless humanity. In Genesis, God says about Abraham, the man of faith, "I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen 18:19). Whenever God establishes a covenant relationship with individuals he always explicitly includes the children as well. The covenant promises are extended to children in God's relationship with Noah (Gen 6:18, 9:9), Abraham (Gen 17:7-11), Israel (Exod 31:16), Joshua (Josh 24:15), David (2 Sam 7:12-17), and the members of the new covenant (Acts 2:39). In establishing covenant, God goes beyond common grace, given to all the descendants of Adam and Eve, and extends further blessing in special grace to his own people who are his through covenant.

The law of God given through Moses establishes the priority of the family in terms of authority, economics, property, and education.<sup>4</sup> As Rushdoony observes, "In the Ten Commandments, four laws deal with the family, three of them directly: 'Honor thy father and mother,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' 'Thou shalt not steal,' and 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house . . . nor anything that is thy neighbor's.'"<sup>5</sup> God protects the family through legislation so that it might prevail in society as a place of

---

<sup>4</sup>Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 1:159–84.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:159.

personal, spiritual, and cultural formation. The texts of Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Psalm 78 explicitly call parents to teach their children about God. We also see the investiture of the family in texts of wisdom literature, “Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck” (Prov 1:8-9). Job intercedes for his sons (Job 1:5) and the prophet Malachi calls for the hearts of fathers and sons to be drawn together to avoid a curse upon the land (Mal 4:6).

Indeed, God has designed the family to be a source of preparation for all of life. Consider:

The family is not only the first environment of the child, it is also his first school, where he receives his basic education; his first church, where he is taught his first and foundational lessons concerning God and life; his first state, where he learns the elements of law and order and obeys them; and his first vocation, where the child is given work to do, and responsibilities in terms of it.<sup>6</sup>

Edith Schaeffer agrees when she observes, “A family is a formation center for human relationships. The family is the place where the deep understanding that people are significant, important, worthwhile, with a purpose in life, should be learned at an early age.”<sup>7</sup>

In summary, a theology of the family begins with God. God is the origin of all fatherhood from his divine essence in the Trinity as Father, Son, and Spirit (Eph 3:14-15). God calls those whom he redeems to be his adopted sons and daughters. God establishes marriage and family through the Scriptures in redemptive history to bring glory to himself. In common grace, he blesses all families everywhere, and in special grace, he calls Christian parents to raise their children in the “discipline and instruction of

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1:192. For a fuller treatment of this theme, see also, Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 85-98, where they summarize the marrow of Darrell Block's "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 35ff. The roles and responsibilities of fathers and mothers make plain God's ideal of the family as a formative environment for life and culture.

<sup>7</sup>Edith Schaeffer, *What Is a Family?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 62.

the Lord” (Eph 6:4). The passages that speak of the parental duty are not incidental, but stand upon this foundation of family throughout the Scripture. According to the grand vision of family revealed by God, congregational leaders in Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, and Ephesians 6 exhort parents and equip them to act as the primary disciple-makers of their children.

### **Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 is a primary passage in the Bible voicing God’s expectation for parents to teach their own children at home. In this pivotal passage containing the greatest commandment, Moses envisions the blessings of generational faithfulness through the means of parents loving God and teaching their children the words of the testimonies, statutes, and laws. In order to equip Israelite parents for this work, Moses provides specific directions for how to fulfill this command in daily life.

### **Context of Deuteronomy**

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses addresses the generation who had survived forty years in the wilderness (Deut 1:1; 8:1-10) and who were preparing to enter the land (Deut 5:32-33). The members of this present generation were children when their parents rebelled against the Lord and heeded the majority report of the ten faithless spies (Deut 1:26-40). Knowing that he will not be present to lead this younger generation into the land of promise, Moses retells the story of God’s redemption and repeats the law in a passionate sermon to the whole nation. As Block writes, “[Deuteronomy] presents itself as a series of sermons that review events described in the narratives of earlier books and challenges the people to faithful living in the future.”<sup>8</sup> Block elaborates, saying, “Moses’ role in Deuteronomy is not that of a lawgiver but pastor (Num. 27:17; Isa.

---

<sup>8</sup>Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 25-26.

63:11). Knowing that his death is imminent . . . Moses gathers his congregation and delivers his final homily, pleading with the Israelites to remain faithful to Yahweh.”<sup>9</sup> “The heart of the book, therefore, is correctly described as a speech of Moses instructing the people in the way they are to live.”<sup>10</sup>

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 is one of five key locations within Deuteronomy that dwells on the theme of educating children.<sup>11</sup> In Deuteronomy 4:9 Moses told the assembly, “Keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children.” Later, in Deuteronomy 11:19 Moses repeated the exhortation with these words, “You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” In Deuteronomy 31:13 Moses commanded children to be present in the Jubilee reading of the law. Following “The Song of Moses,” and before his final blessing of Israel, Moses repeated,

Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. (Deut 32:46-47)

Here in chapter 6, following the restatement of the Ten Commandments, Moses says,

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 37

<sup>10</sup>Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 11.

<sup>11</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 133.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:1-9)

### **Chain of Command**

Verses 1-3 of this passage form a sort of chain of command from God to the future generations of the sons of Israel. Moses says that these are the things “that the LORD your God commanded me to teach to you, that you may do them in the land . . .” (v.1), so that “you may fear the LORD your God, you, and your son, and your son’s son” (v. 2). Moses envisions nothing less than complete transmission of the spirit of faith, obedience, and blessing to successive generations in perpetuity—even as they “multiply greatly.” Since the “you” in verses 1-3 is singular, it implies that He calls each member of the covenant community to personal responsibility.<sup>12</sup> The expectation is clear: only deep personal faithfulness will result in generational faithfulness to the second and third generations.

### **Love the Lord Your God**

In a rhetorical call, Moses now elaborates what he has just said through the words of the Shema (“Hear O Israel”) and the words that follow. The Shema, a verse still quoted twice daily by Jews in prayer,<sup>13</sup> has been called “the fundamental truth of Israel’s religion” and “the fundamental duty founded upon it.”<sup>14</sup> Block writes,

Moses’ concern here is whether God’s people would remain devoted exclusively to Yahweh or be seduced by the gods of Canaan. . . . Answering to the Supreme Command, by uttering the Shema the Israelites were declaring their complete, undivided, and unqualified devotion to Yahweh. This is not strictly a monotheistic confession (cf. 4:35; 39), but a cry of allegiance, an affirmation of

---

<sup>12</sup>Telford Work, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 95.

<sup>13</sup>Block, *Deuteronomy*, 182.

<sup>14</sup>Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 168.

covenant commitment that defines the boundaries of covenant community. It consists of those who claim this utterance as a verbal badge of identity and who demonstrate this identity with uncompromising covenant commitment.<sup>15</sup>

“Yahweh was to be the sole object of Israel’s worship, allegiance, and affection.”<sup>16</sup> This affection is significant. According to Block, “For the first time in the Pentateuch, Moses picks up on a notion expressed in the Decalogue and speaks of the proper response to God as ‘love’ (*’ahab*).”<sup>17</sup> At the center of Israel’s fundamental duty is not fearing the Lord (6:2) or obeying his voice (4:30), as important as those are, but love for Yahweh. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (v. 5). Jesus reaffirms this in the gospels as the greatest commandment (see Mark 12:29-30; Matt 22:37; and Luke 10:27).<sup>18</sup>

### **Teach Them Diligently**

God expects that those who love him will act. “Love of God in Deuteronomy is not only an emotional attachment to Him, but something that expresses itself in action.”<sup>19</sup> Thus a second command now follows—teaching one’s children. McConville affirms this by writing,

These verses expand the idea of whole-hearted obedience. The commandments, that is the whole teaching of Moses, are to be ‘upon your heart’, reiterating the need for inward obedience (6). They are likewise to be passed on to the next generation, not simply by enforcing them as a law code but by making them the fabric of life and conversation (7).<sup>20</sup>

As the people love God with their heart and have his words upon their hearts (v. 6), they

---

<sup>15</sup>Block, *Deuteronomy*, 182.

<sup>16</sup>J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1974), 121.

<sup>17</sup>Block, *Deuteronomy*, 188.

<sup>18</sup>Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 168.

<sup>19</sup>Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 77.

<sup>20</sup>J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 142.

will teach their own children these laws. “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (v. 7). Thus Brown reiterates,

This love for God was not to be a secretive devotion, a purely private relationship which did not concern others. From the start it was to involve the element of public confession as well as personal allegiance.

First, this loving devotion to the *one* Lord must be shared in the home. These God-given truths must not only be taught by Moses but also by every parent in Israel (7), so that children and grandchildren would learn and keep *all his decrees and commands* (2). Parents were to impress this word on their children’s minds and make it the subject of natural everyday conversation within family life.<sup>21</sup>

The word for “teach them diligently” (ESV) or “impress” (NIV) is שָׁנַן *shanan* which means “to repeat.”<sup>22</sup> Another way of putting it is “recitation for memorization.”<sup>23</sup> In classical education, young children excel in the grammar stage by filling their minds with knowledge through repetition. Whether this occurs through repeating a catechism, memorizing Scripture, or simply repeating sacred truths over and over, the point is that teaching should be ample in the home.

### **Specific Actions**

Importantly, Moses does not merely tell parents to teach their children, he names specific times and places where that ought to occur. By saying, “. . . when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise” (v. 7), Moses enumerates opportunities that are common to typical family life and life in general.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the parallelism employed communicates not only specific

---

<sup>21</sup>Raymond Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 97.

<sup>22</sup>Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

<sup>23</sup>Work, *Deuteronomy*, 97.

<sup>24</sup>It is interesting to note that various psalms mention seeking God or acknowledging God at times and places Moses mentions: sitting in your house (Ps 128:3), walking (Ps 1:1), rising up (Ps 5:3), and lying down (Ps 63:6).

times to acknowledge God but also the scope of life that the parent's teaching should fill.

As Gentry notes,

[These] expressions . . . are examples of a figure of speech known as a merism. This is a way of indicating the totality by referring to two antipodes or opposites. . . So during all our waking moments and activities, we are to use the opportunities at hand to speak of the creator God, of all aspects of his creation and also of the God who is in covenant relationship with his people.<sup>25</sup>

So Moses encourages talking about God's commands at the beginning and end of the day, both at home and everywhere else. As Block summarizes, "In this case, every adult Israelite is to be a teacher, seizing every opportunity for instruction."<sup>26</sup>

Whether Moses intended the men to tie the law literally on their hands and head, as in a phylactery or mezuzah,<sup>27</sup> or not,<sup>28</sup> the point is that the law is meant to inform every act and every thought. Likewise the command to write the law on both doorposts and gates symbolically marks the home as a domain directed by God's law. The home is to be marked as God's domain.<sup>29</sup>

Through these instructions, Moses goes beyond telling the people to teach their children diligently, he describes in specific detail what it will look like for the people to put this into practice in concrete terms. By doing so Moses has gone the extra step to equip parents for the task God has called them to do.

The implications of what Moses commands are made clearer by considering some of the alternative methods Moses did not adopt. He did not establish professional teachers, though the Levites could have been called upon. He did not create day schools,

---

<sup>25</sup>Peter J. Gentry, "Sermon: Raising Children, the Christian Way," *The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry*, 2, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 100.

<sup>26</sup>Block, *Deuteronomy*, 185.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 185–86.

<sup>28</sup>Earl S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 66.

<sup>29</sup>Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

though plenty of opportunity existed to congregate. He did not call children to gather at an alternate time or location from the assembly of Israel. When generational faithfulness hung in the balance, Moses looked squarely at the parents and in effect said, “Parents, you are plan A. Begin by loving God first of all, take action to teach everything you know to your children, and live it out in every area of life. You are the one sphere where all of this comes together—instruction, correction, life skills, obeying God in all areas of life.” As Wright concludes, “as a didactic force throughout succeeding generations, the family stood as the center of the twin relationships between Israel and Yahweh and between Israel and their land.”<sup>30</sup>

In summary, at a critical juncture in Israel’s history, their entrance into the Promised Land, God spoke through his appointed leader, Moses, to charge individuals to take personal responsibility as the primary faith-influencers of their children. Moses called Israel to love God and to teach faithful obedience to successive generations. Moses elaborated upon this public call with concrete ways to live out this command.

### **Deuteronomy 6 and Faith Milestones**

Faith Milestones sought to enact the wisdom of Deuteronomy 6 into the design of the project in two ways. First, through Faith Milestones, parents were called into this program publically and comprehensively. In the same way that Moses called out to all Israel, church leaders issued a call to all the parents of Cornerstone. In the promotion stage, parents in general were reminded that God calls parents to take personal responsibility as the primary faith-influencers toward their children. Using emails and direct mail, every potential parent with a child near a milestone was contacted. In the future, as parents and their children approach these milestones year-by-year, they will be

---

<sup>30</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 82.

invited again, so that, in time every parent will be invited repeatedly as each child approaches the next milestone.

Second, through Faith Milestones, parents were equipped and asked to practice specific actions with their own children at home. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses commanded the people to do specific actions (teach diligently) at specific times (when you sit, walk, lie down, and rise up) with specific words (“these words that I am commanding you today”). In Faith Milestones, church leaders directed parents to do specific actions (talk with their own children at home) at specific times (multiple times per week) with specific words (a written curriculum). In Deuteronomy 6, Moses called all of Israel’s parents to teach diligently and described actionable tasks that were measurable and specific. In Faith Milestones, church leaders invited all of Cornerstone’s families to engage as faith-influencers practicing specific, measurable actions in the home throughout the spiritual formation of their children at age-appropriate times.

### **Psalm 78:1-8**

During a later period in Israel’s history the text of Psalm 78 recounts the exhortations from the Mosaic Law for parents to tell their children about God and applies those principles to that generation. The Psalmist calls parents to commit themselves to act as the primary faith-influencers and equips them by demonstrating how one might teach others by recounting biblical history.

### **The Context and Purpose of the Psalm**

Psalm 78 is difficult to date with precision.<sup>31</sup> An early date is primarily based on its writer being Asaph, the contemporary of David mentioned in 1 Chronicles 25:1.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 284–285.

<sup>32</sup>H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 561.

Asaph was “a musician who was among those whom David appointed to oversee music in worship (1 Chron. 6:39) and who sang at the dedication of Solomon’s temple (2 Chron. 5:12). A number of psalms were also attributed to him (Pss. 50, 73–83).”<sup>33</sup>

Some, such as Clifford, have argued that historical references within the Psalm reflect a later composition.

The best clue to the date of the composition is its message to believe that God has chosen Zion and the dynasty of David as a replacement for the destroyed northern shrine of Shiloh and the northern kingdom. Historically, the capital of Israel, Samaria, was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. . . . Psalm 78 originally seems to have been part of the eighth-century appeal for national unity. It now stands as a perennial appeal to believe in God who acts in new ways.”<sup>34</sup>

While references to the Ephraimites turning back (v. 9), and rebellion through high places and idols (vv. 56-58), followed by God’s rejection of Israel and Shiloh, and captivity through the sword (vv. 59-62), certainly were sealed by the Assyrian conquest, a later date beyond Asaph’s lifespan, is not necessary. Keil and Delitzsch observe that rebellion, division, and their consequences began earlier than their culmination stating, “the alienation and jealousy between Ephraim and Judah is older than the rupture of the kingdom.”<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, “[The psalmist] everywhere contemplates the sin of Ephraim, without any Judaeen boasting, in a connection with the sin of the whole nation, which involves all in the responsibility.”<sup>36</sup> Due to these considerations, attributing the Psalm to David’s contemporary, Asaph, to whom the Psalm is ascribed, seems best.

Regardless of the provenance of the Psalm, the message is the same. God has revealed his intention for each generation to tell every successive generation the glorious

---

<sup>33</sup>M. A. Powell, ed., *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011) s.v. “Asaph.”

<sup>34</sup>Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 44.

<sup>35</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes: Psalms*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 361–62.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:362.

deeds of the Lord. God has commanded that fathers teach their children so effectively that future generations will set their hope in God and keep his commandments.

Successive generations must “not forget the works of God” (v. 7) the very thing the Ephraimites did in verses 9-11. Asaph uses the historical examples described in the rest of the Psalm (vv. 9-72) to warn Israel about what will happen if they do not follow the counsel found in this introduction (v. 1-8).

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

### **Incline Your Ears**

Asaph begins by calling his people to hear his teaching. This invitation serves as a form of wisdom literature that is simultaneously an echo of the Shema (Deut 6:1, 4). So while he calls people to his “teaching” *torah* (תּוֹרָה), he opens his mouth in a “parable” or “proverb” using the word *mashal* (מִשָּׁל), which is the root word used to name the book Proverbs (see Prov 1:1).<sup>37</sup> “Whereas the first verse called for attention, the second justifies the demand by hinting that the outer sense conceals an inner and hidden meaning, which only the thoughtful will be able to perceive.”<sup>38</sup>

So Spurgeon proclaims, “God gives his truth a tongue, and sends forth his messengers trained to declare his word with power.”<sup>39</sup> And Mays says, “The speaker is

---

<sup>37</sup>Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 281.

<sup>38</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Charles Spurgeon Commentary on Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 433.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 432.

performing a divinely constituted duty that Israel's God has ordained as the responsibility of every generation of the people of the Lord (vv. 5-6)."<sup>40</sup> Mays continues,

The speech is an eloquent testimony to the crucial importance of tradition in biblical religion. Its basic assumption is that remembering and telling are essential to the existence of the people of God. The speaker views the people of God as a family whose identity and ethos are maintained across generations because parents tell children the story of how they came to be the people of the LORD. . . . Inseparably associated with God's mighty acts are the responsibilities they entail, the commandments and decrees (vv. 7, 56). Together the two comprise the covenant or decree and the *torah* that it provides (vv. 5, 10). The purpose of the tradition is to nurture a community who put their confidence in God and observe his commandments (v. 7). That is why the psalm must be more than simple storytelling; this remembering by the parents for the sake of the children leads to praises that disclose the reliance of the heart and obedience that displays the commitment of the soul."<sup>41</sup>

This powerful passage acts both as an exhortation and an example. Steven Lawson's outline of this section puts it in a pithy way,

1. I Will Teach You (1-3)
2. You Will Teach Others (4-8).<sup>42</sup>

What Asaph and others "have heard and known" (v. 3) "from of old" (v. 2) through "our fathers" (v. 3) he now promises to bring to bear on the present generation.

### **Tell the Coming Generation**

Verse 4 begins as a corporate declaration in the first person plural. This fits a possible use of this Psalm according to Dahood, that it was "composed for use at the major festivals."<sup>43</sup> One can almost hear the whole assembly respond aloud with the words of this verse, saying, "We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD" (v. 4).

---

<sup>40</sup>James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 255.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>42</sup>Steven Lawson, *Psalms 76-150*, Holman Old Testament Commentary, vol. 12 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006), 20.

<sup>43</sup>Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, Anchor Bible, vol. 17 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 238.

In these middle verses Asaph specifically refers back to God’s plan for generational integrity revealed through the ministry of Moses. He declares, “He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel.” Here he refers to the giving of the law in Exodus 20-23 as well as to the repetition of the law in Deuteronomy. Both before giving the law the first time and immediately after the second giving of the law to the new generation (Exod 10:2; Deut 6:4-9), Scripture makes clear that telling the next generation is a priority strategy. Asaph’s words envision four generations of faithfulness. First the fathers are to teach their children. These children (the second generation) are to embrace God’s commands so fully that “the next generation might know them” (a third generation) who are appositionally described as “the children yet unborn.” These children yet unborn will “arise and tell them to their children” (the fourth generation).

So John Calvin also writes, “It is our bounden duty to use our endeavors that there may be a continual succession of persons to communicate instruction in divine truth.”<sup>44</sup> According to Asaph, this duty falls first and primarily to fathers (v. 5). Leupold summarizes, “The writer goes on to develop the practical purpose that he has in mind in treating the problems of history (vv. 3-8). He lays stress chiefly on the fact that the basic lessons involved are to be taught diligently to their children by the fathers lest the coming generations continue to make the same mistakes in a wearying and endless round.”<sup>45</sup>

### **A Teaching within a Teaching**

The closing words of the Psalm’s introduction state Asaph’s purpose. Kidner writes, “Here is the main burden of the Psalm in positive and negative terms. The three phrases of verse 7 show a threefold cord of faith, as personal trust, informed and humble

---

<sup>44</sup>John Calvin, *Psalm 36-92, Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 231.

<sup>45</sup>Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 564.

thinking, and an obedient will. If these qualities strike us as adventurous, verse 8 depicts the rebel against the covenant in his true colours, not a hero but a renegade: perverse, infirm of purpose and unfit for trust.”<sup>46</sup>

Psalm 78:1-8 provides further support for God’s expectations for parents to disciple their children. In this Psalm, Asaph expresses his own intent to tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord. He grounds his action in God’s commands for fathers to teach their own children and expects covenantal faithfulness. Asaph further declares that the intent of God’s command is for the people to set their hope in God. This Psalm is a teaching within a teaching as Asaph models the very command he desires the people of God to obey. Through the introduction and then the rest of the Psalm the reader is given a living example of the act of declaring and obeying God’s command to teach others in real life.

### **Psalm 78 and Faith Milestones**

Each generation of parents needs to be called back to God’s plan for faithful parental instruction in the home. Hundreds of years after Moses’ sermon in Moab, Asaph repeated the blueprint of God’s design for parents to teach their children so that they would hope in God and be faithful to him. It was a creative and passionate plea to hear and obey. Believing that faithfulness to God from one generation to another hung on fathers teaching their children, Asaph envisioned multiple generations either walking with God or walking away from him.

Faith Milestones applied the heart of Psalm 78 by providing teaching aimed to call forth faith at each milestone. Rather than assuming that regeneration occurs on or before a specific age, as in the confirmation model, Faith Milestones calls forth faith repeatedly at each stage. Gospel Promises held our parents responsible to raise children

---

<sup>46</sup>Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 281–82.

in the Lord, prayerfully seeking the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation that is for you and your children (Acts 2:39). Gospel Beginnings helped parents and children talk together about the story of the gospel from creation and fall to the cross and redemption, thus, asking children to “put their hope in God” (Ps 78). Gospel Truth used the reception of God’s Word as an occasion to proclaim the gospel and live by faith in God’s Word. Gospel Business repeated the message of the gospel, urging parents to talk with their sixth grade sons and daughters about personal faith in Jesus. Through Faith Milestones, the church leaders who taught the parents had a platform to speak, as did Asaph. They urged parents of this generation to tell the coming generation the most glorious deed of the LORD, his salvation in Christ Jesus, that the coming generation might set their hope in God.

#### **Ephesians 6:1-4**

A third Scripture where a leader of God’s people commands parents is Ephesians 6:4. Here, the apostle Paul exhorts fathers in the New Testament church to not provoke their children, but rather to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This brief directive connects the well-established Old Testament patterns to the church age as God’s continuing plan for parents to act as the primary faith-influencers toward their children.

The words of Ephesians 6:1-4 comprise the middle section of his household code—a larger section beginning in 5:22 and ending in 6:9.<sup>47</sup> Having discussed the relationship between husbands and wives (5:22-33), he now moves to parents and children (6:1-4). Klein explains, “Household codes or regulations were features of the first-century world. . . . [Paul] adopted this traditional format, as did other Christian

---

<sup>47</sup>Philip H. Towner, “Households and Household Codes,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 419.

writers, because he was concerned about relationships and the outworking of Christian values within Roman society.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Words to Children**

While it may seem that only verse four speaks to parenting, the first three verses contain insights for parents through what is implied in Paul’s words to children. For example, the opening statement, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,” communicates that parents should expect obedience from their children.<sup>49</sup> Wise parents know that a child must be trained to obey by providing clear and firm direction. Thus, from the outset, parental training is implied in the command to children.

Note that Paul, in writing to the Ephesian church, addresses children directly, “children, obey your parents.” Hence, children were present for the public reading of the Scriptures and expected to be listening.<sup>50</sup> Paul envisions a faithful parent in the home who takes on the responsibility to bring their children to public worship where they would hear the Epistle to the Ephesians read aloud. He also envisions that they have been instructed in the faith—a standard exemplified by elders (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:4-5). The preposition, “in the Lord,” signals that “Christian children must obey their parents in keeping with their commitment to Christ. In other words, children are expected to obey as the Lord would expect them to obey.”<sup>51</sup>

Paul grounds this command to children by appealing to the command and the promise of the fifth commandment. By quoting the fifth commandment, Paul

---

<sup>48</sup>William W. Klein, *Ephesians*, in vol. 12 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 147.

<sup>49</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009), 312.

<sup>50</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 415.

<sup>51</sup>Klein, *Ephesians*, 156.

demonstrates pedagogical wisdom by using something that children would have likely memorized.<sup>52</sup> He also indicates that Spirit-filled living through the gospel (Eph 5:21) is congruent with obedience to the Law of Moses.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the expectations and model we have seen in Deuteronomy and Psalms are reaffirmed through Paul. God has established the family to be a primary resource to shape children in the Lord, not just in the days of the patriarchs and the monarchy, but also in the days of the apostles and the church age.

### **Words to Fathers**

In verse four Paul addresses fathers directly and gives them both a negative and a positive command. First, fathers are told not to “provoke their children to anger.” They are to learn to use their substantial authority in a way that expresses love. Bryan Chapell writes, “Dedicating ourselves to our children’s welfare means first that Christians must not parent with unbiblical patterns or priorities.”<sup>54</sup> Children become exasperated by hypocrisy, harshness, or authoritarian control. On the contrary we should display, “Authority based on the example of Christ, love patterned after the sacrifice of Christ, and respect expressed out of reverence for Christ.”<sup>55</sup> Arnold writes,

Fathers should carefully weigh the potential impact of their words and actions before responding to their children. This passage effectively rules out reactionary flare-ups, overly harsh words, insults, sarcasm, nagging, demeaning comments, inappropriate teasing, unreasonable demands and anything else that can be perceived as provocative.<sup>56</sup>

Lincoln attempts a list as well:

---

<sup>52</sup>William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, in *Galatians and Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 259.

<sup>53</sup>O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 443. O’Brien notes that “the commandment to honour one’s parents appears on five other occasions in the New Testament,” all of them in the gospels (n 16).

<sup>54</sup>Chapell, *Ephesians*, 317.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>56</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 418.

This involves avoiding attitudes, words, and actions which would drive a child to angry exasperation or resentment and thus rules out excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child's needs and sensibilities.<sup>57</sup>

This was counter-cultural in Paul's day, according to Wood:

It is a feature of Paul's treatment of these domestic categories that the stronger have obligations to the weaker. The gospel introduced a fresh element into parental responsibility by insisting that the feelings of the child must be taken into consideration. In a society where the father's authority (*partria potestas*) was absolute, this represented a revolutionary concept.<sup>58</sup>

Second, fathers are told on the positive side to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The words of this sentence are rich with meaning. The word for "bring them up" (ἐκτρέφω, *ektrepho*) is the same verb used of husbands who should "nourish" their wives as a man does for his own body (Eph 5:29).<sup>59</sup> "Discipline" (παιδεία, *paideia*) means "training, instruction, and discipline."<sup>60</sup> "This Greek word (*paideia*) was a common term in Greco-Roman society for education and training."<sup>61</sup>

According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, *paideia* refers to,

the whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions, now reproof and punishment). . . . In Greek writings from Aeschylus on, it includes also the care and training of the body.<sup>62</sup>

The sense of the word connotes that there is intentional formation over time—first by the

---

<sup>57</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 406.

<sup>58</sup>A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 81.

<sup>59</sup>Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 797.

<sup>60</sup>Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F Miller, eds., *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. "παιδεία."

<sup>61</sup>Chapell, *Ephesians*, 321.

<sup>62</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, "παιδεία," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997).

mother, then by the father, at times supplemented with a pedagogue or other adult.<sup>63</sup>

The word rendered “instruction” (νουθεσία, *nouthesia*) refers to admonition (KJV, NKJV) or warning. The semantic range of this word includes, “teaching, admonition, warning, ethical, and corrective instruction in regard to belief or behavior.”<sup>64</sup> Parents are called not only to nurture children toward the right path, but also to warn them of the consequences of faithlessness or rebellion. The word *nouthesia* can therefore be explained as “counsel about avoiding or stopping an improper course of conduct.”<sup>65</sup> Eli in 1 Samuel is a sad example of a parent who neglected to admonish his sons (see 1 Sam 2:12-17, 22-36; 3:10-14).

Selter’s comments of the combined use of these two words in their verbal cognates in Colossians sheds light on Paul’s sense here in Ephesians 6:4. He writes,

In Col. 1:28 and 3:16 *noutheteo* is coupled with *didasko*, in reference to the proclamation of Christ. Warning and teaching belong inseparably together, as a constant counterpart of knowledge and action. The aim of the teaching and warning ministry is ‘maturity in Christ’ (1:28).<sup>66</sup>

One may further note that where Paul speaks in Colossians 1, he summarizes his own ministry of teaching and warning, and where he speaks in chapter 3, he extends such activity to be expressed from one believer to another throughout the body of Christ. Paul uses these two words in their nominal form Ephesians 6:4 to communicate that parental authority is an additional sphere where teaching and admonition should be employed to cultivate life in the gospel and maturity in Christ.

Parents, therefore, should imagine that they have a specific charge toward their own children imitating a pastor, apostle or teacher. Just as the Apostle Paul and his

---

<sup>63</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 400.

<sup>64</sup>Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. “νουθεσία.”

<sup>65</sup>Klein, *Ephesians*, 157.

<sup>66</sup>F. Selter, “Exhort—Noutheteo,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Books, 1986), 1:568.

companions acted like both a mother and a father toward the Thessalonians, so mothers and fathers should act as apostles and shepherds toward their children.<sup>67</sup> This is such a priority for all fathers, that the qualifications of both deacons and elders, as examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:3), include the management of the home and leading his children (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:4-5, 3:12).

The biblical expectation placed upon every Christian father is that he, with the support of his wife (Eph 6:1), is called to nurture his children intentionally with all the means God has provided—physical and spiritual nourishment, together with sympathetic training and counsel.

### **Ephesians 6 and Faith Milestones**

The entire act of parent equipping through Faith Milestones seeks to honor the implications of the household code of Ephesians 6. Through Faith Milestones, parents were told that they are responsible to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The united curriculum of Faith Milestones, with its four phases, begins to point parents toward the more comprehensive vision of the word discipline. Since *paideia* connotes a systematic training through the phases of childhood toward adulthood, Faith Milestones provided parent instruction through time in various milestones. Together the four milestones created a systematic training through the phases of childhood.

### **Ephesians 4:10-16**

Finally, Ephesians 4:10-16 supports the thesis of this chapter by declaring that the exalted Christ has given church leaders a primary role of equipping the people of

---

<sup>67</sup>In his similes Paul assumes certain characteristic of good parents. One should provide for his or her own child “like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thess 1:7) and should serve as a faithful guide “like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God” (1 Thess 1:11-12).

God. “Equipping the saints for the work of ministry” applies not only to believers in a general way, but also to parents in particular. Parents should be equipped for their work of ministry—raising their children to love and obey God. The aim of equipping is to build up the body of Christ in unity and knowledge, so that the whole church might grow into maturity like Christ.

### **Christian Parents are Saints**

Clearly, God speaks through leaders such as Moses, Asaph, and Paul, to exhort and equip parents to act as the primary disciple-makers of their children. Here, in this earlier section of Ephesians, concerning the ministry of the church, one may observe that equipping in general is a model for the church at large. Paul writes that Jesus Christ has delegated his ministry to specific leaders who are called to equip the saints for their work of ministry.

He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Eph 4:10-12)

Arnold summarizes this passage saying,

[Paul] makes the assertion that Christ has given gifted people to the church (4:11). He explains their purpose and role within the body by means of a prepositional phrase (“for the equipping of the saints . . .”), which is completed by another prepositional phrase (“ . . . for the work of service”). This objective is clarified by yet another prepositional phrase (“for the building up of the body of Christ”). The three prepositional phrases are therefore not coordinate; the latter two are subordinate to the first.<sup>68</sup>

The work of the church leadership is therefore for “equipping the saints.” Arnold explains the force of this passage by adding, “Christ has given gifted leaders to the church not merely to do the ministry, but to invest their time heavily in developing and preparing fellow believers to engage in ministry to the body. The model Paul presents is

---

<sup>68</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 242.

therefore one of mutual service in the community and not one of professionals serving a group of consumers.”<sup>69</sup> Ephesians 4 is frequently appealed to when resourcing programs for the local church ministry, and so the phrase “equipping the saints” has come to be equated with training elders and deacons, or other volunteers at church. This is good, but if parents are overlooked the church has missed strategic saints who should also be equipped. Christian parents are saints and they clearly have a work of ministry! A parent’s ministry in the home is as clear in the Scriptures as the role of elders, deacons or any other ministry in the body of Christ. Parents should be equipped for their significant, biblically-commanded work of ministry—to raise their children to love and obey God through the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

When ministry is Spirit-empowered and delegated throughout the body of Christ, then the goal of unity and maturity in Christ will be attained more fully. Paul envisions the maturity that will occur as all the parts do their work

. . . until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph. 4:13-14)

### **Ephesians 4 and Faith Milestones**

How can God’s leaders in the church fulfill the apostle’s call to equip the saints? Faith Milestones provided a model whereby parents were equipped for their work of ministry in a training environment that gave them instruction, support, and accountability. As seen in this section, gifted leaders are not supposed to do all the work of ministry themselves. They are supposed to, “invest their time heavily in developing and preparing fellow believers to engage in ministry.”<sup>70</sup> Faith Milestones was a

---

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 262.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

significant investment of leaders' time to develop and prepare fellow believers, in this case, parents, to engage in the work of ministry in the home.

### **Conclusion**

God's design for his people is that church leaders should focus a substantial portion of their efforts on equipping the saints for the work of ministry. Moses, Asaph, and Paul looked to parents as saints who would bear fruit in the work of ministry through teaching and forming their own children. Their exhortations communicate God's commands to parents and their instructions provide training to fulfill those commands. Church leaders today ought to exhort and train parents for their work of ministry to help parents succeed in their role as the primary disciple-makers for their children. Faith Milestones sought to exhort and equip parents to carry out parent-led discipleship in our congregation. It publically called parents to train their children; it equipped parents in a way that was concrete and specific; it called forth faith repeatedly at each phase; it created an ongoing, systematic curriculum through which parents could walk with their children; and it actively sought to equip parents as saints for their work of ministry.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL SUPPORT

In addition to the biblical and theological support advanced in chapter 2, Faith Milestones was grounded by theoretical and sociological support. Theoretical reflection and sociological insight will support the claim of this chapter that, since parents matter so profoundly as spiritual influencers and yet often fail to maintain meaningful engagement, the church can play a strategic role by enacting a family-equipping approach through a strategy such as milestones. Prior to the conclusion of this chapter, the benefits of the milestone strategy will be enumerated to describe how a local church may implement an equipping process designed to inspire, equip, and celebrate parents' involvement as disciple-makers with their own children in the home.

#### **Sociological Research: Parents Matter**

Do parents matter anyway? In a word, yes. Parents have significant influence upon their children throughout the entire span from birth to high school graduation. Parents matter both in general formation and in spiritual formation.

On the surface, one might be tempted to think that parents lose primary influence to competing forces like peers and media as their child moves into the teen years. However, the results of multiple studies challenge the oversimplified hypothesis that parents become superfluous. Of course, peer influences do exert powerful pulls that begin to compete with parents who were once the sole voice in their child's life. At the beginning of life, parents enjoy almost exclusive influence of their child. As a child's world expands from parallel play in preschool to finding their voice during elementary years, independence and exploration increases. Consider the reflections of Tedd Tripp:

What parents with newborn children may accomplish simply because they are in charge—because they are the authorities—is at an all time high. They call all the shots . . . . The parents’ word is law because they have the physical capacity to enforce it . . . . As a child grows . . . what you may accomplish through raw authority diminishes.<sup>1</sup>

As children reach their teenage years their peers are no longer merely a standard for comparison, but an overactive source of influence we know as peer pressure. Richard Dunn expresses the reality of youth culture by writing,

The net effect of all these changes creates a junior high school social environment that can be very intimidating. Vying for peer acceptance to validate their sense of belonging and value in the uncharted waters of adolescence and youth culture, students maneuver, manipulate, and manhandle one another emotionally . . . . [Students] feel insecure because they know that if the social currents shift, they too may find themselves drifting alone . . . .

The ethos of the culture begins to exert an increasingly powerful pull as teenagers move toward middle adolescence, a time when they will be choosing more for themselves than their parents.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, a parent raising their child may be tempted to think that by junior high or high school they lose the moral and spiritual influence they once had. However, what parents are losing is not influence, but authority. Tedd Tripp explains,

While I am limited in what I can accomplish through the raw use of authority, thankfully, my son is willingly under my influence . . . . Influence represents the willingness of a child to place himself under authority because of trust . . . . Each day you live with your children, your influence grows . . . . As you engage your children in rich, full communication . . . you not only nurture them, but develop a relationship of unity and trust.<sup>3</sup>

Parents may maximize their influence through strong relationship building. The key is realizing that, while authority will diminish over time, influence will remain over time. This influence should actually increase if parents seek to love their children by pacing with them, understanding them, and giving them wise counsel.

---

<sup>1</sup>Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 93.

<sup>2</sup>Richard R. Dunn, *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students: A Guide for Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers and Campus Ministers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2001), 174–75.

<sup>3</sup>Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, 94.

## The General Influence of Parents

Regardless of parents' qualities to leverage their influence well, sociological research clearly demonstrates that, on the whole, parents remain highly influential during the entire span of childrearing. In 1985, the Strommens published the following:

The Adolescent-Parent study shows that adolescents in a close family unit are the ones most likely to say "no" to drug use, pre-marital sexual activity, and other antisocial and alienating behaviors. They are also the ones most likely to adopt high moral standards, develop the ability to make and keep friends, embrace a religious faith, and involve themselves in helping activities.<sup>4</sup>

Philip Morris complements this observation with the research they funded through the Youth Smoking Prevention program over a ten-year span. The Teenage Attitudes and Behavior Study (TABS) disclosed that parental engagement results in something as concrete as adolescent smoking trends. According to the study,

These results indicate that adolescent non-smokers perceive their parents to be more involved in their lives and to exert a greater level of parental monitoring and rule-setting as compared to smoking adolescents. These findings are further emphasized by the TABS results indicating that adolescent non-smokers engage in more frequent conversations with their parents as compared with smoking adolescents.<sup>5</sup>

Parents also matter in terms of how they model behavior. The study further observes that, "Adolescent current smoking rates vary significantly according to parental smoking history, with the prevalence of current smoking being highest among adolescents with one or more parents who currently smoke."<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, what is seen by correlation in studies is also what teens report when asked directly. In 1998, over a quarter-million teenagers were surveyed in USA Weekend's 11th Annual Special Teen Report. When 272,400 students in grades 6-12

---

<sup>4</sup>Merton P. Strommen and Irene Strommen, *Five Cries of Parents: Help for Families on Troublesome Issues* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 72.

<sup>5</sup>Youth Smoking Prevention, "Teenage Attitudes & Behavior Study" (Philip Morris USA, 2008), 18, [http://www.philipmorrisusa.com/en/cms/Responsibility/Helping\\_Nav/Helping\\_Reduce\\_Underage\\_Tobacco\\_Use/Select\\_Historical\\_Programs/Final\\_2007\\_TABS\\_Report\\_March\\_2008.pdf.aspx](http://www.philipmorrisusa.com/en/cms/Responsibility/Helping_Nav/Helping_Reduce_Underage_Tobacco_Use/Select_Historical_Programs/Final_2007_TABS_Report_March_2008.pdf.aspx).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

were asked, “How much influence does each of the following have upon your life?”, 70 percent of them answered that parents had “a lot” of influence. Parents were named twice as frequently as any other category: girlfriend/boyfriend, teacher, religion, advertising, TV shows, other kids, celebrities.<sup>7</sup>

Table 1. Teenage influencers  
*How much influence does each of the following have on your life?*<sup>8</sup>

	A lot	Some	None
Parents	70%	26%	4%
Girlfriend/boyfriend	24%	39%	37%
Teacher	25%	55%	20%
Religion	34%	36%	30%
Advertising	4%	32%	64%
TV shows	8%	36%	56%
Other kids	21%	57%	22%
Celebrities (like stars, athletes, musicians)	21%	42%	37%

### **The Spiritual Influence of Parents**

Sociological studies that have focused on teenage religion and spirituality demonstrate that parents are a significant influence in the context of spiritual formation. Strommen and Hardel, whose work utilizes studies by the Search Institute, assert the primacy of parents in the final conclusion of their 300-page survey:

We conclude our research by reiterating that the family is the most powerful institution in promoting faith in youth. The family atmosphere allows children to enter into a love relationship with God. We say this out of a conviction that congregations have erred in allowing the focus of faith development to shift from the home to the congregation or parish.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Patty Rhule and César G. Soriano, “Teens and Self Image,” *USA Weekend*, May 1, 1998, accessed March 20, 2014, [http://159.54.226.237/98\\_issues/980503/980503teen\\_survey\\_results.html](http://159.54.226.237/98_issues/980503/980503teen_survey_results.html).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Merton P. Strommen and Dick Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, rev. ed. (Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 2008), 336.

Even more recently, the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), “the largest, most comprehensive study of American teenage religion and spirituality conducted to date,”<sup>10</sup> yielded similar conclusions. The NSYR was the basis of both *Soul Searching* and *Almost Christian*. The following paragraph from *Soul Searching* is worth quoting in its entirety.

One of the key themes of this book is that parents are normally very important in shaping the religious and spiritual lives of their teenage children, even though they may not realize it. It seems that many parents of teens rely primarily on the immediate evidence of the overt attitudes, statements, and sometimes behaviors that their teenage children dole out to them on a daily basis in order to estimate their current level of parental influence. Many of the attitudes and statements that teenagers communicate to their parents do not exactly express great admiration and gratitude for and readiness to listen to, emulate, or freely obey their parents. Many parents therefore appear to come to the conclusion that they have lost their influence in shaping the lives of their teenage children, that they no longer make any significant difference. But for most, this conclusion is mistaken. Teenagers’ attitudes, verbal utterances, and immediate behaviors are often not the best evidence with which to estimate parental influence in their lives. For better or worse, most parents in fact still do profoundly influence their adolescents—often more than do their peers—their children’s apparent resistance and lack of appreciation notwithstanding. This influence often also includes parental influence in adolescents’ religious and spiritual lives. Simply by living and interacting with their children, most parents establish expectations, define normalcy, model life practices, set boundaries, and make demands—all of which cannot help but influence teenagers, for good or ill. Most teenagers and their parents may not realize it, but a lot of research in the sociology of religion suggests that the most important social influence in shaping young people’s religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents. These findings in prior research are also evident in NSYR data.<sup>11</sup>

In *Almost Christian*, sociologist, Kenda Creasy Dean, states it more succinctly:

Overwhelming every other finding of the National Study (NSYR) is one recurrent theme: Parents matter most when it comes to the religious formation of their children. While grandparents, other relatives, mentors, and youth ministers are also influential, parents are by far the most important predictors of teenagers’ religious lives.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>12</sup>Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Kindle loc. 366.

George Barna harmonizes with this chorus of voices when he claims,

One of the lessons that emerged from the research on which my earlier book [*Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*] was based was that churches alone do not and cannot have much influence on children. In fact, the greatest influence a church may have in affecting children is by impacting their parents.<sup>13</sup>

Whether or not they set out to find it, those who have studied children, youth, and families have all come to the same conclusion: parents are more powerful than any other influence in a child's life. They are influential in broad areas of life choices as well as spiritual formation.

### **Parental Engagement Is Diminishing**

While parental influence has remained constant in our changing culture, parental engagement has been rapidly diminishing. George Barna writes, “The typical American family registers less than fifteen minutes of direct parent-child conversation each day.”<sup>14</sup> Such a statistic paints a dismal picture. But given the hurried pace of life it is believable. Families exist in a cultural context that typically practices long schooldays followed by excessive homework,<sup>15</sup> with extracurricular activities and travel sports,<sup>16</sup> all in the context of media oversaturation.<sup>17</sup> Parents have less time with their children, more demands, and greater distraction. This downward trend of parental engagement is observable both from decade to decade and also within particular families through time.

---

<sup>13</sup>George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting: Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions* (Carol Stream, IL: BarnaBooks, 2010), xvii.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 33–34.

<sup>15</sup>Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (New York: Tarcher, 2009), 3–4.

<sup>16</sup>Tom Farrey, *Game On: The All-American Race to Make Champions of Our Children* (New York: ESPN, 2008), 14.

<sup>17</sup>Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 189–90.

## Diminished Engagement Over Decades

Parental engagement has been diminishing when observed from decade to decade. One means to observe the diminished engagement is through the lens of research on parental-religious engagement. Three studies from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s give us a picture of the trend.

In 1980 the Strommens noted these statistics:

When asked, “How often does your family sit down together and talk about God, the Bible . . . or other religious things?” 42 percent of young adolescents say this never happens; 32 percent say this topic is discussed twice a month, 13 percent say it is discussed once a week. And this, it must be noted, is the finding from a survey of largely church-connected families, of whom 97 percent are members of a church.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, significant discipleship was not occurring in most Christian households according to the Search Institute in the 1980s. By 1990 Benson and Eklin observed that 64 percent of young adolescents reported never or rarely having anything resembling family devotions.<sup>19</sup> Barna’s research in the 2000’s found that “fewer than one out of every ten born-again families read the Bible together during a typical week or pray together during a typical week, excluding meal times.”<sup>20</sup> When it comes to family worship, the numbers drop even more precipitously. “Even fewer families—1 out of every 20—have any type of worship experience together with their kids, other than while they are at church during a typical month.”<sup>21</sup>

It is no wonder that “fewer than one out of every five parents of young children believe they are doing a good job of training their children morally and spiritually.”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Strommen and Strommen, *Five Cries of Parents*, 134.

<sup>19</sup>Peter L. Benson and Carolyn H. Eklin, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990), 50.

<sup>20</sup>Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 31.

<sup>21</sup>George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church’s #1 Priority* (Grand Rapids: Regal, 2003), 78.

<sup>22</sup>Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 10.

Christian parents are not capitalizing on the home environment to talk about their faith and what it means for life.

### **Diminished Engagement as Children Age**

Compounding the general trend across culture from decade to decade is the diminishing engagement observable within given households. Longitudinal studies demonstrate that parents actually decrease their engagement in the years from parenting toddlers to parenting teens. Parents begin the journey with the idealistic intentions, but struggle to maintain measurable engagement as their children develop. The Strommens observed that

in 1983 a comprehensive sociological study of more than one thousand families confirmed something that had been observed in other, smaller, studies: instead of improving over the years as parents gain experience, there is actually a steady decline in most measures of family achievement from the childless stage to the adolescent-raising stage of the family life cycle. During these years, closeness and adaptability reach a low point, and communication between parents and adolescents is poorest.<sup>23</sup>

Later in the same book, the Strommens write,

There are homes today, in which there may be very good intentions of having a “Christian home,” complete with talks about one’s faith. Attempts may have been made when children were young, but as they near adolescence, the family begins to fragment: social life and work obligations become more complex; children begin participating in extracurricular activities and working at part-time jobs. A meal is scarcely ever eaten when everyone is together.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, parents begin with lofty ideals and implement them in early years. However, parental participation tends to diminish as children progress through the stages of development—reaching a nadir during their children’s adolescence.

### **Cognitive Dissonance in Parents**

Parents need help if they are to exhibit sustained engagement with their

---

<sup>23</sup>Strommen and Strommen, *Five Cries of Parents*, 2.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 134–35.

children in the home. To understand how parents may be helped one must not only acknowledge trends or obstacles, but also know what parents are thinking. Why do parents fail to engage? Interestingly, it is not because they have come to believe that they are not influential or that they are not called. The curious paradox is that even though Christian parents engage insufficiently, they retain the view that they are agents of primary influence. Jones' research through the *Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey* revealed that "90 percent of parents see themselves as personally responsible for their children's Christian formation."<sup>25</sup> However,

Even as parents admit their responsibility to function as primary faith trainers in their children's lives, most are doing little, if anything to fulfill this role. For most parents, intentional processes of spiritual formation with their children range from sporadic to nonexistent. One out of every five parents admits to never engaging in practices of prayer, Bible reading, or worship in their households.<sup>26</sup>

Christian parents believe that they are called to the role, but fail to act upon it. This contradiction of beliefs and behavior is an example of cognitive dissonance. Leon Festinger used the term, cognitive dissonance, to describe a person who knows smoking is bad for his health, yet continues to smoke regardless of the information that smoking causes lung cancer.<sup>27</sup> Two truths war against one another, and the path of least resistance wins.

Barna describes what he believes occurs in the minds of parents:

Most churchgoing parents are neither spiritually mature nor spiritually inclined and, therefore, they do not have a sense of urgency or necessity about raising their kids to be spiritual champions. . . . But how do parents reconcile the apparent contradiction between saying that they have the primary responsibility for the spiritual development of their own children and their practice of dropping off the kids for others to provide virtually all of the spiritual instruction that their children receive? By believing that *because* they are responsible and yet personally

---

<sup>25</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011), 99.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 2.

incapable of meeting their children's spiritual needs, the best thing they can do is to seek the help of others who are more skilled in spiritual matters.<sup>28</sup>

### **Codependent Enabling in Churches**

While parents feel ill equipped, the church can unfortunately play a role akin to an enabler in a codependent relationship. In this case, the church provides rescue for the family, but creates an even greater long-term problem to which it must continually respond. Barna writes,

When a church—intentionally or not—assumes a family's responsibilities in the arena of spiritually nurturing children, it fosters an *unhealthy dependence* upon the church to relieve the family of its biblical responsibility . . . .

Thus, a majority of churches are actually guilty of perpetuating an unhealthy and unbiblical process wherein the church usurps the role of the family and creates an unfortunate and sometimes exclusive dependency upon the church for a child's spiritual nourishment.<sup>29</sup>

In seeking an answer to why parents would acknowledge their role, but fail to engage, Jones writes, “what were the two top factors in parents' failure to disciple their children? The primary point of resistance was that churches weren't training the parents. The secondary reason was that parents weren't making the time.”<sup>30</sup> He continues, “This matter of time is highly significant, but scheduling priorities are not the sole roadblock in parents' practices of discipleship . . . [the] far more significant problem has to do with the expectations and equipping that parents receive through their churches.”<sup>31</sup> Based on his research Jones points back to the church who must change:

The issue seems to be not so much that parents have resigned their role as primary disciple-makers. It isn't even that parents don't desire to disciple their children. In most cases, the problem is that churches are neither expecting nor equipping parents to disciple their children.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 78–79.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 81–82.

<sup>30</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 100.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

Instead of enabling parents, the church ought to equip parents. Churches can do the most good when they clarify their own boundaries and equip parents to meet the expectations that rightly belong to the family. This is what a family-equipping model seeks to pursue.

### **The Family Equipping Model**

Embracing a family-equipping model involves viewing family ministry as “the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children.”<sup>33</sup> In this definition of family ministry, the church seeks not only to acknowledge parents, but also to train them, and expect outcomes from them. All of these three activities are important to the process.

Acknowledging parents is the first step because it properly defines the role that parents have according to the scriptures. In a family-equipping ministry model, parents should be inspired through the proclamation that occurs from the pulpit and through other publications such as brochures, newsletters, and/or the church website. Only parents who are moved and inspired will relentlessly aim for family discipleship. According to Barna this sense of resolve is critical for parents to raise “spiritual champions.”

From our research, we can posit that raising a spiritual champion is best accomplished by having at least one parent in the home who is fully committed to honoring God through his or her parenting practices . . . .

Having evaluated the options based on their life experiences, they had concluded that the greatest gift they could give their offspring was a sound upbringing based on biblical principles. That mind-set was a reflection of their personal campaign to integrate their faith in Christ into every dimension of their lives.<sup>34</sup>

There must be a resolve in the parents’ minds that biblical instruction in the home is a

---

<sup>33</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, ed., *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 40.

<sup>34</sup>Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 30.

true priority of life. The alignment of proclamation and practices implies that this proclamation must be complemented by practices that acknowledge the same priorities in the ministry structures of the church.

Training is the second element of family-equipping ministry. The church should empower parents to fulfill the role it proclaims to be biblical. The family-equipping model for family ministry is so named because it envisions a place in which “the church equips parents to disciple their own children, and the parents recognize the church as an active partner in this process.”<sup>35</sup> Training is necessary to align practices with proclamation. This need for training may be larger than we imagine because it involves ensuring that parents know the Bible they are supposed to teach to their own children. When tracking the diminished engagement of parents over time, the Strommens reason that, “One answer might be that the fruits of declining instruction in faith in the mid-1960s are now appearing. Parents who have received scant biblical training and little opportunity to verbalize what they do believe, feel inadequate to teach at home.”<sup>36</sup> This means that training that succeeds will be more than a single weekend seminar, but will be recurring in a larger process. Further training should be aimed at helping leaders of families integrate God’s truth into family life. As Barna writes,

One of the idiosyncrasies of these families is that they tend to delve into faith matters as a family unit. While there are ample instances of family members engaging in spiritual activities apart from other family members—for example, Sunday school classes, small-group involvement, attending Christian events—the glue that holds it all together consists of two themes: family conversations that bring biblical values into their shared lives, and efforts to regularly engage in faith activities (Bible study, worship, prayer) that model the integration of faith into their lives.<sup>37</sup>

The third element of family ministry involves some manner of accountability

---

<sup>35</sup>Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 44.

<sup>36</sup>Strommen and Strommen, *Five Cries of Parents*, 134.

<sup>37</sup>Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 31.

where outcomes may be encouraged and assessed. This presents an admittedly awkward situation because most American Christians are unaccustomed to such accountability. While the Puritan and Reformed churches paid annual family visits to home ensuring that they were catechizing their children,<sup>38</sup> this would not be welcome by very many households today. A more realistic proposal is to provide an opportunity for natural accountability to emerge in the context of support systems such as a small group of like-minded parents.

A family-equipping model of ministry is an approach to family ministry that takes seriously the biblical role of parents and does so in a manner suitable to the contemporary church. Every model needs a particular methodology to enact its vision. Therefore, the issue of methodology shall now be addressed.

### **Milestones: A Method of Family Equipping**

The milestone strategy, as developed over the past two decades, provides a practical methodology to live out the vision of family-equipping ministry in the local church. Brian Haynes introduces the milestone strategy by writing,

How can pastoral leaders embrace the family-equipping model in light of existing segmented-programmatic approaches that dominate evangelical churches in the Western culture? At first, it seems like an insurmountable endeavor to lead such an adventurous transition. Rites of passage are one way to move the congregation toward family-equipping ministry. Developing rites of passage as a spiritual formation strategy enables churches that once thought of discipleship as class on Sunday to equip the family as the primary faith-training vehicle for the next generation . . . . Rites of passage, also known as “milestones,” serve as both moments of celebration and catalytic points of entry into a new season of life for the maturing Christ-follower.<sup>39</sup>

Following a survey of the development and practice of the milestone strategy, specific benefits will be summarized.

---

<sup>38</sup>Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 13-18.

<sup>39</sup>Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 193.

## **Development of the Milestone Strategy**

During the twentieth century, following the rise of adolescence as an intermediate stage of development, American culture lost a consensus on how and when a young man or woman crosses the threshold into adulthood. Recent adaptations of the rite of passage have paved the way for milestones to be valued as a means of spiritual enrichment along a discernible path and have been incorporated into church programming. The milestone strategy has emerged over the past two or more decades in different spheres within the American church. Various writers and researchers have contributed to this milestone strategy as they have adapted rites of passage into modern context and then applied it in the context of church. Milestones have moved from rites of passage in various cultures, to milestones in the home, and finally to milestones involving church and home.

**Family-based rites of passage.** In 1997 Robert Lewis published what he and other fathers had been perfecting since 1989, *Raising a Modern Day Knight*. This book used the model of medieval knighthood to create a structure of ceremonies to pass on a well-defined set of ideals outlined in a specific process sealed by four symbolic ceremonies.<sup>40</sup> Lewis' focus was upon imparting a vision of manhood to sons by having a group of fathers cooperatively move through the stages of the process. The four milestones that Lewis identified were puberty, high school graduation, college graduation, and marriage.<sup>41</sup> Lewis' aim was to help Christian fathers follow a process with their own sons from teen years to the threshold of manhood. He invited fathers to band together with other fathers as a group to prepare their sons for and to celebrate stages of becoming a man. Lewis did not seek to incorporate his approach into church

---

<sup>40</sup>Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight: A Father's Role in Guiding His Son to Authentic Manhood*, rev. ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2007), 15–18.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 114.

ministry programming, but it did serve as a voice for the significance of milestones and celebrations.

In 2001 the Weidmanns and Ledbetters wrote *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children's Spiritual Passages*. It was similar to Lewis in that it was designed as a guide for parents and their children apart from any church-based recognition or involvement. In contrast to *Raising a Modern Day Knight*, *Spiritual Milestones* was not just focused upon authentic manhood, but rather upon the broader aim of faith formation. The Weidmanns and Ledbetters identified seven milestones in the process: believer's baptism, communion, preparing for adolescence, purity, adulthood, high school graduation and wedding day.<sup>42</sup> As a result it was applicable to both sons and daughters, with the purity and adulthood rites of passage being adaptable for either young men or young women.

**Church and family milestones.** Merton Strommen and Richard Hardel's book, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, was first published in 2000. It drew on four decades of research through the Search Institute and was the fruit of the Youth and Family Institute which was founded in 1987. In this book, Strommen and Hardel sought to advance a partnership between church and home by involving parents. In the preface to the first edition they write, "We, the authors, address this concern [that our children will be committed to Christ when they graduate from high school] with a new paradigm—a partnership between congregation and family in which primary responsibility for faith development is assumed by parents."<sup>43</sup> While their book is a broad summary of family in faith formation in the life of the local church, the

---

<sup>42</sup>Jim Weidmann, et al., *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children's Spiritual Passages* (Colorado Springs: Heritage Builder Books, 2009), 8.

<sup>43</sup>Strommen and Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*, 9.

milestone strategy is mentioned at multiple points.<sup>44</sup> According to Linda Staat's article, she was first exposed to the milestone strategy at a Youth and Family Institute conference in 1995.<sup>45</sup> The methodology continues today under the new name of Vibrant Faith Ministry. Vibrant Faith defines a milestone as "a meaningful, memorable moment in the lives of individuals and communities" and uses four keys: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions.<sup>46</sup> Vibrant Faith has identified eighteen milestones that families and congregations may practice together. John Roberto in his work, *Generations of Faith*,<sup>47</sup> complemented this approach, and he is presently part of the Vibrant Faith Ministry Team.<sup>48</sup>

Rich Melheim was also a pioneer in the work of faith at home. He developed eight milestones called Faith Stepping Stones where church leaders are given a system to "bless the child, gift the family, and call parents to the promise every night in every home."<sup>49</sup> His training content includes practical needs for early parenting enabling the church to build new relationships with young parents—even ones outside the church.

Mark Holmen increased the visibility of the milestone strategy in 2007 through his books, *Faith Begins at Home* and *Building Faith at Home*. He adapted the work of

---

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 29, 110, 141, 162.

<sup>45</sup>Linda Staats, "Passing on the Faith—Milestone to Milestone," *Lifelong Faith* 2 no. 1 (Spring 2008): 17.

<sup>46</sup>"Milestones Ministry," *Milestones Ministry*, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://vibrantfaithmilestones.org/>.

<sup>47</sup>"Faith Formation 2020," *Faith Formation 2020*, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.faithformation2020.net/>.

<sup>48</sup>"Vibrant Faith - About Us," *Vibrant Faith Ministries*, accessed May 1, 2014, [http://www.vibrantfaith.org/about\\_us.html](http://www.vibrantfaith.org/about_us.html).

<sup>49</sup>"Faith Stepping Stones," *Faith Inkubators*, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.faithink.com/Inkubators/stones.asp>.

the Youth and Family Institute and has named Dick Hardel among his mentors.<sup>50</sup> Dave Holmen and his associate, Dave Teixeira, designed thirteen “Take It Home” events from birth through high school graduation. On selected Sunday mornings, parents were trained along with their children for an age-appropriate exercise they could learn and practice at home.<sup>51</sup>

In 2009, Brian Haynes published *Shift*,<sup>52</sup> which represented the culmination of his work at Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas and his doctoral thesis work.<sup>53</sup> At Kingsland he worked on *The Integration of Church and Home* from 2004 through 2006 by adopting the six key milestones from the Weidmanns’ and Ledbetters’ book *Spiritual Milestones*.<sup>54</sup> For each milestone Haynes identified a staff leader, a parent seminar, a campus event, and a family celebration (if applicable), designed to help establish core competencies within families. The milestones were used as a tool to integrate church and home. The church provided training and celebration to empower parents to engage in the discipleship of their children leading up to the milestone. Between the milestones, parents were encouraged to conduct weekly faith talks in order to “walk the Legacy Path.”

Since then, even more milestone ministries and guides have emerged. The Keeleys wrote *Milestones of Faith*.<sup>55</sup> Group Publishing has taken Haynes work and

---

<sup>50</sup>Mark A. Holmen, *Building Faith at Home: Why Faith at Home Must Be Your Church’s #1 Priority* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2007), 53–54.

<sup>51</sup>Mark Holmen and Dave Teixeira, *Take It Home: Inspiration and Events to Help Parents Spiritually Transform Their Children* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2008).

<sup>52</sup>Brian Haynes, *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2009).

<sup>53</sup>Brian Haynes, “The Integration of Church and Home: A Strategic Partnership for Spiritual Formation” (D.Min. thesis, Liberty Theological Seminary, 2006), 4, 39.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 64–65.

<sup>55</sup>Laura Keeley and Robert Keeley, *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2009).

developed a curriculum.<sup>56</sup> The Fuller Youth Institute has published about Faith Milestones as part of its Sticky Faith theme.<sup>57</sup>

### **Benefits of the Milestone Strategy**

The implementation of a milestone strategy using insight from these pioneers and practitioners has numerous benefits. Specifically, there are eight benefits of using a milestone strategy like Faith Milestones.

**Recurring opportunities to equip parents.** First, since there are multiple milestones, there are periodic times where all parents with children at a certain age will be intentionally invited to participate in a particular milestone. Providing training at intervals results in parents being repeatedly invited, challenged, and inspired along the parenting journey from infancy to adolescence.

**Attainable and measurable goals.** Second, the milestones present attainable short-term goals for parents as they become trained to prepare their child for a specific milestone. Rather than attempting to communicate too many expectations at a single parent training, each milestone prescribes age appropriate objectives that can be attempted by the parent during and following the training period.

**Flexible with God's timing of granting faith.** Third, the milestone strategy is a better tactic to reach the unique children and households within the church. As parents get trained for the precise stage of their child's age and development, they are ready to personally help their child grow in the faith where they are presently. In contrast to the confirmation approach where faith is confirmed at a particular age, the milestone strategy

---

<sup>56</sup>Brian Haynes, *All about Family Faith Celebrations* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2011).

<sup>57</sup>Steven Johnson, "Milestones of Faith: Creating Rhythms through Rites of Passage," *StickyFaith.org*, accessed June 17, 2014, <http://stickyfaith.org/articles/milestones-of-faith>.

calls for appropriate responses of faith all along the way. A child may receive Christ during Gospel Beginnings (kindergarten) or Gospel Truth (2<sup>nd</sup> grade), or perhaps not until after Gospel Business (6<sup>th</sup> grade). Regardless of the timing of the Holy Spirit, each milestone calls forth faith in a personal way.

**Creates ongoing momentum through time.** Fourth, each milestone can build upon earlier milestones as parents follow the course of the milestones. If a parent journeys with the process from their child's infancy through later milestones, there will be multiple competencies and habits established in the home. Parents may build on past success as they proceed from one milestone to the next. Momentum is further established because it is not the latest seminar that comes and then disappears. The milestone strategy becomes a church's own ongoing, custom-designed parent-training program as Charles Sell advocated for in his classic, *Family Ministry*:

The vast variety of philosophies and methods of parent training creates difficult choices for church leaders. The best option open to them is to create their own parent-training program. A program like this has the advantage of continuing over a long period of weeks instead of only a brief weekend or a series of evenings. Local church seminars and courses can provide the necessary time to consider subject in depth as well as provide practice, experience, and group support.<sup>58</sup>

As churches look beyond short bursts of weekend seminars and invest in periodic short-term parent-training that is part of a larger process, the work of family equipping will be greatly advanced.

**Connect generations in mutual support and accountability.** Fifth, the milestones strategy implemented at Cornerstone creates support and accountability through small group breakouts led by experienced parents. As these more mature parents walk alongside of the participants, these facilitators will be available to share their struggles, gently encourage, and provide natural accountability. This strategy for support

---

<sup>58</sup>Charles M. Sell, *Family Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 155.

will also create a growing network of intergenerational relationships in the Body of Christ as Titus 2:2-8 directs. Through small groups older men and women may positively influence younger parents through their example and experience.

**Celebrates accomplishments publically.** Sixth, since each milestone has a milestone event and/or church-wide recognition, there are celebrations to provide affirmation and reward for reaching the objectives of the milestone. At the recognition before the congregation on Sunday morning, parents and children are encouraged to fulfill their God-given roles. Just as churches commission mission teams and other ministries, so they now have an opportunity to commission and pray for parents in their ministry. By celebrating a milestone, the goals of family-equipping ministry to acknowledge, train, and hold responsible parents as primary disciple-makers is valued. The impact of celebrations is something that Andy Stanley realized with respect to baptism at his church:

We do baptisms right in the middle of our services. . . . Our baptisms are probably the best vision casting event in the life of the church because it's a story that says, "Here's what we came to do. We came to lead people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, and you just saw it. That's what it looks like...The things that an organization celebrates...are what the organization values. I tell leaders all the time, "You want to internalize your values in the organization? Just start celebrating what you value." People will value what you celebrate, and they will celebrate what you value.<sup>59</sup>

This is exactly what Faith Milestones celebrations aim to accomplish. We want everyone in our congregation to value the role of parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children. Therefore, we ought to celebrate efforts of family discipleship in a visible manner. The church-wide milestone recognitions exist to do more than build congregational awareness. They communicate that parental engagement is valued at the church. As Jones says in *Family Ministry Field Guide*, "Instead of assuming that parents

---

<sup>59</sup>Andy Stanley, "10 Years of Outreach: A Vision to Celebrate," *Outreach*, iPad ed., January/February 2013, 44.

already know what to do to become primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives, family-equipping ministries intentionally over-communicate, taking every opportunity to acknowledge parents’ divinely designated role.”<sup>60</sup>

**Complements existing church ministry.** Seventh, since the milestone strategy is so flexible, it can be utilized in almost any environment and any church ministry approach. It does not matter what model of ministry best describes ones church, whether it be family-based, family-equipping, or family-integrated,<sup>61</sup> milestones can provide a welcome enhancement to the model that is presently in place. A church may successfully implement a milestone strategy regardless of size, location or resources. In fact, churches will likely discover that implementing milestones will reinvigorate existing ministry because each milestone training creates a point time when all parents of children at a particular age will receive an invitation or call to participate and reconnect with church leaders.

**May be developed in phases.** Eighth, the milestone approach in a particular church may be developed over time in multiple phases of implementation. Since most churches already practice infant baptism or baby dedication that may be identified as the first milestone. An existing celebration or event might also be reinvigorated with a parent equipping purpose. Developing a milestone strategy at a local church is more like urban planning and less like building a boat. While a boat requires completion to stay afloat, urban planning is an ongoing process of improvement in phases according to a broader vision. After creating a vision of a number of fitting milestones, a church may begin with one or more and develop the full program as personnel and budget allow.

---

<sup>60</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 116.

<sup>61</sup>Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 52.

## **Conclusion**

Sociological research demonstrates not only how important parents are but also how much parents need support and help. Since parents are so influential, church leaders should aim to equip them on an ongoing basis to counter their tendency to engage less and less as children age. The church's role of equipping may be accomplished in a natural and effective way through the milestone strategy and may help build momentum in church programming and family life through strategic years. The specific description of this program as it was carried out will be the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

The Faith Milestones project was implemented at Cornerstone over a twenty-week period from January 26 through June 8, 2014. This chapter will describe the project as a whole, recount the planning and promotion of the project, and finally, summarize the twenty weeks of project implementation in chronological order.

#### **Description of the Project**

As a result of the project, Faith Milestones is now an ongoing ministry initiative at Cornerstone where church leaders equip parents to disciple their own children at strategic intervals along a coordinated path. During the project, church leaders for each particular milestone trained parents in a two or five-week class to exhort parents to their role, and to equip them to faithfully prepare their son or daughter for participation in the age-appropriate milestone. The four milestones that were established were linked together as one program so that, as parents and children progress through time, they will be able to progress through successive milestones as their children reach new stages.

Prior to Faith Milestones, three ministry events existed that contained elements of milestone distinctives. These events were Infant Baptism/Baby Dedication, Second Grade Bible Reception, and J12 Rite of Passage. Each event stood alone on its own merits and did not share a common purpose or vision with the others. As the Generational Discipleship team met to discuss implementing a milestone strategy to equip parents, these three events were considered alongside of other options. It was determined that these three could be developed into a series of rites of passage under one heading with common objectives. The central aim was that each rite of passage would be

used to equip parents to engage in discipleship at home in preparation for the age appropriate milestone.

In addition to these three existing events, a new milestone, Gospel Beginnings, was created and incorporated into the program to fill in the gap between infancy and second grade. During the planning phase these four milestones were developed. They were named, Gospel Promises (Infant Baptism or Dedication), Gospel Beginnings (Essentials for Kindergarteners), Gospel Truth (Second Grade Bible Reception), and Gospel Business (J12 Rite of Passage for Sixth Graders). There is room for other milestones to be added in the future in an ongoing program within our church.

A core element of each milestone was classroom teaching for multiple weeks where a church leader acknowledged, trained, and held accountable, parents as primary disciple-makers. Parents were equipped to engage with their children at home in preparation for their child's upcoming milestone. Two of the milestones also included support through small group breakouts led by experienced parents who could provide discussion and accountability. Each milestone culminated in an event for celebration and recognition. For the first milestone, Gospel Promises, the celebration and recognition were one event in the Sunday morning service. For the other three milestones special celebrations were planned in the chapel preceding or following church-wide recognitions.

The planning, promotion, and implementation of the project provided many opportunities to make the parents' commission as primary-faith influencers known and communicated.

### **Planning Phase: May through December 2013**

The Generational Discipleship team played a vital role in planning the Faith Milestone project. In order to coordinate three areas of ministry (Children, Students, and Adults), considerable discussion occurred regarding timing and logistics. Critical decisions were made early on that included the following: (1) what milestones we would

develop, (2) what the focus and aim of those milestones would be, and (3) what timing was best to conduct the parent trainings between January and May. During the planning phase, the church's elders and other pastors were informed of our purpose and were involved in giving input to the milestone project.

In May 2013 the vision of the program was shared with the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone to seek his approval and support. Later in that same month the Generational Discipleship team finalized the scope and purpose of each milestone. In July, the vision was shared with the children's ministry team at a one-day planning retreat. Throughout that month, specific objectives were identified with the particular roles that would be played by both children's ministry staff and student ministries staff. After the project proposal was submitted to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Session of Cornerstone also gave their approval to proceed with the project on August 12, 2013.

During the time frame from September to December, all of the timing and logistics of the project were planned out carefully. The curricula were completed, the parent survey was imported into an online survey tool including online registration for particular milestones, volunteers were recruited for various roles, and promotional materials were designed and ordered.

#### **Promotion Phase: December 2013 and January 2014**

During the final eight weeks leading up to the project, considerable effort was exerted communicating the vision of Faith Milestones and inviting parents to become involved. Promotional materials were assembled including a brochure, webpages, PowerPoint slides, posters, a six-foot hallway banner, and other signage using professionally produced images and layouts. In mid-January parents were sent an invitation letter. The vision for Faith Milestones was shared at a congregational meeting on January 19 and a personal appeal to parents was made through a three-minute announcement in all three worship services on Sunday, January 26, 2014.

All parents with children in the home were invited to complete the online survey that included the Family Discipleship Survey and an opportunity to register if their children were at the age of a milestone. With the public announcement in church and the invitation to complete the survey on Sunday, January 26, the project was now underway.

### **Project Implementation Weeks**

#### **Week 1 (January 26)**

Sunday, January 26 marked the beginning of the project. The online survey was open, and many families began responding to the invitations to respond. By the end of the first week the survey had already received fifty-seven respondents. To help connect with other potential participants, emails were sent to parents of infants to personally invite them to register for the first milestone, Gospel Promises, to participate in infant baptism or baby dedication.

#### **Week 2 (February 2)**

During the second week, early results from our survey and feedback from some parents revealed that our chosen teaching time, Wednesday nights, posed a conflict for some parents. These parents either were involved as volunteers in our Wednesday night programming for children and youth, or had children who were not able to stay up that late. After considering several options with the director of children's ministry, plans were made to offer parent training for Gospel Truth on a Saturday morning for those who could not attend on Wednesday nights. This was successfully completed on Saturday, March 1.

#### **Week 3 (February 9)**

On this week, the first parent-training class, Gospel Promises, was offered. As the parents arrived and signed in, paper versions of the online survey were provided for

any parents who had not completed the Family Discipleship Survey through the online registration process. Parents were taught about the role of parents in spiritual formation from scriptures such as Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Psalm 78, and Ephesians 6:4. The teaching also included the role of the church in equipping parents and God's view of children. Parents were given an excerpt from the book, *ApParent Privilege* and asked to submit a photo of their children for use during the church service. Those who had been recruited to serve as observers to conduct the implementation assessment were present during both nights of the training.

#### **Week 4 (February 16)**

The second week of parent training for Gospel Promises included additional teaching about the meaning and significance of infant baptism and baby dedication. The views of covenant baptism versus believer baptism were explained to help parents make an informed decision about which view of baptism their family would practice. Parents were also introduced to the promises that they and the congregation would be making upon celebrating the baptism or dedication. The public commitment that the parents make before the congregation included affirming their own faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, dedicating their child to God unreservedly, pledging to live an exemplary life before their children, committing to pray with and for their children, and promising to participating faithfully in the life of the church as they raise their children in the loving discipline of the Lord.

#### **Week 5 (February 23)**

On Wednesday, February 26, the parent training for Gospel Truth began. Although this was the third milestone in the sequence, the order was selected to work with the church calendar. The director of children's ministry, who also wrote the curriculum for this milestone, led the sessions with help from the Pastor of Generational Discipleship. As the parents arrived and signed in, paper versions of the online survey

were provided for any parents who had not completed the Family Discipleship Survey through the online registration process. A total of sixteen parents participated in this training on Wednesday nights. Other volunteers worked as hostesses, small group leaders, and observers. During this first week parents were introduced to the value of God's Word for themselves and their children. They were given a Bible that they began preparing for their child. During the opening session parents made a bookmark using the letters of their child's name as an acrostic to describe their child. Parents were also encouraged to complete a worksheet at home with their child called "Wild About God's Word," to help them take the topics of the lesson and talk about them up with their child. At each table, a group of parents worked on the Bible and was led in discussion by a small group leader who had been recruited and trained for this milestone. The small group leader's role was to walk alongside of the parents, to provide a listening ear, and to encourage parents to engage with their child at home.

At the end of this week, on Saturday, March 1, a three-hour version of the five-week training was offered for those parents who had communicated their desire to complete the milestone, but who had a scheduling conflict with Wednesday nights. These eight parents did not benefit from the week-to-week interaction, but were introduced to the material and given time to work on the same assignments. They completed the Family Discipleship Survey as well.

### **Week 6 (March 2)**

The second week of Gospel Truth began with characteristics of second grade children and then continued by looking at characteristics of God's Word. One very special part of the teaching included video excerpts in which parents and other adults from our congregation shared how God's Word had been powerfully useful during a situation or season of their lives. One parent shared how God's Word had been an encouragement when her son had to face a blood draw while fighting cancer. In the

small group time, parents were asked how they did with the first assignment, continued work on their child's Bible, and were encouraged to use the "Wild About God's Word" at home with their child.

During this same week, the curricula for all three milestones were assembled and distributed to those who had been selected to assess the curriculum. They began reading and reviewing the curriculum and completed the assessment forms in a timely manner.

### **Week 7 (March 9)**

On Sunday, March 9, our first milestone recognition, Gospel Promises, was conducted in Sunday morning worship. The parents who were presenting their children for infant baptism came before the congregation at the 9:00 a.m. service. The parents who were presenting their children for baby dedication came before the congregation at the 10:30 a.m. service. At both hours the congregation was told about the purpose of Faith Milestones—to equip parents as primary disciple-makers through the vehicle of particular milestones. The meaning of infant baptism and of baby dedication were each explained, and the parents affirmed their faith and their promise to raise their children in the Lord. The congregation responded with their commitment to support these families and their children. As each parent and child participated in baptism or dedication, a slide with their child's name and photograph appeared on the screens of the sanctuary. Both recognitions were concluded with prayers of blessing and thanksgiving. Parents received a certificate of the event along with an invitation to visit the church nursery to select a handmade blanket. The day after the event an email was sent to ask parents to return to the survey site to take the Family Discipleship Survey a second time.

On Wednesday, March 12, the third session of Gospel Truth was cancelled due to inclement weather. That session was combined with the fourth session, on March 19 to keep on track with the scheduled celebration and recognition.

**Week 8 (March 16)**

During this week the curriculum for weeks three and four of Gospel Truth were combined into one night. Parents were provided with some basic Bible skills such as chapter and verse references, major sections of the Bible, and study resources so that they would feel competent using the Bible with their own children. The fourth lesson also included two testimonies as examples to help parents share the gospel with their children. Parents continued preparing their child's Bible by marking verses that communicated essential elements of the gospel message. They also continued to build relationships with leaders and with other parents at their tables.

**Week 9 (March 23)**

During this week, Gospel Truth was completed in time for the celebration and recognition on the coming Sunday. Parents were taught about the value and practices of blessing their children, and they each chose a verse from the Bible to speak as a regular blessing to their child. The curriculum included a list of famous Bible stories that parents and children could plan to read together once the Bibles had been received. Parents also completed the preparation of their children's Bibles and were reminded about the details for the recognition in service and the celebration on Sunday afternoon.

**Week 10 (March 30)**

On Sunday, March 30, the recognition for Gospel Truth was conducted during the 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. worship services. Parents chose ahead of time which service would work best for their family and stood before the congregation with their second grade children. The director of children's ministry recounted the journey that these families had been on to prepare for the milestone. The goal of equipping parents through Faith Milestones was again emphasized to the whole congregation. The Pastor for Generational Discipleship encouraged the parents of the church that they each have a ministry toward their children and then offered a prayer of consecration and blessing for

these second graders and their parents.

In the afternoon of March 30, the families gathered again for the celebration of the milestone, Gospel Truth, also known as Second Grade Bible Reception. The room was tastefully decorated and included a special dessert reception for the children and their families. Following some introductory remarks, the Pastor for Generational Discipleship brought a devotional message about the value of God's Word. To impress upon the children and the parents who were gathered that God's Word is as sweet as honey, everyone in the chapel was given a honey stick that they opened in their mouth and tasted simultaneously. Parents were also given a book, *ApParent Privilege*, as a gift to encourage them in their role as the primary disciple-makers in the home. Parents were reminded to visit the online survey to complete Family Discipleship Survey for the second time. An email also was sent to enable them to click through to the survey.

This week also included the implementation of two new milestones—Gospel Beginnings and Gospel Business. The Pastor for Generational Discipleship led Gospel Beginnings, and the director of student ministries led Gospel Business. As the parents arrived at their specific training, paper versions of the online survey were provided for any parents who had not completed the Family Discipleship Survey through the online registration process.

The first week of Gospel Beginnings opened with the theme of children's capacity as image bearers to know God. The class examined the story of Samuel's call (1 Sam 3) and the account of Jesus welcoming the children (Mark 10:13-36). Parents were introduced to the process of preparing for the milestone including their role in leading their children in faith talks using the provided resources. Beginning with week one, parents were given specific assignments to prepare to lead their children. At the end of the teaching time, parents gathered in small group breakouts to meet their small group leaders and get to know the others in the group.

In another location of the building, the first meeting for Gospel Business

provided an orientation for parents with sixth graders, who would be engaging in their milestone. The director of student ministries gave the parents the discussion materials and helped them to understand the process. On that following Saturday, April 5, the student ministries team used an event called “Build-It Day” to provide further training for students and parents who were involved in Gospel Business. The students had sessions about faith in Christ, Bible reading, and prayer, as well as teaching on the meaning and practice of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The parents enjoyed a morning session where they were encouraged to press on in their role as primary disciple-makers through participation in church and faith talks at home. While Gospel Business was not subject to the project research, it was included in Faith Milestones as a visible part of the church’s program.

### **Week 11 (April 6)**

The second session of Gospel Beginnings taught parents about God’s commission to teach their own children. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 was the basis for the teaching time, and included not only why God chooses parents as primary disciple makers, but also practical steps to live that out in the home. Parents were asked to complete the first two faith talks on Genesis 1 with their children. Parents met in their assigned small groups to discuss follow-through from the first week and clarify their assignments to prepare their son or daughter for the milestone.

Having completed Gospel Truth, those involved in that milestone met to engage in after-action review. Elder Vernon Hoffner, one of the elders assessing the implementation led the team through a series of questions: What did we intend to do? How was that accomplished? What went well? What might we do differently? What will we do about it? Answers to those questions were written down and will be used to improve future cycles of Faith Milestones.

**Week 12 (April 13)**

Due to Holy Week and Easter Sunday, no activity occurred for Faith Milestones during this week.

**Week 13 (April 20)**

The third session of Gospel Beginnings focused on encouraging parents to conduct faith talks with their children. Now that they had done one or more faith talks with their child, the class teaching followed up with rationale for talking about faith at home and advice about how to conduct faith talks fruitfully. Parents met with their small groups where they continued to receive encouragement to faithfully carry out their assignments at home.

**Week 14 (April 27)**

The fourth session of Gospel Beginnings introduced the tool of catechisms to the parents. Parents learned what a catechism is, how it may be beneficial, and how to use one effectively at home. The faith talk guides included catechism questions, so parents already had some experience using a catechetical tool. The parents met with their small groups to discuss their experience and to encourage continued engagement.

**Week 15 (May 4)**

The fifth session of Gospel Beginnings gave parents direction about how to lead their children to faith in Jesus Christ. The faith talk guides had been designed to explain the good news of the gospel through the framework of creation, fall, and redemption, so it was natural to discuss how parents may be used by God to lead their children to receive Christ. Specific direction was provided about how to invite a response of repentance and faith as well as how to discern where their child was in their faith journey. The fifth and final session concluded with a large group discussion to wrap up their experience as parents. Parents were encouraged to complete the assigned faith talks in preparation for the breakfast on Saturday.

The Gospel Beginnings Breakfast on Saturday, May 10, was the celebration event for the kindergarteners and first graders who had completed the second Faith Milestone, Gospel Beginnings. The chapel was decorated with a Rainforest Cafe theme. There was a large tree in the center of the room, representing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as well as real mounted animals, including an African white lion! After families enjoyed a pancake breakfast together, the Pastor for Generational Discipleship recapitulated the message of creation, fall, and redemption through Jesus. The group sang the songs that had been written to go with the fifteen catechism questions that they had been learning. Each child who participated came forward with his or her parents, where mom or dad presented a certificate of recognition to their own child. Families were encouraged to gather for a photo-op in front of some of the animals to provide a memento of the event.

During this week, parents who were involved in the fourth milestone, Gospel Business, also gathered for a third time to make sure they had completed their tasks to prepare their sixth graders for the upcoming rite of passage. Specifically, there were asked to have six strategic conversations with their son or daughter and also write a letter that they would read on the night of the celebration event.

### **Week 16 (May 11)**

On Wednesday, May 15, sixth graders and their parents gathered to celebrate the fourth milestone, Gospel Business. Gospel Business was adapted from a program called J12 that has existed at Cornerstone for over a decade and was incorporated into the Faith Milestones project. Each year the director of student ministries has given more and more of the discipling role to the parents in a shared partnership between church and home. The celebration was a very special event. The room was decorated with a throne room theme with a large throne chair at the front of the room and an aisle runner up the center flanked by white pillars. The tables were set with candles and tasteful decorations

communicating that this was a special night. Parents and their sixth graders were photographed upon arrival so that they could take home a photo memento. Following a dessert reception, the director of student ministries recounted the theme of the milestone, that students were being challenged as they reached adolescence to walk in a way that was faithful to Jesus even though that meant being different from the world. The sixth grade children were called to three commitments: (1) to be about their Father's business, (2) to walk closely with God, (3) and to be a blessing to their parents by respecting them and heeding their wisdom. All 25 sixth graders affirmed their commitment to live this way as they moved through this milestone and toward their teen years.

### **Week 17 (May 18)**

On Sunday May 18, the participants in Gospel Business were recognized before the congregation. The director of student ministries spoke to the congregation to explain the purpose of the milestone—how parents had been further equipped and how students were being challenged to live for God. The students were introduced by name, followed by enthusiastic applause. The students were prayed over and then returned to their seats. Having completed all the training along with the celebrations and recognitions, parents who participated were sent a series of reminders to return to the online survey site, where they could take the Family Discipleship Survey a second time.

### **Weeks 18 and 19 (May 25 and June 1)**

On these two weeks there was no further activity other than collecting more surveys and reminding parents to return to the survey if their results were still not completed. Throughout this time the results of the survey were gathered and put into an Excel spreadsheet where the numbers could be used for assessing the results. Each parent who participated and completed the survey before and after, as requested, was assigned a specific number so that a *t*-test for dependent samples could be conducted.

The second time through the survey, parents were asked to respond to two

additional questions. First, they were asked how Faith Milestones helped them as primary disciple-makers in the home (#24) and how Faith Milestones could be improved (#25), see appendix 3. The comments from these questions were assembled in a separate document. During these weeks the Milestone Implementation Assessments and the Curriculum Assessments were collected and assembled for use in the evaluation process.

### **Week 20 (June 8)**

Due to scheduling conflicts in Sunday morning worship, the recognition for Gospel Beginnings was delayed until Sunday, June 8, almost one month after the celebration. On this morning the kindergarteners and first graders who participated came to the front of the sanctuary with their parents to be recognized before the whole congregation. The Pastor for Generational Discipleship reminded the congregation about our church's growing priority to equip parents within the church and that Faith Milestones was a vehicle to accomplish that end. A sample of the catechism questions that were used to teach creation, fall and redemption were read. The children and the parents were commended and prayed over before the congregation. With this final church-wide recognition the Faith Milestones project came to a close.

### **Conclusion**

The execution of this project was somewhat complex as four milestones were being implemented in a short time frame. As noted in chapter 1, a primary limitation of the project was its twenty-week duration. One result of this limitation was that when inclement weather in March required canceling week 3 of Gospel Truth, there were no buffer weeks to make up the class before the celebration. This obstacle was overcome by teaching two lessons during the fourth session. Naturally, this resulted in 20 percent less classroom time for parent training and Bible preparation. The lessons were abridged and some parents came in on their own time to finish their Bible preparation.

The limited duration of the project also necessitated conducting two parent

trainings simultaneously. Specifically, the second milestone, Gospel Promises, and the fourth milestone, Gospel Business, both met for training on the same nights for the first and last meetings (April 2 and May 7). The potential problem was that any family who had children in both milestones would have two times where they were called upon to be present at two locations. Thankfully, there was only one household that had children in these two particular milestones this year. As a two-parent home, this household was able to have the father and mother each attend different parent training meetings simultaneously.

Third, the limited duration of the project resulted in greater intensity of recognitions during Sunday worship. Without this limitation, the recognitions could have been spaced more evenly throughout the year. This was overcome by taking additional time to plan Sunday worship requests during the planning phase. Arguably, this intensity was helpful during the first year of implementation as the congregation quickly became familiar with Faith Milestones due to its frequent repetition. Recognitions occurred on March 9, March 30, May 18, and June 8. In the future, as Faith Milestones is practiced at Cornerstone, it will be advisable to conduct Gospel Beginnings, or another milestone, in the fall to alleviate congestion.

In summary, the logistics of the whole project ran quite smoothly. By the twentieth week, all the milestone trainings, celebrations, and recognitions were complete, and the parents had completed the survey before and after their participation. The assessment of the project will be the subject of the next and final chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This fifth and final chapter will be used to communicate an evaluation of the Faith Milestones project at Cornerstone. In summary, Faith Milestones successfully fulfilled its purpose and met the goals established for it. The project's purpose and goals will be evaluated using the criteria described in chapter 1. Following this, the project will be considered for its strengths and weaknesses with suggested improvements. Finally, the project will be reflected upon from a theological and personal point of view.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this project was to develop and implement an effective process to equip parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children in the home through the strategy of Faith Milestones at Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brighton, Michigan. That purpose was met through the 20 weeks of the project as a new process of equipping parents was developed and implemented at Cornerstone. The effectiveness of this intervention will be evaluated by examining the specific goals for the project. Three goals were established for this project and will be considered one-at-a-time.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

##### **First Goal: Develop Curriculum**

The first goal of the project was to develop curriculum to train parents for the three distinct milestones. These three curricula were completed in early January and submitted to three observers from Cornerstone to evaluate according to the criteria of the assessment. One observer was an elder for Generational Discipleship; one observer was

a staff person from Cornerstone children's ministry; and one observer was an elder with a master's degree in education and a doctorate in human development and family studies.

The curriculum assessment scores indicated that the criteria were successfully met. The ten criteria, which may be seen in appendix 1, were measured with a numerical range of 1 to 4, where 1 represented "did not meet expectations," and 4 represented "exceeded expectations." The tabulation of the three assessments by the three observers resulted in a raw score of 33.9, which met the stated goal of scoring 30 out of 40 points.

While the curriculum met or exceeded expectations overall, one weakness the assessments revealed was that the stated objectives for each lesson in the curricula should have been worded to be more clearly measurable. Expectation B stated, "Each lesson moves to accomplish a clear objective for that element of parent equipping."

At the same time, the curriculum met or exceeded expectations in the following five areas: designed with an overall framework that served the purpose of the milestone (criterion A), approached each topic using Scripture as the foundation and basis (D), presented the content in an orderly manner (E), was accessible to parents at various stages (G), and used Scripture throughout and reflected biblical faithfulness in all areas of content (J). The curriculum used during Faith Milestones is included in appendix 4.

### **Second Goal: Effectively Implement**

The second goal of the project was to effectively implement the first three Faith Milestones in the program according to predetermined aims. These aims were listed in the goal section of chapter 1 and enumerated on the assessment forms of appendix 2. Six observers each completed an evaluation to assess the attainment of the objectives of one of the three milestones. These observers were present in training classes, during small group breakout sessions, and at celebrations and recognitions. The assessments were provided ahead of time so that the observers could know what they

were asked to observe as the milestone transpired.

The results of milestone implementation assessments indicated that the criteria for implementation were successfully completed. The goal was successfully met, as the raw score from the six assessments scored 61.5 out of 80 exceeding the minimum of 60 points deemed to qualify as success. It should be noted that one section of the implementation assessment was not applicable for the first milestone, since small groups were not used there. Omitting the scores that were not applicable (objective 3 for milestone 1, provide support/accountability) and using the averages to recalculate renders an adjusted score of 64.4. Regardless of the adjustment, any score over 60 represents having fully met the stated objectives. Overall, the implementation of Faith Milestones successfully met the expectations enumerated for all five objectives: communicate the vision, provide training, provide support/accountability, celebrate the milestone, and encourage ongoing practices.

### **Third Goal: Improved Perceptions and Practices**

The third goal of the project was for parents to demonstrate improved perceptions and practices in family discipleship as a result of participating in one milestone of the Faith Milestones program. Eighty parents completed the Family Discipleship Survey before and after participating in at least one Faith Milestone. Fifty-one participants of that group participated in the three milestones that were subject to the research.

By pairing the pre- and post-test results from each participant, a *t*-test for dependent samples could be conducted. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the means of the pre-test and post-test scores. The research hypothesis states that there will be a difference in the pre-test and post-test scores, thus rejecting a null hypothesis. This research hypothesis was confirmed, as engagement in at least one Faith Milestone by the sample of parents across three distinct milestones made a

statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their perception and practices of family discipleship ( $t_{(50)} = 6.555346$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ). Appendix 5 contains tables of data relating to the *t*-test.

Further observation of the data reveals that of the 16 questions in the pre- and post-test, 2 answers increased by at least one whole point on average on the Likert scale across the 51 samples. On question 16: “How often in the past year has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child’s spiritual development?”, that average moved from 2.29 to 3.49, where 1 represented “never,” 2 represented “once,” 3 represented “a couple of times,” and 4 represented “three or four times,” etc. Interestingly, on the pre-test for this question, 43 percent responded that they had never been contacted in the past year, but on the post-test that percentage dropped to less than 4 percent. (See table A6 in appendix 5.) Of that 43 percent, one third (or 8 of 22) responded in the post-test with an answer of 4 or higher, meaning that a church leader had now made contact three or more times, in the past year, to help them engage actively in their child’s spiritual development.

Another question where the average increased by one whole point on average on the Likert scale was question 8: “My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.” While only 2 percent answered, “strongly agree” at the beginning, more than 23 percent answered, “strongly agree” afterward. In the post-test, an overwhelming 67 percent answered question 8 as either 5 or 6, indicating “agree” or “strongly agree.” (See table A4 in appendix 5.) From this, one may conclude that parents perceived that a church leader had now reached out to help them engage actively in their child’s spiritual development and that the church had helped them to develop a clear plan for their child’s spiritual growth.

Other survey questions where the average increased in a notable measure were questions 1 and 13, where the average increased by approximately one-half point on average on the Likert scale. Question 1 stated, “I prioritize consistent family devotional

or worship times in my family’s schedule.” Question 13 stated, “How many times in the past *two months* has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?” (See table A3 and table A5 in appendix 5.) These results demonstrate that parents had increased perception and/or practices in the area of family devotion or worship times.

### **Strengths of the Project**

Perhaps the greatest strength of the project was that Faith Milestone created greater impetus for church leaders to actively equip parents. More than ever before, ministry leaders intentionally developed curriculum to acknowledge and train parents in their role as primary disciple-makers in the home. The pastor for Generational Discipleship, the director of student ministries and the director of children’s ministries were all involved in developing or enhancing existing curriculum to equip parents. Each of them also taught that curriculum to parents face-to-face in a classroom for at least three hours, and in some cases more than five hours.

A second strength of the project was that Faith Milestones established a platform of communication at Cornerstone to advance the vision of equipping parents. The various opportunities afforded through promotion, invitation, training times, celebrations, and recognitions were used to capitalize on acknowledging parents as the primary disciple-makers of their own children.

A third strength of the project was that it combined the elements of parental acknowledgment, training, and accountability into a singular process that resulted in dramatic results. As mentioned in the rationale for the project, Cornerstone had initiated elements of Family Discipleship but since they were disconnected, none of these elements alone had a discernable impact. Parents expressed appreciation for the way that the whole program came together. One parent said in the comment section of the survey,

[Faith Milestones] gave us structure, motivation, and accountability! Lots of new ideas, resources, help. This important job/role is sometimes difficult to create a

plan for and/or break down into specific lessons. Faith Milestones helped give us the plan and lessons to work on with our children.<sup>1</sup>

A fourth strength was that Faith Milestones integrated celebrations into the process of family discipleship. At the outset of the training, the plan of an upcoming celebration provided a specific time frame that generated urgency. As the milestone celebration arrived, the celebration brought closure as accomplishments were acknowledged, success was celebrated, and faith was reinforced. Through the recognitions, parents and children received validation by church leaders who recognized these families' involvement before the congregation.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

One weakness of the project was that the time frame in which perceptions and practices were observed was very abbreviated. Knowing that practices are difficult to maintain once accountability or weekly classes have ended, it would have been instructive to know what practices parents continued after the celebrations. Furthermore, while parents were given resources, or made aware of resources, when the process was over, successful parents would need significant resolve to carry on as thoroughly as during the milestone. Furthermore, since the faith talks were closely tied to the milestone, but not to a lifestyle of parent-directed discipleship, there was no intentional bridge back into everyday life. The survey results communicate that parents were ignited for a brief period of time, but like building a fire, unless there is persistence to fan the flame into the kindling and larger logs, the fire itself will be short lived. It is good to know that parents seemed to have a positive experience with family discipleship, faith talks, and spiritual conversations; and these positive experiences can be building blocks for the future. But the limitation of the project and its research raises important questions about what it might take to create sustainable practices. This element of the project could

---

<sup>1</sup>Male participant, comment from Family Discipleship Survey, online survey, June 4, 2014.

have been improved by creating a post-milestone resource that was week-by-week and by planning a follow-up meeting several months afterward. The project design could have also been lengthened to take an additional survey at the three-month mark after the milestone celebration.

A second weakness of the project was that the training and communication with the small group leaders was insufficient to fully support them in their role to encourage and hold parents accountable. Improved training could have further clarified expectations to the small group leaders about support and accountability toward parents. As it was, the leaders were supportive of the group members but less certain about asking for more out of parents who did not perform strongly. There were several parents who did not complete the faith talk guides or the “Wild About God’s Word” sections in milestones two and three. The project would have been stronger if the small group leaders were more prepared to engage actively with those who struggled. More extensive leader training could have included earlier access to the training materials, example scenarios, guidelines and goals for parental engagement, measurable expectations week-by-week, and meetings with each leader individually to ask them how individual participants were doing along the way.

A third area of weakness was that the second and third milestone trainings, while very well designed to instruct parents, did not connect the parents and the children together as deeply as projected. Since some parents only did portions of the faith talks or “Wild About God’s Word,” children could have been brought to the celebration or recognition with little anticipation or understanding. One parent commented thoughtfully, “As it was, only I attended a class on behalf of my child in preparation for this event. Because of this, my second grader didn’t have as much of a connection or stake in this reception day, as not much of their time or attention was directed toward this

important ‘milestone’ in their life.”<sup>2</sup> One way to strengthen this weakness would be by including more explicit directions within the curriculum of the need for parents to talk about the milestone at home with their children. Parents could be provided with sample scripts or talking points to share explicitly with their children. Another means to strengthening the project at this point would be to have children attend class with their parents for one or two weeks to talk about the upcoming journey. By having children attend the parent training for even ten to fifteen minutes at two class times, they would get connected to the process with parents, church and other children. In fact, one participant suggested in the survey that, “maybe the last [ten minutes] of the class our kids could come down to the meeting and we could take that time individually to spend a few minutes with them reading the Bible.”<sup>3</sup> With this improvement the celebration or recognition would not be the first time that both parents and children are gathered in one place to talk about the milestone.

A fourth weakness of the project was a lack of attention toward parents who registered for but did not complete a milestone. Some of the parents registered online but never made it to the parent trainings. Some parents began the trainings but missed 2 or more of the 5 sessions. Some parents attended the trainings but were not present for either the celebration or recognition. Since the third goal of the project was for parents to demonstrate improved perceptions and practices in family discipleship as a result of participating in one milestone, the survey focused on participants who finished, but did not pursue those parents who never started or did not complete their participation. The project demonstrated a statistically significant difference among participants. But what about the impact upon non-participants, or upon those whose participation was incomplete? For those who have a pastoral concern for all the families in their

---

<sup>2</sup>Female participant, comment from Family Discipleship Survey, online survey, April 2, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>Male participant 2, comment from Family Discipleship Survey, online survey, June 6, 2014.

congregation, success should not be measured merely by improvement among those who completed the course, but by improvement among all who indicated interest. Arguably, those parents who were involved the least are the ones who may need our encouragement and equipping the most.

One way to quantify the scope of this concern is to observe the retention rates of the participants. Retention rates were very high in Gospel Promises and Gospel Truth at 100 percent and 96 percent, respectively. Gospel Beginnings had a more moderate retention rate at 68 percent of those who attended at least once. Of the 48 parents who registered for Gospel Beginnings, 41 parents attended at least one class, and 28 parents attended 4 or more of the 5 classes. Interestingly, Gospel Beginnings required much more of parents, in terms of engagement at home, compared to the other milestones. Table 2 summarizes the retention rates of the milestones in the study.

Table 2. Faith Milestone Retention Rates

Milestones	Registered online via survey	Attended class at least once	Attended 80% or more	Retention rate of registrants	Retention rate of attendees
Gospel Promises	8	8	8	100%	100%
Gospel Beginnings	48	41	28	58%	68%
Gospel Truth	26	25	24	92%	96%
Combined Totals	82	74	60	73%	81%

Listening to the experience of those who failed to complete a milestone might yield insights for church leaders to activate those who are hardest to reach in the goal of equipping parents. Noting the reasons for their cessation and the point at which it happened could help provide solutions to more effectively involve families who are more peripheral to the church’s process of equipping parents. Parents who registered but did not attend could be asked about their experience and expectations. Parents who attended but did not finish could be asked about their experience and expectations as well.

## **Suggested Improvements**

Based on the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the project, the following suggestions for improvements are offered. First, follow-through at a pre-determined point of time, two or four months after the milestone, would enhance the research of the project as well as the potential impact. Such a follow-through could either involve retaking the Family Discipleship Survey, or involve an interview process. While far from a longitudinal study, simply aiming to measure further out would cause both the leader and the participants to think about practices after the milestone.

Second, follow-through with parents who did not complete the milestone would be instrumental in learning how to reach parents who may struggle the most to engage in family discipleship. Failure to complete a milestone does not necessarily correlate to weakness in family discipleship, as other factors may have made the process poor timing. However, one wonders whether the lack of commitment to the parent training reveals lack of commitment to family discipleship on the whole. A well-designed interview with those subjects would yield deeper insights as mentioned above.

Third, more extensive training of small group leaders together with frequent meetings to review progress would improve the impact of the project. And fourth, as mentioned in the weaknesses, some children were not as well connected to the milestone, particularly in Gospel Truth and Gospel Beginnings. Such a class time is part of the training for Gospel Business, and this milestone could be used as an example of engaging with the children directly. In the meantime, a very easy solution to strengthen the connection with the children, would be inviting them into the parent-training classroom at least once or twice.

## **Theological Reflections**

Chapter 2 focused on the theological and scriptural basis for this project. The thesis of that chapter, that God used congregational leaders such as Moses and Paul not only to exhort parents to act as the primary disciple-makers of their children but also to

equip parents to fulfill their role, is a worthy starting point for theological reflection. God, as the designer of the human family, has given instructions to his people in his Word. These instructions begin with the call to faithfully repeat and teach of the words of his covenant to our children. The instructions also describe with sufficient detail the vision of what that looks like in the home. Beginning with Moses' day and continuing to the present, generations of families may model their homes from these words.

Reflecting on the magnitude of God's commandments and of the magnitude of this truth and character reveals that this project has only touched the surface of full-orbed family discipleship. Since the family is the formation center for all of life, this entire project is but a very humble beginning to a much deeper and broader journey that families ought to take to teach and live out the whole counsel of God in their lives.

Lastly, seeking to obey God's Word, not just in terms of faith, but also in terms of practice is well worth the effort. God's Word is the sufficient source of truth for faith and life. The church today focuses much on what truth we are to believe from God's Word, but the church would do well to also search for what instructions we are to practice from God's Word. That effort to seek wisdom about the ordering of our common life and then striving to practice it is worth the pursuit. By seeking to equip parents at Cornerstone, we have activated the very people God has directly commanded to disciple the next generation. God is pleased when both the church and the home seek his counsel.

### **Personal Reflections**

While all our efforts to obey faithfully can and will falter, the desire to glorify God and present our children before his throne through the gospel is to be the continual goal of every parent. God cares about this enough to provide examples of equipping. He tells us that he has appointed leaders of the church to act in this equipping role. Faith Milestones has entered this stream and the results have been very encouraging. There is

still a long way to go, but a beachhead for the advancement of family discipleship has begun at Cornerstone.

It has been very satisfying to see the immediate results of this project. Cornerstone has established a process to equip parents to engage in family discipleship with their children in the home. This process ensures that every family in our church will be contacted at periodic intervals to offer parent-equipping at each milestone. The whole congregation has been invited to participate, and many adults of varied ages and gifts have joined in. The celebration and recognitions have demonstrated to parents, children, and the whole congregation that we value equipping parents to disciple the next generation.

Greater yet, however, will be the fruit that hopefully will be borne in the lives of parents and children for the gospel. What a delight it would be to know that eternity has been impacted as children respond to the gospel through their parents who were trained through Faith Milestones! The Apostle John said, “I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth” (3 John 1:4). It is extremely fulfilling to see that joy multiplied throughout households of the people of God.

### **Conclusion**

The family has been designed by God to be a powerful tool for human formation in general and spiritual formation in particular. On various occasions, God directed leaders of his people to call forth the abiding fruit of covenant faithfulness by reestablishing true religion in the home. Faith Milestones was a project that was designed for “such a time as this” (Esth 4:14). Faith Milestones applied a biblical vision for equipping parents at an opportune time in the proper context. Through this strategic initiative, a team of church leaders employed biblical principles of parent-equipping practices in a multi-staff program church. As a result, today, throughout our age-segmented ministries, a common thread of parent-equipping runs throughout the

process—Faith Milestones. Faith Milestones successfully implemented the goals of curriculum development, project implementation, and parental improvement. In its wake there is now an ongoing program to equip parents at strategic intervals. While there is room to improve upon the execution of this program, there are some great successes that have been accomplished.

This fall, a new set of parents will engage in Faith Milestones. Some of these parents will be introduced to new practices and new thoughts about family discipleship for the first time. Each of these parents will be acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the person who is primarily responsible for their child’s spiritual formation. More than merely being reminded of their role, parents will be further equipped. Parents will be given resources to accomplish their role, and together with their children, these parents will celebrate the advancement of the gospel in their lives and hearts, to the glory of God.

APPENDIX 1  
CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess a curriculum used to train parents in the local church. This research is being conducted by Timothy Brown for the purpose of assessing the value of a doctoral ministry project. In this research you will assess a written curriculum. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

**Directions**

In the questions below you will be asked to read and assess the curriculum used for the Faith Milestones project. You will complete one assessment for each of the three milestone curricula you review.

**Background Information**

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Role with respect to the project:

- \_\_\_\_ A. Elder overseeing ministry area
- \_\_\_\_ B. Member asked to evaluate milestone
- \_\_\_\_ C. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Curriculum being assessed on this form:

- Gospel Promises: Parent Training for Infant Baptism/Infant Dedication
- Gospel Beginnings: Parent Training for Parents of Kindergarteners
- Gospel Truth: Parent Training for 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible Reception

<b>Curriculum Assessment</b>				
<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Quality of meeting expectations</i>			
<b>Develop curriculum and appropriate resources used to train parents for the Faith Milestones.</b>	Did not meet (value = 1)	Partially met (2)	Met completely (3)	Exceeded expectations (4)
A. The curriculum is designed with an overall framework that serves the purposes of the milestone.				
B. Each lesson moves to accomplish a clear objective for that element of parent equipping.				
C. The first lesson includes time to inspire and prepare parents for their upcoming role in the process. For milestones two and three, parents will be asked to plan the time they will set aside to do the assignments with their child(ren).				
D. The curriculum approaches each topic using Scripture as the foundation and basis.				
E. The curriculum presents the content in an orderly manner.				
F. The curriculum is well designed to engage the learner. It looks clear, appealing and professional.				
G. The content of the curriculum is accessible to parents at various stages of maturity and spiritual formation.				
H. The curriculum offers practical steps for parents flowing from each lesson.				
I. The curriculum includes a hands-on resource for the parent to use with their child at home following the ongoing lessons.				
J. The curriculum uses Scripture throughout and reflects biblical faithfulness in all areas of content.				
<i>Total raw score for curriculum objectives</i>				

APPENDIX 2  
MILESTONE IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the overall implementation of Faith Milestones. This research is being conducted by Timothy Brown for the purpose of assessing the value of a doctoral ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

**Directions**

This survey is to be completed by a ministry leader or member of Cornerstone. You are requested to have observed at least one meeting of the training as well as the church-wide recognition and the milestone celebration. In the questions below you will be asked to assess specific objectives identified for this project. If there is a question which you have had limited ability to observe, you are encouraged to consult with the ministry leader who led the training and allow them to describe their attempt or action to meet the intended objective in order to more accurately the assessment.

**Background Information**

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Role with respect to the project:

- A. Elder overseeing ministry area
- B. Member asked to evaluate milestone
- C. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Objective 1</b>				
<b>Communicate the Vision</b>				
<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Quality of meeting expectations</i>			
<b>1. Communicate the vision of equipping parents broadly using available communication resources within ministry area at Cornerstone</b>	Did not meet (value = 1)	Partially met (v = 2)	Met completely (3)	Exceeded expectations (4)
1A. The ministry vision statement includes equipping as a goal of the ministry.				
1B. The ministry webpage and/or ministry brochure communicates equipping as goal of the ministry.				
1C. Include a new vocabulary of equipping in at least two parental correspondences (for example, a letter to parents, a newsletter, or an email).				
<i>Total raw score for this objective</i>				

Comments:

<b>Objective 2 Provide Training</b>				
<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Quality of meeting expectations</i>			
<b>2. Provide training designed to equip parents</b>	Did not meet (value = 1)	Partially met (2)	Met completely (3)	Exceeded expectations (4)
2A. Proactively invite all parents whose children are at the suggested age/grade to participate in the milestone and the training. (This may include means such as: postcards, email invitation, or other fitting forms of communication.)				
2B. Register families in advance and provide access to the family discipleship survey prior to the first meeting.				
2C. Ensure that all participants have completed the survey prior to the first meeting. (The survey is voluntary and a parent may choose to exclude him or herself.)				
2D. Conduct the class for parents using the curriculum.				
2E. During the training, demonstrate how to use the provided resource at home.				
<i>Total raw score for this objective</i>				

Comments:

<b>Objective 3</b>				
<b>Provide Support/Accountability</b>				
<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Quality of meeting expectations</i>			
<b>3. Provide support and accountability for parents through weekly small group sessions led by seasoned adults in the church</b>	Did not meet (value = 1)	Partially met (2)	Met completely (3)	Exceeded expectations (4)
3A. Identify and select small group leaders to support parents as they go through the training/equipping process with their children. The goal is to involve generations of our church who have passed through this stage to interact with the younger families in strategic, meaningful and encouraging relationships that will hopefully extend beyond the milestone.				
3B. Provide training for small group leaders which includes scope and objectives of the milestone, qualities of a good small group facilitator and clarity about their role—that they are to be an encourager, a sounding board, and a source of accountability making one phone call during the middle of week 2 and having parents update each other weekly in the small group.				
3C. The small group leaders will be present at all parent trainings to lead the breakout sessions each time.				
3D. Meet with the small group leaders midway through the weeks of training to encourage them and solicit feedback.				
<i>Total raw score for this objective</i>				

Comments:

<b>Objective 4 Celebrate the Milestone</b>				
<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Quality of meeting expectations</i>			
<b>4. Create a memorable and meaningful celebration for families as they successfully complete the milestone</b>	Did not meet (value = 1)	Partially met (2)	Met completely (3)	Exceeded expectations (4)
4A. Plan and lead a celebration for the families at a special time where parents and their children are gathered.				
4B. Provide an award/gift for the families who complete the milestone.				
4C. Plan and lead recognition of the families before the whole church on a Sunday morning at the 9:00 and 10:30 services.				
4D. Use the church-wide recognition to reiterate the goal of equipping parents to be active as the primary disciple-maker of their child.				
4E. Use the church-wide recognition to encourage other parents to participate in the future milestones.				
<i>Total raw score for this objective</i>				

Comments:

<b>Objective 5 Encourage Ongoing Practices</b>				
<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Quality of meeting expectations</i>			
<b>5. Encourage parents to continue the practices they have learned by using further resources and staying connected to their small group and/or small group leader.</b>	Did not meet (value = 1)	Partially met (2)	Met completely (3)	Exceeded expectations (4)
5A. Explicitly invite parents to continue with practices and skills learned during preparation for the milestone.				
5B. Provide a recommended book for all parents that would be appropriate for further parent-led discipleship (if the follow-through resource does not provide additional parent-led material).				
5C. Encourage small group leaders to continue their relationship with parents and check in at least once with the small group leader to debrief.				
<i>Total raw score for this objective</i>				

Comments:

<i>Composite Scores</i>	
<i>Objective 1</i>	
<i>Objective 2</i>	
<i>Objective 3</i>	
<i>Objective 4</i>	
<i>Objective 5</i>	
<i>Total:</i>	

APPENDIX 3  
FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY

*Family Discipleship Survey*

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your perception and practices of family discipleship. This research is being conducted by Timothy Brown for the purpose of assessing the value of a doctoral ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions that best correspond to your perceptions and practices. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

**Directions**

This survey is intended for parents with children living at home. If your children are too young to participate in an activity that is described, please honestly assess what you anticipate doing when your children become old enough to participate. For purposes of this survey, “church leaders” includes pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, teachers, or small group leaders.

**Please select the appropriate box:**

- A. I have children in the home  
 B. I do not have children in the home at this time  
(If B, then skip to Q. 30)

## The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.						
02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while. [REVERSE SCORED]						
03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching. [REVERSE SCORED]						
04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me. [REVERSE SCORED]						
05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities— even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together. [REVERSE SCORED]						
06. Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.						
07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. [REVERSE SCORED]						
08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.						

	Never	Once	A couple of times	Three or four times	Five or six times	Seven or more times
09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past <i>week</i> have I prayed aloud with any of my children?						
10. How many times in the past <i>week</i> has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?						
11. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?						
12. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?						
13. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?						
14. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?						
15. How many times in the past <i>year</i> have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?						
16. How often in the past <i>year</i> has any church leader made any contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?						

Copyright © Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011). Used by permission.

21. I am completing this survey:
- A. For the first time (In January/February or prior to a Faith Milestone training) [skip to question 26]
  - B. For the second time (In April/May or at the conclusion of a Faith Milestone training) [proceed to question 22]
22. In which of the following Faith Milestones did you participate this year? (select all that apply)
- A. Gospel Promises—Infant Baptism/Dedication
  - B. Gospel Beginnings—Kindergarten or First Grade
  - C. Gospel Truth—Second Grade Bible Reception
  - D. Gospel Business—J12 Rite of Passage
  - E. None of the above (I did not participate in a milestone in 2014)

[If E, skip to question 30]

24. A primary purpose of Faith Milestones is to equip parents as the primary disciple-makers in the home. Please share your thoughts on how Faith Milestones has helped you as a parent. [text box provided]

25. Please share your thoughts on how Faith Milestones could be improved. The more specific you are about your experience and suggestions, the more helpful your input will be. [text box provided] [proceed to question 30]

26. I have a child who is at one of the following age/grade levels (check all that apply)
- A. Infant (and yet baptized or dedicated)
  - B. Kindergarten or First Grade
  - C. Second Grade
  - D. Sixth Grade
  - E. None of the above

If none of the above, please comment on what grade of school (or preschool) your child or children are in: \_\_\_\_\_

[If E, skip to question 30, end]

### **Opportunity to Register:**

27. Excellent! It appears you have a child who is the appropriate age for at least one of the four Faith Milestones at Cornerstone this year. Faith Milestones is a program to equip you as a parent to disciple your child toward an upcoming spiritual milestone.

The Generational Discipleship leaders at Cornerstone want to provide you with training, resources and support leading up to a milestone celebration and recognition with your child. We invite you to use this page of the survey to register now for the upcoming Wednesday night class designed for parents like you.

To participate in any of this year's Faith Milestones, please select one or more of the appropriate Faith Milestones below. Do not worry about duplicate registrations, each parent in the home should complete the survey and register individually one time.

If you are registering now, please select any or all of the milestones that apply. By selecting a milestone below you are indicating your intention to attend on the dates provided. An email reminder with further details will be sent to you.

If you are not registering now, please select one of the last two options.

- A. Gospel Promises—Infant Baptism/Dedication  
Classes: Two Wednesdays at 7 PM, February 12 and 19, 2014
- B. Gospel Beginnings—Kindergarten or First Grade  
Classes: Five Wednesdays at 7 PM, April 2 thru May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014
- C. Gospel Truth—Second Grade Bible Reception  
Classes: Five Wednesdays at 7 PM, February 26 thru March 26, 2014
- D. Gospel Business—J12 Rite of Passage  
Student Training on Saturday March 29 (Build It Day), plus  
One Parent Meeting: Wednesday, April 23 at 7 PM, 2014
- E. My child is in one of these grade levels, but I am not registering now.
- F. I am not registering now, but would like more information.

If not registering now, please provide any comments that you think would help us. \_\_\_\_\_

[If E skip to Q. 30]

[If F skip to Q. 29]

28. [If registered for one or more Faith Milestone]

Thank you for completing this survey. You will receive a reminder email for the milestone you have registered for.

If you have any questions about Faith Milestones, visit [www.cornerstoneforlife.com](http://www.cornerstoneforlife.com) or call the church office at 810-227-9411.

29. [If not registering, but would like more information]

Thank you for completing this survey. If you would like us to call you about Faith Milestones, please provide a phone number where you can be reached. Otherwise we will use email.

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not receive a contact within two weeks, please call the church office at 810-227-9411.

30. [If no children in the home, none at a milestone age, not registering, or taking the survey a second time]

Thank you for completing this survey. If you have any questions about Faith Milestones, please call the church office at 810-227-9411.

APPENDIX 4  
CURRICULUM

The curriculum of three milestones that were part of the project is included in this appendix: Gospel Promises, Gospel Beginnings, and Gospel Truth.



***Gospel Promises***  
**Parent Training for Infant Baptism/Infant Dedication**

*For the promise is for you and for your children  
and for all who are far off, everyone  
whom the Lord our God calls to himself." Acts 2:39*

***Celebration Events:***

**Infant Baptism**

Sunday, March 9, 2014 – 9:00 a.m. service

**Infant Dedication**

Sunday, March 9, 2014 – 10:30 a.m. service



## Gospel Promises – Lesson One

### The Place of Parents in the Spiritual Formation of Children

#### Welcome and Introductions

##### Opening Questions

- Which parent does your child resemble more?
- What are some things you hope to pass on to your child?
- What do you not want to pass on to your child?<sup>1</sup>

Both baptism and dedication are a time to present our children to the Lord. They are also a time where parents accept a role to nurture their own children. Your role as a parent will be the primary focus of this first week.

#### Topics we will cover together:

##### *Lesson One*

- The place of parents in spiritual formation
- The place of the church toward parents
- The place of children in God's eyes
- Publically affirming God's promise and our promises

##### *Lesson Two*

- The place of baptism as a sacrament
- The place of infant dedication
- The practice of baptism and dedication at Cornerstone

#### The Place of Parents in Spiritual Formation

- As parents God calls you to serve your children as their primary faith influencer:

*Deuteronomy 6:4-7* "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

<sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

What specific commands can you observe in this passage above? Underline them.

---

<sup>1</sup>Mark Holmen and Dave Teixeira, *Take It Home: Inspiration and Events to Help Parents Spiritually Transform Their Children* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2008), 53.

1. Love the Lord your God
2. Internalize God's words for yourself
3. Teach diligently
4. Talk along the way
5. Saturate your life with God

**Psalm 78:1-8** *Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! <sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, <sup>3</sup> things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. <sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. <sup>5</sup> He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, <sup>6</sup> that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, <sup>7</sup> so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; <sup>8</sup> and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God."*

1. "We will...tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord."
2. "He commanded our fathers to teach their children..."
3. "So that they should set their hope in God..."

**Ephesians 6:4** *<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

### **The Place of the Church toward Parents**

- As the church, God calls the leaders and the body of Christ to serve as partners in that faith influence.
- The church provides sound teaching and an enriching example

**Titus 2:1-8** *But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. <sup>2</sup> Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. <sup>3</sup> Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, <sup>4</sup> and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup> to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. <sup>6</sup> Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. <sup>7</sup> Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, <sup>8</sup> and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*

**Philippians 3:17** *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.*

- The church's leadership equips God's people

**Ephesians 4:11-13** *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to **equip the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

1. Believing parents are saints.
2. Parenting is a work of ministry!
3. We want to train, involve and equip you.
4. Journey with us through the Faith Milestones

### **The Place of Children in God's Eyes**

- Children are made by God's special attention

**Psalms 139:13-18** <sup>13</sup> *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. <sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. <sup>17</sup> How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup> If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.*

- Our children have inherited sinful corruption from Adam...through us

**Romans 3:23** <sup>23</sup> *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

**Psalms 51:5** <sup>5</sup> *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

- Our children belong to God.

**Jeremiah 1:5** <sup>5</sup> *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."*

**Genesis 17:7** <sup>7</sup> *And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*

**Acts 2:38-40** <sup>38</sup> *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."*

- Children are welcomed and blessed by Jesus

**Mark 10:13-16** <sup>13</sup> *And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." <sup>16</sup> And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.*

### **Publically affirming God's Promise and Our Promises**

Both infant baptism and infant dedication have a similar function. We will discuss their differences next time, but this week, we'll see what they share in common.

Since God has given these children to us:

- We present our children to the Lord as an act of faith and dependence, asking for his favor.
- We make vows to fulfill God's commands to raise our children in his truth, promising our faithfulness.
- We accept the support of the body of Christ as we raise our children in the fear and the admonition of the Lord.

### **Preparation for week two:**

- Email a photo of your daughter or son to [cknauss@cornerstoneforlife.com](mailto:cknauss@cornerstoneforlife.com) This photo will be used during the baptism or dedication service.
- Read the excerpt from the book *ApParent Priviledge* (pp. 13-29, 40-44)
- Baptisms: Sunday, March 9, 2014 – 9:00 a.m. service
- Dedications: Sunday, March 9, 2014 – 10:30 a.m. service

## Gospel Promises – Lesson Two

### The Promises of Baptism and Dedication

#### Review from Week one:

- As parents God calls you to serve your children as their primary faith influencer:

**Deuteronomy 6:4-7** *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.  
<sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul  
and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be  
on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk  
of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when  
you lie down, and when you rise.*

**Ephesians 6:4** *<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring  
them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

- As the church, God called the leaders and the body of Christ to serve as partners in that faith influence by providing sound teaching and enriching example, and by equipping God's people.
- Children are made by God's special attention.
- Our children have inherited sinful corruption from Adam.
- Our children belong to God.
- Children are welcomed and blessed by Jesus.

#### Publically affirming God's Promise and Our Promises

Both infant baptism and infant dedication have a similar function. We will discuss their differences next time, but this week, we'll see what they share in essential.

Since God has given these children to us:

- We present our children to the Lord as an act of faith and dependence, asking for his favor.
- We make vows to fulfill God's commands to raise our children in his truth, promising our faithfulness.
- We accept the support of the body of Christ as we raise our children in the fear and the admonition of the Lord.

## The Place of Baptism as a Sacrament

- Baptism is commanded by Christ
  - John the Baptist is known for baptizing in the Jordan (Matthew 3:1-6)
  - Jesus was baptized to identify with repenting sinners (Matthew 3:13-17, see Acts 19:3-5)
  - Jesus commanded his Apostles to baptize his followers (Matthew 28:18-20)
    - Baptism is practiced by Apostles (Acts 2:36-41, 8:34-40, 10:47)
    - Obeyed throughout church history
  
- Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace
  - Baptism involves sprinkling or immersing a person with water in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by a church leader or pastor.

*Matthew 28:18-20* <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
  - Baptism itself does not save.

It is a sign that points to the need for the reality—rebirth and newness of life.
  - Baptism is a sign of multiple realities:
    - Washing away our sins (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)
    - Spiritual Rebirth (John 3:5-8, Colossians 2:11-12)
    - The threat of judgment for sin placed on Christ instead by faith (1 Peter 3:21)
    - Being buried with Christ and walking in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4)
    - Putting on Christ (Galatians 3:27)
    - Belonging to the triune God (Matt. 28:18-20)
    - Belonging to the church, the people of God (Acts 2:41)

## Who should receive Christian baptism?

- Everyone who has become a believer in Jesus should be baptized.

*Acts 8:12* But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

- What about children in Christian households?
  - Some Christians include children - covenant baptism
  - Some Christians include only believers – believer’s baptism
- **Covenant baptism** – “Children of believing parents should be baptized.”
  - In scripture God always makes covenants with an individual and their children: Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, etc.
  - Baptism points to the same reality in the New Testament that circumcision pointed to in the Old Testament (see Colossians 2:11-12, Romans 2:28-29). Both are signs of the covenant.
  - Baptism signals the need to live in light of the covenant
  - Household baptisms (were practiced in Acts) and have been practiced through church history.

*Acts 16:14-15* <sup>14</sup> One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup> And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay."

Presbyterians’ position: “baptism is a sign of the covenant, therefore, believers and their children participate in the covenant promises and in the sign of the covenant.”

- **Believer’s baptism** – “Children of believing parents should be evangelized. Baptism is only appropriate upon profession of faith.”
  - According to the Baptist view, “only those who have received Christ by faith should be baptized. This view is called “believers’ baptism” or “credo-baptism.”
  - Baptism is a sign of the covenant, links to Jewish baptism where a non-Jew would wash/immerse themselves to become part of the people of God.
  - Therefore, it functions differently than circumcision. It is a sign of repentance and rebirth.
  - This view is called “believers’ baptism” or “credo-baptism”

The Baptist position: "The children of believing parents may be baptized upon credible profession of faith. In other words, only those who have responded in faith to Jesus."

As Presbyterians we practice covenant baptism but gladly cooperate with those who are persuaded by the believers' baptism view.

- A comparison of the two views:

View	Infant	Youth	Adult
Covenant Baptism	Baptism	Confirmation	If not previously
Believers' Baptism	Dedication	Baptism	If not previously

### The Practice of Infant Dedication at Cornerstone

Since we believe that our children belong to God, those parents who are persuaded that the arguments of believers' baptism are true are encouraged to present their children in dedication.

*Acts 2:39* <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Forms of dedication were have been practiced in the Bible.

#### Samuel

**1 Samuel 1:24-28** <sup>24</sup> Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. <sup>25</sup> Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. <sup>26</sup> She said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup> "For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. <sup>28</sup> "So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there. (New American Standard – update)

#### Firstborn children of Israel

**Exodus 13:1-2** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

## **Jesus at the temple in accordance with Leviticus 12**

*Luke 2:22-24* <sup>22</sup> And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Infant dedication is a public statement by parents of their commitment to raise their children for God's honor and glory. It involves presenting our children in the presence of God's people.

## **The Practice of Baptism and Dedication at Cornerstone**

- We baptize or dedicate the children of believing parents  
(For infant baptism parents must also be members)
- We baptize or dedicate publically in a worship service
- We ask parents to affirm the specific promises

## **Parental and Congregational Commitments**

At both baptism and dedication parents communicate their commitment to bring their child up in the faith and loving discipline of the Lord. They do so by answer the following questions in the affirmative:

1. Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?
2. Do you claim God's covenant promises and benefits for your child and by faith do you look to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your child as you do your own?
3. Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and do you promise by relying on God's power and grace through the Holy Spirit to live an exemplary life before your child?
4. Do you commit yourself to pray with and for your child, to teach your child the Scriptures and the great articles of our faith in Jesus Christ?
5. Do you promise to use every means provided by God, including faithful participation in the life of the church, to bring your child up in the loving discipline of the Lord?

We ask the church to promise their support

1. Do you, the members of this congregation, acting for yourselves and in behalf of the whole Body of Christ, assume responsibility with these parents for the spiritual nurture of these children?
2. Do you commit yourself to set a godly example before these children, to provide as far as you are able, all that is necessary to the end that these children may one day confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

### **The Baptism/Dedication Event**

Following the affirmations we proceed to the baptism or dedication.

- We baptize or dedicate each child in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- We pray for you and your children that they may know Christ and make him known.
- We present you with a certificate.
- We invite you to receive a handmade baby blanket with a card you present at the nursery.
- We encourage you to remain faithful to your promise to teach your children, pray with and for your children, and raise them to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

# Walk the Faith Milestones

*"I have no greater joy than to see that my children are walking in the truth." 3 John 1:4*

## 1. GOSPEL PROMISES – Infant Baptism/Dedication

**Who: Infants and their parents**

- **Scripture theme:** Acts 2:39 "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."
- **Parent Training:** Baptism/Dedication Seminar (two weeks)
- **Celebration:** Baptism or Dedication
- **Competencies:** The Parent as the primary faith influencer

## 2. GOSPEL BEGINNINGS – Essentials For Kindergarteners

**Who: Kindergarteners and their parents**

- **Scriptural Theme:** 1 Corinthians 15:3 "What I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."
- **Parent Training:** Gospel Beginnings (5 weeks)
- **Celebrations:** Gospel Beginnings Breakfast and Church recognition
- **Competencies:** Parents share gospel message with children, children memorize catechism questions about the gospel

## 3. GOSPEL TRUTH – Second Grade Bible Reception

**Who: 2<sup>nd</sup> Graders and their parents**

- **Scripture theme:** John 17:17 "Your word is truth."
- **Parent Training:** Gospel Truth (5 weeks)
- **Celebrations:** Church recognition and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible Reception (2:00 p.m.)
- **Competencies:** Parents learn to read Bible with their child in small batches one-on-one, children learn to value God's word and begin reading it.

## 4. GOSPEL BUSINESS – J12 Rite of Passage

**Who: 6<sup>th</sup> Graders and their parents**

- **Scriptural Theme:** Luke 2:49 "And Jesus said to them...I must be about my Father's business."
- **Church Leader:** Director of Highway 56
- **Parent Training:** Preparation meetings for parents and students
- **Celebrations:** J12 Rite of Passage & J12 recognition
- **Competencies:** For students to understand the gospel, baptism, communion, and God's plan for growing in Christ through the blessing of parents. The priorities of J12 include: Walk with God all our days, honor and bless your parents, to be about your Father's business.

See our full color brochure for more information.



***Gospel Beginnings***  
**Parent Training for Parents of  
Kindergarteners and First Graders**

*"What I received I passed on to you as of first importance:  
that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."  
1 Corinthians 15:3*

***Celebration Events:***

**Gospel Beginnings Breakfast**  
Saturday, May 10, 2014 – 9:00 a.m.

**Gospel Beginnings Recognition**  
Sunday, June 8, 2014 – 10:30 a.m. service

(Teacher's Guide)



## Gospel Beginnings

### **About this milestone...**

Welcome! We are thrilled that you've chosen to participate in the parent training for Gospel Beginnings. This class and the corresponding resources have been designed for you and your kindergarten-aged child. (Older children who have not yet participated may also be included).

Through this second milestone of our Faith Milestones program you will we hope to help you fulfill your God-given role as a disciple-maker of your own children.

During these next five weeks we will introduce several themes:

- The spiritual formation of children
- God's commission to parents
- Establishing Faith Talks at home
- Talking in echoes—using catechisms
- Leading your child to faith in Christ

To help you apply and practice these truths, we have provided the following:

- training through our classes together
- support through small group breakouts
- resources to use with your own children and
- celebration for the milestone we reach together.

**Family Discipleship Survey:** Please complete the survey before beginning lesson one. The survey is available at the first class, or at [www.cornerstoneforlife.com/familysurvey](http://www.cornerstoneforlife.com/familysurvey)

You'll each want a copy of this parent training manual and a pen. So if you're ready, let's begin!

# Gospel Beginnings – Lesson One

## The Spiritual Formation of Children

### Leader's Guide

#### **Lesson Overview**

*In this first lesson our conversation will focus on the spiritual capacity that God has given to all humanity including children. We will open with stories parents recount about their own children's uncanny sayings followed by reflecting upon Jesus' words in Mark 10 about children. We will also observe scriptural truths about children's spiritual capacity and finish by encouraging parents to write a vision for their children's spirituality and pray for them.*

*The objectives for this lesson are:*

- *For parents to become more aware of their children's God-given spirituality*
- *For parents to grow in their motivation to begin strategic practices at home*
- *For parents to be encouraged that the everyday things they do (like expressing love, acceptance and blessing) are helping to form their children*

#### **Opening conversation:**

*"The things kids say..."*

Discuss some things that your children have said that reflect awareness of God or of Christian truth.

*Ask parents to share things that their children have said that reflected their awareness of God or Christian truth. Begin by sharing one of your own examples:*

*When driving in the car, my children sometimes see beautiful sun-lit clouds, and say, "I see heaven!" or "I see God!"*

*When my youngest daughter was three years old, she kept telling us that, "Jesus died on the red, red cross." We asked her about that cross and why she thought it was red. Was it the blood? Then we realized that she was referring to the red cross in the faceted glass at the front of the sanctuary.*

*After listening to parents tell about their children's spirituality, transition by saying: "if we stop and observe all that is occurring in little children it is pretty clear that they have a lot going on inside their little heads." Sometimes adults might overlook this capacity, but Jesus never did. Let's turn to Mark 10 and look at his words about children.*

## Open God's Word:

Key Text for Lesson One: Jesus' appraisal of children

### Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." <sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

- Observations from the text:
  - Jesus welcomes little children.
    - Parents were bringing their children to Jesus.
    - The disciples rebuked the parents.
    - Jesus rebuked the disciples!
  - Jesus says, "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
    - Children have a spiritual capacity.
    - Spirituality is a universal human capacity to connect to God and the world around us (Romans 1:19-20).
    - They may not have cognitive words, but spirituality is real.
    - Children have this capacity from the beginning because spirituality is not a skill. It is a dimension of our personhood.
    - Examples of children's spirituality in the Bible:
      - John the Baptist (Luke 1:41-44)
      - Psalm 22:9-10
      - Samuel (1 Samuel 3:4)
      - In these examples we see pre-born, newly born and little children respond spiritually to God's presence or his voice.
  - We must receive the kingdom of God like a little child.
    - We are called to be dependent upon God.
    - God can use our children to teach us!
  - Jesus took children in his arms.
    - Everyday actions in the home are spiritual foundations.
    - Actions such as kind touch, kind words, generous attitudes or time, help children learn to trust us and look to God.
  - Jesus put his hands on them and blessed the children.
    - You can speak a blessing over your children
- God uses blessings supernaturally

Consider the words of Ed Moll and Tim Chester about loving your child:

“Your first responsibility as a parent is to love your child. Love is often unseen, serving them behind the scenes. Often it’s unnoticed...Be affectionate. Tell them you love them. Always say good night. A good relationship is the foundation of good discipline because then your approval and disapproval matter to your children.”<sup>2</sup>

- Application:
  - What are some everyday things you can do with joy to love your children and welcome them as Jesus would?
  - Is your acceptance of them conditional?
  - Do they know you love them in spite of performance? Do you?

**Take it home:**

- Your assignment this week:
  - Write down your hopes for your child’s faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Begin to pray for your child’s salvation.
  - Demonstrate love to your son or daughter in a special way this week.
  - Identify two times each week that you can set aside to gather with your child (or with your whole family) to have a Faith Talk. We won’t ask you to begin that until next week, but for now, determine the day and time that you are going to carve out time.
  - Read through and get familiar with the two resources:
    - *In the Beginning Faith Talks*
    - *Children’s Catechism*
      - A catechism is a tool to teach young believers or young children basic knowledge in a question and answer format.
      - As we go further we’ll give you some tips and skills.

Move to Small Groups

---

<sup>2</sup>Tim Chester and Ed Moll, *Gospel Centered Family*, ed. Tim Thornborough (Surrey, England: The Good Book Company, 2009), 53. (Chapter 7, “Children are a Gift,” is full of good suggestions.)

### **Small Groups:**

Break into small groups and find a suitable location to talk. Here are a few directions:

- Share names around the circle and have each person say a word or two about their son or daughter who is in Kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade.
- What do you hope to learn or do as a result of this training?
- Do you currently spend regular time reading from God's word or doing a devotional in your home?
- What have you found helpful that you can share with the group?

To get the most out of our time together, you will need to make the following commitments:

- ✓ Be present for the next four Wednesday night meetings.
- ✓ Complete the "Take It Home" assignments (seven in all).
- ✓ Make plans on your calendar to attend both celebration and recognition
  - Gospel Beginnings Breakfast – Saturday, May 10 (9:00 a.m.)
  - Gospel Beginnings Recognition – Sunday, June 8 (10:30 a.m.)

## Gospel Beginnings – Lesson Two

### God's Commission to Parents

*Leader's Guide:*

#### **Lesson Overview**

*Last week we learned through Jesus' words and in the scriptures that children have a capacity for God that is sometimes underestimated. This week we will turn from focusing on children's capacity to parental responsibility. We begin with a brief review of Lesson One and then open Deuteronomy 6:4-9 to look at God's commands to parents of Israel. We note why God chooses parents over other options and then examine what exactly God asks parents to do.*

*The objectives for this lesson are:*

- *For parents to become aware of their spiritual responsibility for their children.*
- *For parents to consider their own walk with God.*
- *For parents to begin strategic practices.*

#### **Opening Conversation**

We saw in lesson one that children have a God-given spiritual capacity. Jesus recognizes that capacity and he welcomes, embraces and blesses children. We can build a strong foundation in our preschoolers and early elementary children with everyday expressions of love and verbal blessings.

In this new lesson we are going to ask and answer the question, "why does God look first and foremost to parents for children's faith formation?"

Deuteronomy 6 is the classic text where we see God's primary plan for the spiritual nurture of children. The context is the second giving of the Law to the new generation who has survived the wilderness. They were children forty years ago at the beginning of Exodus.

#### **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

### God's strategy:

1. God could have chosen "professional" leaders to nurture all the children in the nation of Israel.
  - A number of personnel were at his disposal:
    - Priests/Levites
    - Prophets
    - Moses and Joshua (Mo and Jo's Torah school)
    - Pastors/Youth Pastors
  - Interestingly, God did not choose any of these.
2. Instead God chose parental leaders to nurture all the children of Israel.
  - Home court advantage—Why did God choose parents?
    - Vested interest—parents have the natural concern.
      - Who else loves your child more than you?
      - Who else will reap the rewards most directly?
      - Who else will reap the rewards for the longest?
    - Most opportunities—parents have the most connection over time.
      - You are with your children day in day out.
      - Comparatively, you will have 100 times more contact than the best Sunday school teacher.
    - Most complete—parents have the most comprehensive influence
      - You observe the nitty gritty, where rubber meets the road (where teaching meets application, where lessons meet life).
      - Since all of life is holy, all of life must receive training.
      - God expects holistic transformation.
    - Even though you're not an expert, God has commissioned you.
      - For better or worse, children name parents as the most influential.
      - Regardless of your lack of credentials, you will always be the preferred venue for spiritual formation in God's eyes.
3. What's the role of church leaders then if parents are supposed to do all this discipleship work? God appoints church leaders (Pastors, Elders, and Prophets) to exhort and equip parents.

#### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

... [Jesus Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

- Ephesians 4:12-14 clarifies that the role of church leaders is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12-14).
- Let’s read that again with a particular application, where **parents** are “the saints” and **spiritual nurture** (as commanded by Deut. 6) is the “ministry”.

**Ephesians 4:11-12**

... [Jesus Christ] gave the...pastors and teachers, to equip parents for the work of spiritual nurture, for building up the body of Christ.

**Our Response:**

- Go back to Deuteronomy 6 and underline all the verbs. What can we observe about the parent’s role from these words?
- Implementing the plan:
  - First order of business: “these words shall be upon your hearts.”
    - You cannot bestow what you do not possess.
    - You must make it a priority to know God for yourself.
    - Take time to grow.
    - Sometimes you just need to be “one step ahead.”
  - Second step: Creating time and space in your family to model and teach
    - Prayer
      - with your children & for your children at meals and bedtime; spontaneous, and planned
    - Family Meals
      - Gathering regularly for family meals is one of the most strategic steps you can take.
      - Meals are seen throughout the bible (Genesis 18:4-5, Psalm 127, Luke 22:15, Revelation 19:9)
    - Family Faith Talks

Which of these practices are you already doing? What could you add to your routine as a family?

- This week your “**Take it home**” assignment is to use the time you have set planned to do two faith talks with your child (“In the Beginning” Faith Talks). Next week we will debrief and discuss.

## **Small Group**

*Take some time to talk through the following questions. As leaders, your goal is to help parents process the material, provide encouragement and support and share from your own experience.*

*Welcome everyone back and work through these questions:*

### **Discussion Questions**

- Did you find a way to demonstrate love to your son or daughter in a special way this week? If so, what did you do?
- Did anyone begin using the Faith Talks? If so, how did it go?
- Tonight's training dealt with God's expectations for you as parents. How do you feel about that assignment?
  - What have you done already in your child's life that has provided spiritual direction and formation?
  - What is the next thing you need to do to keep moving forward in this calling?

Take it Home:

- This week your assignment is to begin the "In the Beginning" Faith Talks. To stay on pace, you should do at least two.
  - Do you have any questions about what you are being asked to do?
  - What day and time have you identified?
  - Make sure you look ahead and prepare for the Faith Talk. It will take a little bit of preparation because it is new and to make it special.

## Gospel Beginnings – Lesson Three

### Establishing Faith Talks at Home

*Leader's Guide:*

#### **Lesson Overview**

*In this lesson we get specific about how we can live out God's expectations for parents by establishing faith talks in our own homes. Faith talks are a primary vehicle we use to travel along the paths between milestones.*

The objectives for this lesson are:

- For parents to see that Ephesians 6 agrees with Deuteronomy 6.
- For parents to have a working definition of a Faith Talk (and understand it's relationship to family devotions, family worship, etc).
- For parents to overcome obstacles to faith talks and be prepared to successfully begin/continue faith talks in their own home.

In Lesson Two we learned that God has chosen parents as the primary faith influencers because they have the natural concern, have the most connection over time and have the most comprehensive influence.

We looked at the active verbs of Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- Hear, Love, Impress, Talk, Tie, Bind, Write

In Ephesians 6:1-4, the Apostle Paul reinforces the ancient command for households.

#### **Ephesians 6:1-4**

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> "Honor your father and mother"-- which is the first commandment with a promise-- <sup>3</sup> "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

- Fathers are told to avoid exasperating children
  - What do children find exasperating?
    - Expectations without training
    - Orders without instruction
    - Hypocrisy in parents (do as I say, not as I do)
      - The remedy for exasperating children is training and instructing from a foundation of integrity.

- What does training and instruction in the Lord look like?
  - *Training*: An intentional process of entrusting knowledge and skills to another person so they become competent.
    - I do it while you watch me
    - Do it along side of me
    - You do it while I watch you
  - *Instruction*: specific teaching to understand the how and why
    - Facts
    - Connections
    - Examples
    - Reasons
    - Counsel

Parallels between Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6

<i>Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.</i>		
	<b>Deuteronomy 6</b>	<b>Ephesians 6</b>
Strategic, planned <b><i>Intentional</i></b>	“Teach them diligently”	Bring them up in the <b>training</b> ...of the Lord. “teaching”
Spontaneous, unplanned	“Talk along the way”	Bring them up in the... <b>instruction</b> of the Lord. “counsel and admonition”

- One way to make this biblical instruction actionable is through faith talks.
  - What are faith talks?
    - Faith talks are intentional times set aside at least one each week for conversation around the Scripture with your family.<sup>3</sup>
    - By doing the assignment this past week, you have done a faith talk!
    - Intentional times, pave the way for spontaneous observations.
  - How often?
    - Some families do it every time they gather for a meal
    - Some families have a faith talk every day
    - Some families commit to one time per week
      - Once a week is a great goal.
      - During this milestone we are asking you to do seven lessons during four weeks’ time.

---

<sup>3</sup>Brian Haynes, “Faith Talk Seminar,” May 23, 2013, [http://legacymilestones.com/assets/1397/faith\\_talk\\_seminar6.pdf](http://legacymilestones.com/assets/1397/faith_talk_seminar6.pdf).

- How does a Faith Talk relate to Family Worship?
  - Family Worship is the ideal context for a Faith Talk. By including time for prayer, singing and conversation you have a forum that prepares children for worship and engages in worship together.
  - You may choose to have an activity or just talk instead of family worship—the point is that you are having intentional time.
  
- Tips for having Faith Talks
  - Choose a specific day and time
  - Prepare your lesson and gather materials.
  - Keep it short! Keep it simple
  - Be creative!
  - Aim for consistency.
  - Remember now is the easiest time to begin.
  - Just do it!

## **Small Group Time**

*Take some time to talk through the following questions. As leaders, your goal is to help parents process the material, provide encouragement and support and share from your own experience.*

*Welcome everyone back and lead them through the following questions:*

- How many of you began a Faith Talk with your son or daughter using *In the Beginning* guide?
  - Did you do it at the time you had identified?
    - If not, what got in the way?
  - If you did do it, what benefits or blessings did you enjoy?
  - How might it have gone better?
  - How did your children take to each part?
    - Reading
    - Discussion
    - Coloring activity
    - Catechism questions
  
- *Leaders, please emphasize the importance of memorizing the catechism questions as part of the process. We'll talk about these more next week.*

# Gospel Beginnings – Lesson Four

## Talking in Echoes—Catechism

*Leader's Guide:*

### **Lesson Overview**

*In this fourth the goal is to help parents see how a catechism (like the Children's Catechism they are using) is a strategic tool to teach their children the great articles of the faith.*

The objectives for this lesson are:

- For parents to observe that children naturally memorize material
- For parents to be introduced to the question/answer, call/echo that catechism provides
- For parents to see that they too can teach their children the great articles of faith with relative ease
- For parents to develop in skillful use of not only asking questions supplied, but also probing deeper

### **Review:**

So far we have covered the following topics relating to training our children:

- The Spiritual Formation of Children
  - Children have a God-given spiritual capacity.
  - Parents should imitate Jesus by being physically affectionate and by blessing them with our words.
- God's commission to parents
  - Parents have the most *care, connection, and comprehensive* influence
  - God has *commissioned* us to teach and influence our children as the primary disciple-makers.
- Establishing Faith Talks at home
  - Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6 speak of teaching diligently/training
  - Faith Talks creating space to talk about God's word
  - In the Beginning explores creation, fall and redemption
  - The Catechism resource creates deeper learning
- Tonight we are going to talk about the strategy of using catechisms, which are an integral part of the *In the Beginning* Faith Talks.

### **Children and Memory**

- Have you ever noticed that children are especially good at memorizing information? Songs, poems, random facts, etc?
- Did you memorize verses or catechism as a child? What was the result?

Tonight we're going to introduce a tool that uses memorization called a catechism.

### **What is a catechism?**

- A catechism is a time-tested method of instruction where a teacher introduces truth and tests knowledge using a question and answer methodology.
- Perhaps the most famous catechism question is the first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:
  - Q. What is the chief end of man?
  - A. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.
- A catechism may range from as few as 20 to as many as 200 questions.
- These questions, together with the answers, cover a body of knowledge systematically.
- Catechisms were used by the ancients and throughout church history.
  - Ancient Israel
  - Plato's dialogue (Socratic Method)
  - Jesus at age 12 ("they were impressed by his questions")
  - Catechumens in the early church and middle ages
  - Reformation
  - Counter-Reformation
  - Today...

### **The image of catechism—sonar**

- The word catechism comes from the word "katecheo." "Like many Greek words *katecheo* is put together from two words. In this case *kata*, meaning 'down toward,' and *echo*, meaning 'to sound.' *Katecheo* is "to sound down."<sup>4</sup>
- When you ask a question it is like sending a sonar message and awaiting an echo in an answer (see Dyken, 11)
- Through the sonar of catechism you may:
  - Assess the knowledge of your student
  - Know when and where to elaborate or clarify truths

### **Benefits of Catechism**

A catechism is helpful to:

- Bring vital truths into one resource
- Give yourself and your child a body of knowledge
- Master content so that the truth becomes owned and internalized
- Be the basis for further conversation and application

---

<sup>4</sup>Donald Van Dyken, *Rediscovering Catechism: The Art of Equipping Covenant Children* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2000), 12.

- Create a road map for further exploration
- The questions and answers work like shelves in a closet—they become places where something is stored and can be added to in the future.

### **How to use a catechism**

- Commit to a specific catechism and make a plan to walk through it
  - In our case, The Cornerstone Children’s Catechism.
- Lead by example:
  - As a parent, you need to work hard to memorize yourself
- Master the question and answers.
  - Make every effort to memorize these together.
- Go deeper:
  - Use questions as a launching pad for further conversations
    - Talk about the questions and answers along the way.
    - Look for things they may not understand yet. Ask follow up questions.
- Keep going!
  - We hope that this will only be the beginning, and that you will use this catechism section by section over the upcoming weeks, months, and years.

### **Small Group**

Take some time to talk through the following questions. As leaders, your goal is to help parents process the material, provide encouragement and support and share from your own experience.

Welcome everyone back and lead them through the following questions:

- How many of you have ever used a catechism before?
  - Which benefit of the catechism resonated with you?
  
- How are you and your child doing at memorizing the questions and answers?
  - Do you think they can get all 15 in the next month or so?
  - How are you doing at the answers?
  
- How are things going in general as you meet with your son or daughter?
  - Are you getting into a pattern?
  - What's been working well so far?

# Gospel Beginnings – Lesson Five

## Leading Your Child to Faith in Christ—Salvation

*Leader's Guide:*

### **Lesson Overview**

*In this fifth and final lesson the goal is to prepare parents to lead their children to faith in Christ—that they may receive salvation.*

### **Introduction**

Every Christian parent desires for their children to experience new birth in Christ. Receiving Christ by faith is the most important decision anyone will ever make. Generations into the future and eternity as well will be impacted by the act of receiving and depending upon Christ as he is offered in the gospel. The timing belongs to the Lord, but we are called to call forth faith in our children as 2 Corinthians 5 tells us.

The objectives for this lesson are:

- For parents to begin praying for their children's spiritual rebirth and life in Christ.
- For parents to know the message of the gospel so clearly that they can express it in their own words.
- For parents to be ready to lead their child to faith when they demonstrate readiness—not being pushy, but not neglecting opportunities either.

### **Your faith in Christ**

- It's important to begin with your own salvation. Have you entered the kingdom through God's cross by his grace? Take a few minutes to write out your story and what the gospel means to you.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Your role in leading your child**

One of the exciting truths of the gospel is that not only does God give to us so freely, but He also makes us participants to help spread the message. Read and then discuss the text of 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

**2 Corinthians 5:14-21** <sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

### **You are Christ's ambassador**

- You are a new creation (v. 17)
- You have been reconciled to God (v. 18)
- You have been given the ministry of reconciliation (v. 19)
- You are called to implore others (v. 20)

### **The key truths that your child should understand to respond to God's grace**

- God made us in his image to know him and walk with Him
- Our sin deserves death and separates us from God
- Jesus died in our place on the cross and then rose again to conquer death.
- When we place our faith (trust) in Jesus, we receive His salvation
- We respond not only with faith in Jesus, but also repentance (turning from our sins)
- The results of our salvation include:
  - o Forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)
  - o New life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)
  - o The Holy Spirit lives in us to guide us and help us (2 Cor 1:22)
  - o Eternal life with Jesus now and when He returns (John 3:16)
  - o A celebration in heaven because you are born again (Luke 15:10)
- The Faith Talk guide goes through these truths step by step.

## Leading your Child to Christ

- How do I know when are my child is ready to receive Christ?
  - Remember the four P's:
    - Don't be pushy—wait for God's perfect timing
    - Don't be passive—ignoring opportunities
    - Be patient. It is better to wait upon the Lord and let your child respond from internal desire than coercion.
    - Be prayerful. In truth, this moment is God's work. Ask the Lord to regenerate your child by the power of His Holy Spirit.
  - Watch for the fruit of readiness:
    - Your child will begin to understand gospel truths (listed above) after repeatedly hearing them in Faith Talks and at church.
    - Your child may begin to struggle with sin and want to be forgiven.
    - He or she may ask you directly about becoming saved (born again, receiving Christ, etc).<sup>5</sup>
    - They may return home from church and report that they have received Christ. If so, celebrate!
- What should you say to lead your child to faith in Christ? **Romans Road**
  - Our Situation
    - We are all sinners **Romans 3:23**.
    - The wages of sin is death. **Romans 6:23**
  - Our Savior
    - Jesus died on the cross to pay the price of our sin—death **Romans 5:8**
    - Jesus rose again because he had never sinned

---

<sup>5</sup>For an extended discussion of readiness to receive Christ at different ages see: Donald Ratcliff, *Childfaith: Experiencing God and Spiritual Growth with Your Children* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 61–68.

- Our Response:
    - When we put our faith in Jesus, he forgives our sin and gives us new life.
    - God asks us to respond with faith (trust). **Romans 10:9; 13**
    - Ask: Are you ready to turn from your sin and trust in Jesus?
    - If so, lead them to pray and receive Christ and his salvation.
  - Our Celebration!
    - Tell them that you are so excited for them!
    - Invite them to tell others.
    - Have a born again birthday party
    - Tell them about the blessings God gives to His children (forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, eternal life, etc.)
  - Our Lifestyle
    - Continue to walk with them and to live in terms of the gospel.
- What if my child wants to become saved again? Now what?
- Take time to talk with them and listen to their heart.
  - If applicable remind them of earlier conversations they have had.
  - Be open to the fact that they might be more ready than an earlier time.
  - Teach them how to repent and start fresh with God.

## Looking forward

- Receiving Christ by faith is the first step to life-long growth in the gospel.
  - o We never out-grow our need for the gospel, but continually live from faith to faith (Romans 1:17) in terms of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

William Farley writes these words about the gospel:

“The gospel—the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—is our tutorial. It teaches us everything we need to know about people, God, ethics, marriage, humility, submission to authority, excellence, ambition, heaven, hell, hope true love, and much more. The applications are almost infinite. I have been a Christian for many years, and every week I find new applications for the gospel.”<sup>6</sup>

- As your son or daughter grows they will encounter discernable stages. At Cornerstone we have a Milestone for each of these upcoming phases.
  - o Elementary Years (becoming Bible readers)
    - **Milestone 3 – Gospel Truth.** The next milestone that your child will encounter is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible reception. At that time we will help you lead them into knowledge and appreciation of God's Word. Help them to embrace God's word as truth to make them wise for salvation.
  - o Jr. High (growing in their awareness of the world and relationships)
    - **Milestone 4 – Gospel Business: (J-12)**
    - At the end of 6<sup>th</sup> grade all 12 year olds are called to commit to:
      - Walk with the Lord Jesus Christ all their days.
      - Walk closely with their parents looking to them for wisdom and seeking to be a blessing to them.
      - Be about their Father's business.
- Perspective on Teen Years.
  - o One author who has captured the heart of God on raising teens is Paul Tripp.

“It's time to reject the wholesale cynicism of our culture regarding adolescence. Rather than years of undirected and unproductive struggle, these are years of unprecedented opportunity. They are the golden age of parenting, when you begin to reap all the seeds you have sown in their lives, when you can help your teenager to internalize truth, preparing him or her for a productive, God-honoring life as an adult.

---

<sup>6</sup>William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009), 186.

These are years of penetrating questions, the years of wonderful discussions never before possible. These are the years of failure and struggle that put the teen's true heart on the table. They are the years of daily ministry and of great opportunity.

These are not years merely to be survived! They are to be approached with a sense of hope and a sense of mission. Almost every day brings a new opportunity to enter the life of your teen with help, hope and truth. We should not resign ourselves to an increasingly distant relationship. This is the time to connect with our children as never before. These are years of great opportunity.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Summary:**

- In this series we have seen the following:
  - Children have a God-given spiritual capacity (Mark 10)
  - God has asked parents to play the leading role in faith formation (Deut 6:4-9)
  - Parents can walk the path between the Faith Milestones by using the vehicle of Faith Talks (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:1-3)
  - Parents have front row seats to invite their children to receive Christ by faith through the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:14-21)
  - It is through the gospel that we continue to grow in Christian formation.

Thanks for participating and we look forward to seeing you at the celebration and recognitions.

### **Wrap up with your Small Groups**

---

<sup>7</sup>Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens, Second Edition* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), 19.

**Small Group**

*Take some time to talk through the following questions. As leaders, your goal is to help parents process the material, provide encouragement and support and share from your own experience.*

Welcome everyone back and lead them through the following questions. Please take note of their answers and share any helpful remarks or recommendations with Pastor Tim.

- What's been the most beneficial part of this Faith Milestone for you?
  
- What could we have done to improve it?
  
- What's one thing you hope to take with you?



***Gospel Truth***  
**Parent Training for Second Grade Bible Reception**

*"Sanctify them by the truth...  
Your Word is truth."  
John 17:17*

***Celebration Events:***

**Recognition**

Sunday, March 30, 2014  
9:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. service

**Reception**

Sunday, March 30, 2014  
2:00 p.m.



## Milestone 3: GOSPEL TRUTH (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible)

This milestone is for parents of children in second grade. We will discuss:

- What is the Bible . . . and why is it so special?
- The Value and POWER of God's Word
- BIBLE BASICS TRAINING
- The Bible Makes Us Wise unto Salvation
- Memorization, Meditation and Application of God's Word

**Pre-Training Survey:** Every participant will complete a survey prior to our time together. Verify that all present have completed the survey. Time will be allotted at the beginning of the first session for anyone who has not done so.

GOSPEL TRUTH is the third of four milestones we have established at Cornerstone EPC to help train and equip parents to fulfill the role as the primary faith influencers of their children. This milestone involves:

- Equipping parents during class sessions
- Encouragement through small group time
- Resources to assist activities being implemented at home
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible Reception celebration

## The GOSPEL TRUTH – Lesson One

### What is the Bible . . . and why is it so special?

#### **Lesson Overview**

*The Word of God speaks authoritatively about the role of parents in the process of teaching our children **to love God** and nurture their faith. We need to tell our children the story of God and what He has done for us. This lesson will focus on why God’s Word is different from all other books. God helped men, moved by His Spirit, write down His inspired words. The Bible is God’s message for all people everywhere. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*

*Scripture guides our steps and gives light in our darkest times.*

The objectives for this lesson are:

- For parents to become keenly aware of their God-given role as the primary faith influencers and be moved to action—**use the Bible** with their child intentionally at least once this week.
- To experience an insatiable hunger and desire for God’s Word resulting in setting personal goals to grow in their personal faith—reading, meditating, journaling, memorizing scripture.
- To memorize Psalm 119:105.
- To actively engage their second grader in using the Bible this week. The “Wild About God’s Word” activities are provided as a resource to use at home.

**Opening Activity:** Verify that each attendee has completed the Pre-Training Survey. Take time to do so. Everyone will work on their **child’s name acrostic bookmark** until all surveys are completed.

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Welcome and thank you for taking time to be with us tonight and the next four weeks to prepare for the third Faith Milestone, GOSPEL TRUTH—the Second Grade Bible Reception. Introduce yourself. Open with prayer.

#### **Opening Conversation: What is the Bible?**

How many of you have a favorite children’s book? What is the title? Why is it a favorite?

- Initiate conversation—share the names of some of these books and briefly tell why.
- It is one thing to know about a book but quite another to have READ it yourself.
- What are the merits of READING a book for yourself?
  - It’s meaningful or fun.
  - You never tire of reading it or hearing it read again.

- You can quote parts of it.
- People sense your enthusiasm when you speak of it.
- It comes to mind out of the clear blue when an event triggers a thought that reminds you of it.

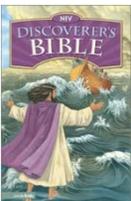
Although the Bible is the best-selling most influential book of all time, and many people own multiple copies, why don't we KNOW more about the Bible? Let's watch a short clip on YouTube of children answering the question 'What is the Bible'?

### Our perspective

- View YouTube kid's answer: What's in the Bible? (1:08)
- Ask adults "What is the BIBLE?" . . . Write ideas on white board. Some may include:
  - Best-selling most influential book of all time
    - Gutenberg Press (1455 by Johannes Gutenberg) The Bible was the very first book ever printed and continues to be the most widely printed and distributed book around the world.
  - Translated into more languages than any other book.
  - Inspired (means God-breathed) by God.
  - A Library- collection of 66 books written by 40 authors over 1600 years. Its book ends **BEGIN with Genesis** (creation of heavens and earth) and **END with Revelation** (new heavens and new earth).
  - Attributes of God's Word: inspired, preserved, totally true, applicable, alive, eternal, sweet, relevant, powerful, life-changing.
  - It's a valuable book about relationships—made possible because of Jesus Christ
  - The Bible is the most important book ever. The BIBLE is a story about God and what He has done for us.
  - The Bible should be handled with respect and care.
  - The Bible helps us learn how God wants us to live today.

### Open God's Word: What is the Bible?

#### God's perspective



Pass out the *NEW BIBLE* that will be given to every second grader at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Bible Reception (one per second grader). These are NOT to go home but remain at the church until after the Bible Reception.

- Let's open our Bibles and read Psalm 119:105 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What is God saying to you about these Scriptures? Take the next five minutes to "reword" each verse and then we'll share our insights and thoughts.
  - Psalm 119:105 *"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."*

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*
- God wants everyone to KNOW HIM. How do we do that? We learn how to use the Bible, read it and apply its commands and wisdom to our lives.
- In preparation for the third faith milestone, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible Reception, **this Bible** will be the Bible which will be presented to your child on Sunday afternoon, March 30<sup>th</sup>. You will have the next four weeks of joyfully preparing your child to receive their very own BIBLE at this special celebration.
- This class is a way the church is helping to equip and encourage you to nurture your child’s faith. We recognize that God has chosen YOU to be the primary faith influencers and our desire is to support you as YOU do “ministry work” in your child’s life (Ephesians 4:12-14).

The Word of God speaks authoritatively about raising our children to love God with all their heart, all their soul, and all their mind, and all their strength.

- Open the Bible to **Deuteronomy 6** and we’ll read verses 4 through 9 together. <sup>4</sup> *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.* <sup>5</sup> *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.* <sup>6</sup> *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.* <sup>7</sup> *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.* <sup>8</sup> *Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.* <sup>9</sup> *Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”*
- Make a list of all the verbs on the white board.
- What do we observe about the parent’s role from these verbs? We have an ACTIVE role to fulfill—it’s a directive, a command, a mandate.
- What did God say to you from reading these verses?

Now let’s turn to **Mark 12**.

- Set the stage: Sadducees approached Jesus with a question about the resurrection and knew that Jesus had answered that question well so they asked another question.
- Let’s begin reading with the question at the end verse 28 and read through verse 30. “. . . *Of all the commandments, which is the most important?*” <sup>29</sup> *“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*” <sup>30</sup> *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”*
- The mandate in the Old Testament, the time before Jesus came to earth, is the same as in the New Testament, the time after Jesus arrived on earth. **We are to love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength.** It is stated simply but not easy to do.

- God has assigned YOU, the parent, the responsibility and pleasure of being the primary faith influencer in your family. You will communicate many things about your faith just by your actions and behaviors. You will communicate your love for God.

- Consider the words of Dr. Howard Hendricks:

“YOU CANNOT IMPART THAT WHICH YOU DO NOT POSSESS.”<sup>8</sup>

You **WILL** impart ***something*** as the primary faith influencer in your family . . . what will that be? Make it a personal goal to read, meditate, memorize and grow to love God’s Word. It’s never too late to start or begin again.

### **Small Groups:**

Break into the pre-assigned groups and discuss the following:

- Begin with introductions. Share names around the circle and use the **child’s name acrostic bookmark** to share about their second grader. The bookmarks are to be left inside the Bible that will be given to their child and left at church until the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Bible Reception.
- Discuss some of the favorite books their 7-8 year olds like. Why do they like them?
- How does the amazing responsibility and opportunity to shape your child’s heart to **love God** make you feel?
- Small group leaders: close this class by **PRAYING** for each member of your group and their child by name.

To get the most out of our time together, you will need to make the following commitments:

- Be present for the next four weeks.
- Complete the “Take It Home” assignments.
- Attend both the celebration and recognition.

### **Take It Home:**

- Your assignment this week:
  - Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 repetitively this week and PRAY, asking God to give you an “unquenchable thirst” for His Word and the desire to grow in your own faith.
  - Be Intentional: Use the Bible with your child this week. Carve out a time to do the **“Wild About God’s Word”** activity.
  - Let your second grader know that they will be receiving a Bible on March 30<sup>th</sup> so that they can anticipate this important milestone. Mark March 30<sup>th</sup> on the family events calendar.

### **Resources:**

- Christine Yount, *With All Their Heart Teaching Your Kids to Love God* [Moody Press, 2002]
- Steven James, *Believe It! Bible basics that won’t break your brain* [Standard Publishing, 2003]
- Ministry-To-Children website <http://ministry-to-children.com>

---

<sup>8</sup>Jeanne Hendricks, “A Lasting Legacy: Howard G. ‘Prof’ Hendricks,” *Kindred Spirit*, Spring/Summer 2013, 7.

# WILD ABOUT GOD'S WORD!

## Read the readable rhyme...

### Why is the BIBLE special?

The Bible is cool!  
It's awesome and true.  
It's God's special message  
Recorded for you.  
It's different from all other  
Books on your shelf  
'Cause God was the author  
And wrote it Himself!

It wasn't "made up"  
Like legend or fable,  
It's *totally true*  
Because God isn't able  
To make a mistake  
Or let error slip in.  
So trust what it says  
Through thick and through thin!

So, what's in the Bible?  
What does it contain?  
God's plan of salvation  
Made simple and plain!

With parables, poems,  
And prayers you can pray,  
And tales of great heroes  
Who lived far away!  
The Bible predicts  
What the future will bring,  
And it even includes  
A few songs you can sing!  
It has stories and warnings  
Of what not to do,  
And the best of all news--  
God came to save you!<sup>9</sup>

## God's Word GUIDES OUR STEPS!

Get out the flashlights! Turn off the lights so it is totally dark. Have you ever been afraid of the dark? Has there ever been a time when you were lost and didn't know which way to go? What happens to the darkness when you turn on the light? Use your flashlight to look up and read Psalm 119:105. The Bible is the light that shows us the direction we should go in life. Visualize a picture of this verse in your mind... now take a few minutes and draw your picture.

### Tour of the Bible:

Count the number of books in the Bible.

How many are there? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the name of the first book? \_\_\_\_\_

The last book? \_\_\_\_\_

The book in the middle? \_\_\_\_\_

Locate the **BOOKENDS**: find Genesis and Revelation.

Besides the CONTENTS page and the books themselves, what other special sections does the Bible have? \_\_\_\_\_

### Practice using the CONTENTS page:

How many testaments are there in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

Name them. \_\_\_\_\_

What does 'Testament' mean? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is one called NEW and the other OLD?

How many books are in the Old Testament? \_\_\_\_\_

How many books are in the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_

### Trivia Challenge:

What book in the Bible has the least number of letters in its name? \_\_\_\_\_ Say its name. Find it in the Bible. What book of the Bible has the most number of letters in its name? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you pronounce it? Find it in the Bible.

---

<sup>9</sup>Steven James, *Believe It! Bible Basics That Won't Break Your Brain* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2003), 10-11.

## The GOSPEL TRUTH – Lesson Two

### The VALUE and POWER of God’s Word

#### **Lesson Overview**

*God’s Word is different from all other books but is often treated just like any other book. We miss out on one of God’s most significant blessings in life if we don’t recognize its priceless attributes— inspiration, guidance, authority, comfort, truth and power. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is **alive** and **powerful**. . .” God’s Word has power to change our behaviors, attitudes and thoughts. NO OTHER BOOK can do that! It is important to repetitively impress the **value** and **power** of God’s Word on our children’s hearts.*

The objectives for this lesson are:

- For parents to recognize the developmental characteristics of their seven-eight year old and the remarkable spiritual capacity that God has given them (Mark 10:13-16).
- For parents to embrace significant attributes of Scripture and experience it themselves.
- To talk to their child about how to respect and care for the Bible but USE it.
- For parents to choose and share a Scripture **about God’s Word** that is meaningful to them.
- For parents to enthusiastically involve their child in using the Bible. DO suggested activities on the “Wild about God’s Word” worksheet.

**Lesson Preparation:** Before class, collect testimonies of other Believers who have experienced God’s working in their lives through His Word. Each testimony needs to include the following:

- *clearly identify a situation, circumstance or challenge*
- *identify and read the Scripture that ministered to them*
- *give evidence of the outcome.*

Be prepared to present these vignettes through the methodology of your choice: PowerPoint, videotape, visit from guest(s) or reading the testimonies aloud to the class.

**Opening Activity:** Greet parents warmly by name and ask them to record one characteristic of seven -eight year olds and one characteristic of God’s Word on post-it notes (one per sheet). Instruct them to post their notes to an identified location on the wall.

#### **Welcome and review:**

Last week we focused on why God’s Word is special. You were challenged to be INTENTIONAL about reading Deuteronomy 6:4-9, praying and using your Bible with your second grader.

- How did you do?
- How did your child respond to the “Wild about God’s Word” activities?

- Did you encounter any challenges when you went to do any part of your Take It Home assignment?

**Opening Conversation:** Tonight we're going to speak about attributes— qualities, characteristics or traits, of 7-8 year olds and of God's Word.

- Let's open our time together with a word of prayer.
- What do we know about seven-eight year olds?

Identify characteristics of 7-8 year olds (read the post-it notes aloud). Add information if needed.

- Still learning the basics of reading and writing but gaining confidence
- In the concrete stage of learning and thinking but beginning to think and learn abstractly.
- Good at memorizing.
- Learn best if learning is made fun.
- Need to move around; like to be actively involved in their learning.
- Can wiggle and learn simultaneously.
- Thrive on routine; need structure.
- Like to be challenged.
- Have fairly well developed large and small motor skills.
- Very industrious.
- Resilient; need encouragement.
- Thrives on acknowledgement of personal success.
- Want adult approval.

**Open God's Word:**

God's Word has characteristics or attributes which we can TRUST and depend on. It is useful to help us grow and mature in our faith.

- Give instructions on how to do a Bible drill (Sword Drill).
- Conduct a Bible Drill to identify these attributes.
  - **God's Word is SWEET** (Psalm 119:103)  
*"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"*
  - **God's Word is FROM GOD and USEFUL** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*
  - **God's Word is TRUE** (Psalm 33:4)  
*"For the word of the Lord is right and true; He is faithful in all He does."*
  - **God's Word GUIDES OUR STEPS** (Psalm 119:105)  
*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."*

- **God's Word is PERFECT** (Psalm 12:6)  
*"And the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times."*
  - **God's Word is ETERNAL** (Matthew 24:35)  
*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."*
  - **God's Word KEEPS US FROM SIN** (Psalm 119: 9 & 11)  
*"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word . . . I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*
  - **God's Word is our DEFENSE** (Ephesians 6:17)  
*"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."*
  - **God's Word is PROSPEROUS** (Isaiah 55:11)  
*"so is my Word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*
  - **God's Word is POWERFUL** (Hebrews 4:12)  
*"For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*
- God speaks to us through His Word. Scripture is active and does a mighty work in our lives! Do you believe that? Listen to the testimonies of people from Cornerstone who have experienced God's blessing in their lives through His Word. You'll be blessed!
    - Show the POWER OF GOD'S WORD DVD (or your preferred methodology)

**Small Groups:**

Take some time to talk through the following questions or discussion points. As leaders, your goal is to help parents process the material, provide encouragement and support and share from your own experience.

- What did you do this past week to provide spiritual direction for your child?
- Do you have a favorite scripture? Underline it in their Bible and label it (Dad's favorite verse).
- We need to teach our children how to respect and care for the BIBLE and at the same time, not be afraid to **USE** it. How do we do that?
  - Keep it in a safe place
  - Put your name in it
  - Turn the pages carefully
  - Keep it clean
  - Read it

**Take It Home:**

- Your assignment this week:
  - Pray and ask God to help you schedule your time so that you choose to make time to get into His Word.
  - Talk to your child at bedtime about a verse that is special to you. Read it to them from the Bible. Print it out and give it to them to keep. Express your desires for them to grow in their faith.
  - Talk to your child about how to respect and care for the Bible but NOT be afraid to use it.
  - Complete the 'Wild about God's Word' activities with your second grader.

**Resources:**

- Books of the Bible Song [http://youtube.com/watch?v\\_aSs](http://youtube.com/watch?v_aSs)
- Gary Smalley and John Trent, *The Blessing*, [Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1886]

# WILD ABOUT GOD'S WORD!

## Read the readable rhyme below:

Why is the BIBLE special?

The Bible is cool!  
It's awesome and true.  
It's God's special message  
Recorded for you  
It's different from all other  
Books on your shelf  
'Cause God was the author  
And wrote it Himself!

It wasn't "made up"  
Like legend or fable,  
It's totally true  
Because God isn't able  
To make a mistake  
Or let error slip in.  
So trust what it says  
Through thick and through thin!

So, what's in the Bible?  
What does it contain?  
God's plan of salvation  
Made simple and plain!  
With parables, poems,  
And prayers you can pray,  
And tales of great heroes  
Who lived far away!  
The Bible predicts  
What the future will bring,  
And it even includes  
A few songs you can sing!  
It has stories and warnings  
Of what not to do,  
And the best of all news—  
God came to save you!<sup>10</sup>

## Talk about respect and care for God's Word.

Decorate a cover for your Bible or shop for one on-line.

## Share your favorite verse from the Bible.

Have your child find the verse. Tell them why it is meaningful to you. Print it out on a small index card. Give it to them as a keepsake.

## Read all the Bible book names.

Where do you go to find them all on one page? You may need help pronouncing them. That's quite an accomplishment in itself!

## MEMORIZE the books of the Bible.

Listen to the Books of the Bible Song on YouTube.

[http://youtube.com/watch?v=aoQEB5v\\_aSs](http://youtube.com/watch?v=aoQEB5v_aSs)

## Trivia Challenge:

One of the books of the Bible contains the shortest chapter, the longest chapter and the middle chapter. Which book is it? \_\_\_\_\_  
Which chapter is shortest? \_\_\_\_\_  
Which chapter is longest? \_\_\_\_\_  
What is the middle chapter in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

## God's Word is POWERFUL!

Get out the sharpest knife you own.

Describe/demonstrate what a sharp knife can do. **Pierce** a piece of paper with the knife. Compare your sharpest knife to a double-edged (sharp on each side of the point) sword. Look up and read Hebrews 4:12. This is a very powerful verse because it tells us that God's Word is ACTIVE—it doesn't just sit around doing nothing. It has POWER to **change** our hearts, minds and lives—to TRANSFORM us. It shows us the truth of our thoughts and our motives. It reveals our real/true selves.

The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The way you use it is by memorizing and quoting Scripture when you need it. When we are facing trouble we can put that sword out and fight off our enemy. (Ephesians 6:10-17). You've got to know it and quote it!

---

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

## The GOSPEL TRUTH – Lesson Three

### Bible Basics Training

#### **Lesson Overview**

*God wants people to know Him and follow His ways. How can we do that if we don't know how to use the Bible? As parents, our role is to patiently introduce God's Word through a variety of learning experiences that connect our child's development and understanding of Scripture to their life. Repetition, routine practice and fun are important in being successful. **Bible Basics Training** is essential in equipping your child to use the Bible and find their way around it.*

The objectives for this lesson are:

- To memorize the books of the Bible.
- To know the Bible is divided into two testaments: Old and New.
- To locate and label the beginning of each book of the Bible.
- To know a Bible "address" includes the **book name + chapter +verse** and be able to read it and write it.
- To create a monthly schedule implementing the Bible Basics Training.

**Opening Activity:** Greet Parents warmly by name and ask them to complete the Bible Basics IQ (BBIQ) pop quiz independently. Limit the time.

#### **Welcome and review:**

Welcome back! This is the midpoint of our time together.

- Did you spend time this past week with your second grader in God's Word?
- What was their response when you shared your favorite verse with them?
- Did anyone do the Trivia challenge from last week?
  - What book has the shortest, longest and middle chapter in the Bible? (Psalms)
  - What is the shortest chapter in the Bible? (Psalm 117)
  - What is the longest chapter in the Bible? (Psalm 119)
  - What is the middle chapter in the Bible? (Psalm 117)

#### **Opening Conversation:**

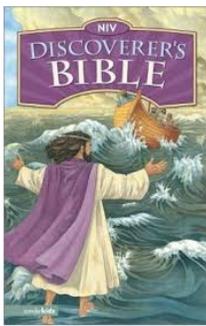
- How high is your BBIQ (Bible Basics Intelligent Quotient)?
- Answer the questions. (Show **What's in the Bible? with Buck Denver** [Church Edition-Review Volume, Disc 1, week 1, video 2]).
- Reward the highest scores.

"Imagine sitting down at a computer, staring at a blank screen and knowing that all the information you need is right at your fingertips, **YET YOU CAN'T ACCESS IT. . . NOW IMAGINE** the frustration level of children who are told that what they need is in the

Bible, yet they don't know the first thing about finding their way around it. It's common to drill young children to memorize their name, address and phone number; yet too often we neglect our responsibility to teach them how to get where they need to go in God's Word."<sup>11</sup>

Tonight we're going to equip you with the basic information needed to help your child succeed at understanding how and finding their way around God's Word. It is important to remember to take this information step by step and at your child's pace. **Fun, enthusiasm and repetition are very important for learning.** ALWAYS allow a child to explore and "DO" themselves. Leave them wanting to come back and "play it again".

**Open God's Word:**



Distribute the second grader's Bible to parent(s).  
 Why did we purchase this particular Bible for your child?

- It has large print. Easy to read.
- It is organized SIMPLY.
- Features an introduction and outline at the beginning of every book.
- NIV translation: used most frequently at our church.
- Includes Bible Dictionary-Concordance and Maps.
- User friendly for any child.

- The Bible is a Library of Books
  - 66 books
  - Inspired by God but written by 40 authors
  - Bookends: the Bible BEGINS with Genesis (the creation of heaven and earth) and ENDS with Revelation (new heaven and earth).
  - The CONTENTS page lists all 66 books and gives the page number where the book begins.
  - Every book has its name at the top of every page!
- The Bible is divided into two parts:
  - Old Testament (39 books) and New Testament (27 books).
  - Testament means covenant or promise, an agreement between God and people.
  - Books are **organized into sections:**
    - OLD TESTAMENT
      - Law: Genesis – Deuteronomy
      - History: Joshua – Esther
      - Poetry: Job – Song of Songs
      - Major Prophets: Isaiah – Daniel
      - Minor Prophets: Hosea – Malachi

---

<sup>11</sup>Gospel Light, *Big Book of Bible Skills*, (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1999), 4.

- NEW TESTAMENT
  - Gospels: Matthew – John
  - History of the Early Church: Acts
  - Letters: Romans – Jude
  - Prophecy: Revelation
- A **Bible Dictionary** is used for finding the spelling and definition of words.
- The **Concordance** is often combined with the Dictionary. It tells us where to find a word in a verse. It also helps us locate the address to a verse.
- **Maps** help us discover where certain places are located.
- Bible Address = **Book** + **Chapter** + **Verse**<sup>12</sup>
  - The **name of a book** is the first part of a Bible “Address”. Look at the **Contents** page in your Bible to learn where the books begin. The book names are at the top of every page.
  - The Bible Books are divided into **chapters**. The BIG numbers on a page mark the chapters.
  - Bible chapters are divided into **verses**. Verses are the small numbers on a Bible page.
  - Small dots, (:), a colon, separates the chapter and verse numbers.

#### **Small Groups:**

Break into the pre-assigned groups. Group leaders are to provide instruction and support in tonight’s discussion.

- How did you use the Bible with your child since we last met?
- What obstacles have you faced when trying to spend time in God’s Word?
- “You cannot impart that which you do not possess.”<sup>13</sup> Do you feel equipped to impart this Bible Basic knowledge to your second grader this week? Any questions?
- Complete your monthly Bible Basics Training schedule during small group
- Close in “popcorn prayer” for the families in your group.

#### **Take It Home:**

- Your assignment this week:
  - Continue spending time in God’s Word this week. Not only will you benefit, but your child will see the significance of God’s Word and sense the value and interest you have in the Bible. Pray for a passion and love for God’s Word to consume you.
  - Implement the schedule to spend time teaching the Bible Basics to your child. Routine, **repetition and practice** are important for success. Have fun! (Distribute packet of games)

---

<sup>12</sup>Discipleland, *How We Got the Bible: Disciple Guide*, Elementary: Core Bible, Level Two, Quarter A (Fort Collins, CO: Through the Bible, 2007), 34, 40, 46.

<sup>13</sup>Hendricks, “A Lasting Legacy: Howard G. ‘Prof’ Hendricks.”

- Complete the “Wild About God’s Word” activities with your child.

**Resources:**

- Packet of activities to teach the Bible Basics
- Books of the Bible Song [http://youtube.com/watch?v=aoQEB5v\\_aSs](http://youtube.com/watch?v=aoQEB5v_aSs)
- Steven James, *Believe It! Bible Basics that won't break your brain* [Standard Publishing, 2003]
- Phil Vischer, *What's in the Bible? with Buck Denver* DVD series  
[www.whatsinthebible.com](http://www.whatsinthebible.com)
- Susan L. Lingo, *Basic Bible Skills* [Standard Publishing, 2005]

# WILD ABOUT GOD'S WORD!

## Read the readable rhyme below

### *Why is the Bible useful?*

Two parts to the Bible—  
The Old and the New.  
Each part is still Bible.  
Each part is still true.  
Each part's called a *Testament*,  
And to help you keep track,  
Remember: "Old in the front  
And New in the back!"

There are sixty-six books  
In the two parts combined,  
And if you counted each chapter  
In the Bible you'd find  
One thousand, one hundred and eighty-nine!  
(And that's more than I'd care  
To count at one time!)

There are *thirty-one thousand*  
Verses for learning,  
Correcting, directing,  
Perfecting, discerning,  
And telling of God  
And His wonderful ways,  
Helping us, teaching us  
Each of our days,  
Guiding and leading,  
Improving our choices,  
Our actions,  
Our thoughts,  
And the use of our voices!<sup>14</sup>



Check it out: [www.whatsinthebible.com](http://www.whatsinthebible.com)

## God's Word is SWEET!

Get out the honey! Give everyone a sample. Describe the taste. Nothing is sweeter than God's Word or the goodness it brings to our lives. Look up and read Psalm 119:103 in your Bible. What does that mean? How can God's Word be sweet? Taste and see...

**Locate and mark each book of the Bible** at home using small post-it notes. Have you located all 66?

**Books of the Bible Song** by Troy and Genie Nilsson are available for purchase at iTunes and Amazon. Remember to take it in the car as you go.

**Open your Bible** and see how quickly you can find the following:

- Contents
- Maps
- Psalms
- First book of the New Testament
- Bible Dictionary & Concordance
- Last page of the Old Testament
- The Bookends

**Use the resource packet:** choose some fun games to play as you implement the Bible Basics Training.

### Warm up:

Shout out a book of the Bible. Who can find it first? The person who locates the book fastest gets a point and gets to shout out the next book to find. The person finding 10 books in the Bible quickest wins!

### Find these scriptures and read the verses:

Do you recognize any of them?

- Luke 6:31          Hebrews 4:13
- Genesis 2:7        Exodus 20:3-17
- 2 Timothy 3:16

### Trivia Challenge:

Which book of the Bible has the MOST letters in its name? How many letters? Say it, find it, learn to spell it!

<sup>14</sup>James, *Believe It! Bible Basics That Won't Break Your Brain*, 10–11.

## The GOSPEL TRUTH – Lesson Four

### The Bible Makes Us Wise unto Salvation

#### **Lesson Overview**

*God communicates to us when we read the Bible. He tells us His story and what He has done for us. This lesson will focus on knowing how to lead a child to Christ. It is important to always be prepared to share the Gospel and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. You never know when an opportunity will arise to testify to God's working in your life.*

The objectives for this lesson are:

- For parents to articulate their own faith in Jesus Christ.
- For parents to pray for their child's salvation.
- To give opportunity for people to accept Jesus as Savior.
- To be able to use Scripture to lead someone to salvation.
- To diligently 'get into God's Word' with your family.

**Lesson Preparation:** A week or two before this class session, invite three different people from diverse backgrounds to visit the class and share their 'Faith Story' (when and how they accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior). For example, a child, a teen, a person raised in a Christian home, a prodigal, a person who accepted Jesus as Savior later in life, etc. Testimonies should last 3-5 minutes. All testimonies should CLEARLY include the following:

Sin separates us from God.

God's grace and forgiveness.

Belief that Jesus died for them on the cross and rose again.

Expression of confession, repentance, belief and trust.

God's working in their life NOW.

Each story will be different, but the underlying message will be the same –the plan of salvation.

**Opening Activity:** 'Born Again' worksheet. Write out your faith story.

**Welcome and review:** Greet everyone cordially at the door by name. Begin class with some brief accountability discussion.

- How did your second grader **use** the Bible since we last met?
- Can your child recite all the books of the Bible? New Testament? Old Testament? How about you? 😊
- What activity did your child enjoy doing most while using the Bible?

### **Opening Conversation:**

- When did most people accept Jesus Christ as their Savior? Poll the class.
  - Those under the age of 6
  - Those ages 6-14
  - Those ages 14-21
  - Those over the age of 21

The Barna Research Group out of Ventura, California showed the importance of reaching children for Christ while they are still young. According to their research,

The current Barna study indicates that nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%), and that two out of three born again Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday. One out of eight born again people (13%) made their profession of faith while 18 to 21 years old. Less than one out of every four born again Christians (23%) embraced Christ after their twenty-first birthday.<sup>15</sup>

- Tonight we have several guests with us. They will be sharing their faith story with us. Introduce each person. Thank them for being here.
- As parents, we need to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to love God and share our faith with our children! What an amazing responsibility and privilege we have to do this while they are still young. God has commanded us to be faithful, diligent and obedient.

### **Open God's Word:**

- Open your Bibles to Isaiah 55. We're going to read verses 8-11 aloud.

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. <sup>9</sup> "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup> As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup> so is my word that goes out from my mouth: **It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

- Let's turn to 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and read those verses.

<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to **make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> **so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

- How are those verses speaking to you? Allow time for discussion.

---

<sup>15</sup>“Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids,” accessed August 4, 2014, [https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids#.U\\_QKYIbRd5k](https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids#.U_QKYIbRd5k).

### ***Our Response:***

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have a faith story. God has equipped you to testify to His saving grace and the work He is actively doing in your life. Let's talk about how to share your testimony/faith story. Use your Bible.

- BE CLEAR about what a person needs to know when presenting the GOSPEL (Good News):
  - GOD MADE YOU AND LOVES YOU. (Genesis 2:7; John 3:16)
  - EVERYONE HAS SINNED and your sin separates you from God. (Romans 3:23)
  - BELIEVE JESUS DIED TO FORGIVE your sins and HE ROSE AGAIN to give you new life and someday live with Him in heaven. (Romans 5:8; 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:17)
  - TRUST JESUS AS YOUR SAVIOR. (Romans 10:9) Encourage a person to express their faith in Jesus through prayer:
    - Admit that you have sinned and need forgiveness.
    - Thank God for sending Jesus to die on the cross and taking the punishment for your sins.
    - Tell God that you believe He died and rose again and that you trust Jesus as your Savior.
    - Thank God for hearing your prayer. Ask Him to make you the kind of person He wants you to be.
- ASSURE THEM OF THEIR SALVATION (I John 5:11) and encourage them to share their faith story with family and friends.
- JESUS HAS GIVEN US THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP US. (Acts 1:8)
- GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR CHOOSING US TO BE ONE OF HIS CHILDREN. (Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 2:10)

### ***Small Groups:***

Leaders: Before sharing tonight, prepare your own heart. Seek discernment from the Holy Spirit of each person's spiritual condition.

Break into pre-assigned groups.

- Open with prayer.
- Listen to group members who want to share their faith story. Be prepared to share first.
- Reiterate the essential steps to take when leading someone to faith in Christ.
- Distribute the Salvation TOOL Resource. (Talk about each briefly)
  - The Wordless Book (Child Evangelism Fellowship [www.cefonline.com](http://www.cefonline.com))
  - The Gospel Story Bracelets (Christian Tools of Affirmation [www.CTAinc.com](http://www.CTAinc.com))
  - Evange Card, Cube and Ball (E3 Resources [www.e3resources.org](http://www.e3resources.org))
  - The Romans Road

- Gospel Bead Bracelets
- The ABC's of Salvation
- Write out the 'plan of salvation' **in your child's Bible**. Underline and number the verses in order to guide them through God's Word, from verse to verse (i.e. - Romans Road).
- Provide an opportunity for anyone who is not a believer to make that decision.
- Pray with them.

***Take It Home:***

- Your assignment this week:
  - Reread Deuteronomy 6:4-9 again this week. PRAY and ask God to help you love Him more and more each day. Ask Him to give you the resolve to "stick to it" and wholeheartedly commit to the spiritual parenting task He has entrusted to you.
  - Complete your faith story if you have not done so. Pray for boldness to share it.
  - **TALK ABOUT** your faith story with your child.
  - **Pray for your child's salvation.**
  - Do more of the "**Wild about God's Word**" activities.
  - Be ENCOURAGED! It takes time. Have you heard the statement "Practice makes perfect"? The idea behind it is the more you practice, the better your skills become. It could also be said, "Practice makes permanent." Remember, God has given your child a great mind for memorizing at this age. **Practice** and **repetition** are KEY to your child's success. Find ways to make it fun!

***Resources:***

- Salvation Tool Resource packet

# WILD ABOUT GOD'S WORD!

Read the readable rhyme below

## What should I Remember About the Bible?

The truth of the Bible  
Is always the same—  
God forgives sin,  
Takes our guilt and our shame!  
For its life-giving words  
Touch souls that are dead,  
And divinely revive 'em  
Leaving live ones instead!

If it helps you remember,  
Just say this refrain:

“The Bible’s from God  
And will always remain!  
God speaks through the Bible—  
Each word and each page—  
And His message extends  
To the end of the age!”

Yes, the Bible will change you  
In big ways and small.  
It’s the best book you’ll find  
And the greatest of all!<sup>16</sup>

### Bible Basics Challenge:

Nicodemus and Paul had life changing stories to tell after they met Jesus. Find and read their stories in the Bible. Write down the Bible Address for:

- When Nicodemus asks what it means to be born again.
- When Paul is blinded and becomes a believer.

**God’s Word is TRUE!** Can we believe everything people tell us? How do we know what is true? Did the Bible stories really happen or are they like fairy tales and movies? Talk about, define and give examples of what is **true** and what is **not true**. Look up and read Psalm 33:4. The Bible is true! Promises in the Bible, made many years in advance, have come true. Can you think of any Bible promises that have come true?

**Continue memorizing** all the books of the Bible. Is the Bible book song helping you? Set a goal. Choose the date that you will have all of them memorized.

**Use the Bible Basics Training Packet** and play some new games this week.

**Make a set of Bible book cards:** Neatly print one book name on one index card. You will have 66 cards. Spell the book names correctly. You can use these to play games. Make two stacks: One Old Testament, one New Testament. Put the books in order. You need a lot of space!

**Favorite Stories in the Bible about children:** Pick out a couple of children you’d like to read about. **Find** and **read** the story by looking up the Bible address listed after their name.

Isaac .....Genesis 22:1-18  
Miriam.....Exodus 1:22-2:10  
Samuel.....1 Samuel 2:18-19;  
3:1-21  
David .....1 Samuel 17:4-51  
The Widow’s Sons .....2 Kings 4:1-7  
Naaman’s Servant Girl.....2 Kings 5:1-16  
Josiah.....2 Chronicles 34:1-7  
Jairus’ Daughter .....Mark 5:21-24; 35-43  
The Boy with a Lunch .....John 6:5-14; 25-40  
Timothy .....2 Timothy 1:5-7;  
3:14-15

<sup>16</sup>James, *Believe It! Bible Basics That Won’t Break Your Brain*, 10–12.

## The GOSPEL TRUTH – Lesson Five

### Memorization, Meditation and Application of God’s Word

#### **Lesson Overview**

*The Bible clearly articulates the responsibility parents have in teaching their children to **love God**. We need to share the story of God and continually speak with our children of the work He is doing in our lives. This lesson will focus on knowing and loving God through the use of His Word. We will be challenged to **memorize, meditate** and **apply** Scripture to our lives. We will also be talking about blessing our child and the preparations for the upcoming 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible ceremony and reception.*

The objectives for this lesson are:

- For parents to write a blessing in their child’s Bible.
- To encourage parents to implement memorization, meditation and application of God’s Word on a regular basis in order to OBEY God’s commandment given to us in Mark 12:28-30.
- For families to attend and participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible **Ceremony and Reception** on Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Opening Activity:**

Bless and affirm the parents warmly and personally as they walk through the door tonight. Ask them to **create a blessing for their child**.

“No matter your age, the approval of your parents affects how you view yourself and your ability to pass that approval along to your children, spouse and friends. Many people spend a lifetime looking for this acceptance the Bible calls...*The Blessing*.”<sup>17</sup>

- A blessing is from one person to another and communicates approval and value.
- “A family blessing begins with **meaningful touching**. It continues with a **spoken message of high value**, a message that pictures a **special future** for the individual being blessed, and one that is based on an **active commitment** to see the blessing come to pass.
- Ideas for writing a blessing in your child’s Bible
  - Words of affirmation which give approval or value
  - A Bible verse
  - The meaning of your child’s name
- Write the blessing in your child’s Bible.

---

<sup>17</sup>Gary Smalley, *The Blessing* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 24.

### **Welcome and review:**

Tonight you will be putting the finishing touches on your child's Bible that will be given to them on Sunday. You've made strategic and personal preparations for them to receive it:

- Personalized bookmark
- Book locators
- Underlined your favorite scripture
- Communicated the plan of salvation
- Resourced them
  - taught them how to respect and care of the Bible
  - taught them how to **use** the Bible and implemented it
- Impressed upon them
  - the value and power of Scripture
  - the usefulness of God's Word
- Modeled enthusiasm, commitment and spent time with them using the Bible
- Blessed them

Well done!!! You have laid a solid foundation to help your second grader grow in their faith.

### **Opening Conversation:**

Pose the question: Is it the same to 'know about' a person and to 'KNOW' a person?

- Give an example of 'knowing about' someone: a person from history, one of the pastors or an elder in your church, etc. Tell or read what you 'know about' the person.
  - have knowledge of
  - be familiar with
  - recognize
  - be acquainted with
- What constitutes really KNOWING a person?
  - the intimacy of the relationship
  - time spent together
  - conversation- listening and talk with them
  - experiences- living through together

It is the degree/intensity of familiarity that distinguishes the relationship.

The same is true with "knowing about" the Bible and 'KNOWING' Scripture. It is the recall of what it says, the introspection it provides and submission to its message that differentiates the connection we have with it.

### **Open God's Word:**

- It is important to **memorize** God's Word. Life happens . . . and the Holy Spirit is there to help us recall verses that we have memorized. Scripture ministers to us and is a powerful advocate.

- **Psalm 119:11** *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”*
  - **Timothy 3:16** (NLT) *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”*
  - **John 14:26** (NLT) *“But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.”*
- It is important to **meditate** on God’s Word. Meditation focuses our mind on one thing, fosters introspection and commands obedience.
  - **Joshua 1:8** (NLT) *“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.”*
  - **Psalm 119:97-101** (NLT) *“<sup>97</sup> Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long. <sup>98</sup> Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide. <sup>99</sup> Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws. <sup>100</sup> I am even wiser than my elders, for I have kept your commandments. <sup>101</sup> I have refused to walk on any evil path, so that I may remain obedient to your word.”*
  - **Hebrews 4:12** (NLT) *“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”*
- It is important to **apply** God’s Word to our lives. ‘Putting it to work’ shapes our behaviors, attitudes and thoughts. It teaches us to live wisely and well. Our submission to God’s commands is obedience. Loving God requires obedience.
  - **Romans 12:2** (NLT) *“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”*
  - **James 1:22-25** (NLT) *“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup> You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. <sup>25</sup> But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.”*

- **John 5:3** (NLT) *“Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.”*
- The most important commandment for us to obey is to **love God** wholeheartedly and teach our children to do the same. That means making space in our busy daily schedules to meet with God in His Word. You and your second grader are well on your way. Keep it up. The benefits are amazing and rewarding!
  - **Deuteronomy 6:4-8** (NLT) *“Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.<sup>5</sup> And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.<sup>6</sup> And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today.<sup>7</sup> Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.<sup>8</sup> Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders.”*

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Ceremony and Reception:**

- The Ceremony
  - Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at the 9:00 and 10:30 am services in the Sanctuary.
  - The pastor will invite parents and second graders to the front Sanctuary.
  - The director of children’s ministry will commend parents for participating in the GOSPEL TRUTH Milestone.
  - The pastor will pray over and bless the parents and children.
- The Reception
  - Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup> 2:00-3:00 PM in the Chapel.
  - Elder of children’s ministry welcomes families.
  - Pastor will talk to the second graders about the importance and value of God’s Word.
  - Bibles will be handed out by small group leaders or children’s ministry staff working with the second graders.
  - Elder of children’s ministry will lead parents in *A Blessing To My Child*.<sup>18</sup>
  - Elder will lead children in a response<sup>19</sup> after the blessing.
  - Pastor will pray a blessing over the children and families.
  - Time to enjoy refreshments and fellowship.

---

<sup>18</sup>Holmen and Teixeira, *Take It Home: Inspiration and Events to Help Parents Spiritually Transform Their Children*, 119.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 120.

### ***Small Groups:***

Break into the pre-assigned groups. Discuss the following:

- Did anyone have an opportunity to share their faith story this week? Tell us about it.
- Complete your blessing for your child. Print it in their Bible. Make sure everything is completed.
- Think of synonyms to define these words:
  - **Memorize** (remember, learn by heart, learn by rote, commit to memory)
  - **Meditate** (ponder, think about, mull over, reflect, ruminate)
  - **Application** (use, effort, diligence, devotion, putting something to use)
- Do you really believe that memorization and meditation of God's Word makes a difference? Isn't it good enough to "generally know" the broader concepts of Scripture?
- Can anyone say the 10 commandments right now without looking?
- Spend time praying for one another.

### ***Take It Home:***

- Your assignment this week:
  - Keep on keepin' on!
  - Use the knowledge and resources you have received to begin a Daily Bible Reading and Bible Memorization plan. Why not start with the 10 commandments?
  - Complete the Wild about God's Word activity sheet.
  - Attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bible Ceremony and Reception, March 30.

### ***Resources:***

- Kingdom Seeker verses (memorization)
- Popular Bible Stories for kids (reading list)
- Ways to teach Bible verses and review games
- CD - Hidden In My Heart Volumes I and II Breakaway Music  
[www.Scripture-Lullabies.com](http://www.Scripture-Lullabies.com)
- CD - Hide 'em In Your Heart Volumes 1 and 2 [SteveGreenMinistries.org](http://SteveGreenMinistries.org)

# WILD ABOUT GOD'S WORD!

Read the readable rhyme below

## What should I Remember About the Bible?

The truth of the Bible  
Is always the same—  
God forgives sin,  
Takes our guilt and our shame!  
For its life-giving words  
Touch souls that are dead,  
And divinely revive 'em  
Leaving live ones instead!

If it helps you remember,  
Just say this refrain:

"The Bible's from God  
And will always remain!  
God speaks through the Bible—  
Each word and each page—  
And His message extends  
To the end of the age!"

Yes, the Bible will change you  
In big ways and small.  
It's the best book you'll find  
And the greatest of all!<sup>20</sup>

### Sing the Books of the Bible Song.

**Have the whole family participate in a Bible Drill.** The person who finds the verse first, stands up and reads it. They then get to choose the next verse to find. Begin with **Mark 12:30**.

**Make a Bible reading schedule** and implement it. Use the Popular Bible Stories for kids list.

**Choose three verses to memorize this month.** You may want to use the Kingdom Seeker memory verse list. Each month add a few more. Review what you've already learned.

### Memorize the 10 Commandments.

Check out the activities on the Ministry-To-Children website. <http://ministry-to-children.com/ten-commandments-lesson-for-kids>

Although these activities are designed for a group setting, adaptation is always possible.

- Make your own 10 commandment posters.
- Make up motions for each commandment.
- Play charades. Can you guess which commandment is being acted out?
- Underline all 10 commandments in your Bible.

## God's Word is GOD-BREATHED AND USEFUL

Preparation: *wet your finger, rub it on a bar of soap and write the word "Scripture" on a glass mirror or window. Let the soap dry so it's invisible.*

God's Word is important for every area of our lives. Open your Bible and read 2 Timothy 3:16. God breathed life into Scripture which makes it come alive in our hearts, minds and lives. *Ask your second grader what they see on the mirror or window, then breathe on the mirror to reveal the word "Scripture". We couldn't see the word hidden on the mirror, but it appeared when blown upon.* Sometimes we can't see all the things God's Word does for us. Read 2 Timothy 3:16 again. God's Word teaches us, corrects us when we stray from God, scolds us in a positive way when we disobey God, and helps us draw closer to Him at the same time. God's Word is useful in our lives every day!<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup>James, *Believe It! Bible Basics That Won't Break Your Brain*, 10–11.

<sup>21</sup>Susan L. Lingo, *Basic Bible Skills*, Perfect Bound edition (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2005), 59–60.

## APPENDIX 5

### TABLES OF SURVEY RESULTS

#### *Survey Results*

Tables below are the pre- and post-test results from the entire sample from the Family Discipleship Survey. The labels of the samples reflect the respondents who not were omitted by being only in the fourth milestone, who were not included in the study results.

Table A1. Summary scores of the sample

Respondent	Before	After
001a	67	87
002a	76	85
003a	79	83
004a	71	80
005a	65	79
008a	68	68
009a	59	71
010a	54	66
011a	48	45
012a	82	86
013a	71	74
014a	79	80
015a	81	80
016a	77	84
017a	70	71
019a	63	67
020a	73	73
021a	70	71
022a	78	77
024a	85	87
027a	71	77
028a	86	87
029a	73	84
034a	61	63
037a	62	68
039a	60	65
044a	61	76

045a	73	78
046a	72	74
047a	71	75
050a	70	66
052a	87	80
055a	71	78
056a	79	80
057a	81	83
058a	56	77
059a	62	78
060a	69	81
064a	63	79
065a	77	78
066a	60	79
067a	63	66
068a	72	77
070a	83	83
073a	55	67
074a	56	66
075a	55	63
077a	89	88
078a	79	83
079a	58	65
080a	58	71

Table A2. *t*-Test: paired two sample for means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	69.58823529	75.47058824
Variance	98.12705882	69.97411765
Observations	51	51
Pearson Correlation	0.766533775	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	50	
t Stat	-6.555345518	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00000001489	
t Critical one-tail	1.675905025	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00000002979	
t Critical two-tail	2.008559112	

Table A3. Question 1

Respondent	Pre	Post
001a	5	5
002a	6	5
003a	4	5
004a	4	5
005a	3	4
008a	3	5
009a	4	5
010a	2	6
011a	2	2
012a	5	5
013a	4	4
014a	6	6
015a	6	6
016a	6	6
017a	4	4
019a	4	5
020a	3	5
021a	3	4
022a	4	4
024a	5	5
027a	4	4
028a	6	6
029a	4	5
034a	5	5
037a	3	4
039a	4	4
044a	4	5
045a	5	5
046a	5	4
047a	4	5
050a	5	4
052a	5	6
055a	4	4
056a	4	4
057a	5	5
058a	5	4
059a	4	6
060a	4	5
064a	1	5
065a	4	4
066a	4	5

067a	2	3
068a	5	5
070a	6	5
073a	4	4
074a	3	3
075a	4	4
077a	6	5
078a	6	6
079a	1	3
080a	4	4
Total	213	237
Average	4.18	4.65

Table A4. Question 8

Respondent	Pre	Post
001a	4	5
002a	4	6
003a	4	6
004a	3	4
005a	4	2
008a	4	4
009a	4	5
010a	2	5
011a	4	4
012a	4	4
013a	4	4
014a	4	5
015a	5	6
016a	5	5
017a	4	4
019a	4	5
020a	5	5
021a	2	5
022a	5	6
024a	5	5
027a	4	5
028a	2	4
029a	6	6
034a	2	2
037a	4	5
039a	2	4

044a	4	6
045a	4	5
046a	4	5
047a	5	6
050a	5	5
052a	4	6
055a	5	6
056a	3	4
057a	4	5
058a	3	4
059a	4	5
060a	5	6
064a	4	5
065a	5	5
066a	3	5
067a	1	5
068a	3	4
070a	6	6
073a	2	5
074a	3	6
075a	4	5
077a	4	5
078a	5	6
079a	3	4
080a	4	6
Total	197	251
Average	3.86	4.92

Table A5. Question 13

Respondent	Pre	Post
001a	4	6
002a	6	6
003a	5	6
004a	2	3
005a	3	6
008a	6	6
009a	3	5
010a	2	1
011a	1	1
012a	6	6
013a	6	6

014a	6	6
015a	6	6
016a	6	6
017a	5	3
019a	3	5
020a	6	5
021a	2	2
022a	3	3
024a	6	6
027a	6	6
028a	6	6
029a	3	4
034a	1	2
037a	3	4
039a	3	3
044a	3	4
045a	3	4
046a	4	4
047a	6	6
050a	3	3
052a	6	3
055a	4	6
056a	4	4
057a	4	5
058a	3	6
059a	1	1
060a	4	6
064a	1	1
065a	6	5
066a	3	5
067a	3	3
068a	6	6
070a	6	6
073a	1	6
074a	1	2
075a	1	3
077a	6	6
078a	3	5
079a	1	1
080a	2	2
Total	194	222
Average	3.80	4.35

Table A6. Question 16

Respondent	Pre	Post
001a	1	5
002a	3	2
003a	1	2
004a	2	4
005a	3	2
008a	2	2
009a	1	2
010a	1	1
011a	3	3
012a	1	6
013a	2	3
014a	1	4
015a	4	5
016a	1	3
017a	1	3
019a	3	3
020a	5	5
021a	3	3
022a	1	6
024a	4	5
027a	3	4
028a	4	5
029a	3	5
034a	2	1
037a	2	4
039a	1	2
044a	1	6
045a	1	5
046a	1	1
047a	2	4
050a	2	2
052a	6	4
055a	5	6
056a	6	5
057a	4	3
058a	1	6
059a	1	3
060a	2	3
064a	4	5
065a	2	3
066a	1	3

067a	1	2
068a	1	4
070a	3	3
073a	1	3
074a	1	2
075a	1	2
077a	5	5
078a	3	3
079a	3	4
080a	1	1
Total	117	178
Average	2.29	3.49

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnold, Clinton E. *Ephesians*. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Barna, George. *Revolutionary Parenting: Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions*. Carol Stream, IL: BarnaBooks, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority*. Grand Rapids: Regal, 2003.
- Bauerlein, Mark. *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*. New York: Tarcher, 2009.
- Baxter, Richard. *The Reformed Pastor*. London: SCM Press, 1956.
- Benson, Peter L., and Carolyn H. Eklin. *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990.
- Block, Daniel I. *Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Message of Deuteronomy*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries*. Vol. 5, *Psalms 36-92*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.
- Campbell, Ken M., ed. *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003.
- Chapell, Bryan. *Ephesians*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009.
- Chester, Tim, and Ed Moll. *Gospel Centered Family*. Edited by Tim Thornborough. Surrey, England: The Good Book Company, 2009.
- Clifford, Richard J. *Psalms 73-150*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentary. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- Cornerstone EPC. "Generational Discipleship." Accessed September 4, 2014. <http://www.cornerstoneforlife.com/generational-discipleship>.
- Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.
- Dahood, Mitchell. *Psalms*. Anchor Bible, vol. 17. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968.

- Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Discipleland. *How We Got the Bible: Disciple Guide*. Fort Collins, CO: Through the Bible, 2007.
- Dunn, Richard R. *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students: A Guide for Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers and Campus Ministers*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2001.
- Dyken, Donald Van. *Rediscovering Catechism: The Art of Equipping Covenant Children*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2000.
- “Evangelism Is Most Effective among Kids.” Accessed August 4, 2014. [https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids#.U\\_QKYlbRd5k](https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids#.U_QKYlbRd5k).
- “Faith Formation 2020.” *Faith Formation 2020*. Accessed May 1, 2014. <http://www.faithformation2020.net/>.
- “Faith Stepping Stones.” *Faith Inkubators*. Accessed May 1, 2014. <http://www.faithink.com/Inkubators/stones.asp>.
- Farley, William P. *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009.
- Farrey, Tom. *Game On: The All-American Race to Make Champions of Our Children*. New York: ESPN, 2008.
- Festinger, Leon. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957.
- Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, eds. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.
- Gentry, Peter J. “Sermon: Raising Children, the Christian Way.” *The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 2, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 96–108.
- Gospel Light. *Big Book of Bible Skills*. Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1999.
- Haynes, Brian. *All about Family Faith Celebrations*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Faith Talk Seminar.” Accessed May 23, 2013. [http://legacymilestones.com/assets/1397/faith\\_talk\\_seminar6.pdf](http://legacymilestones.com/assets/1397/faith_talk_seminar6.pdf).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Integration of Church and Home: A Strategic Partnership for Spiritual Formation.” D.Min. thesis, Liberty Theological Seminary, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting*. Nashville: Randall House, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Shift: What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing Inc., 2009.

- Hendricks, Jeanne. "A Lasting Legacy: Howard G. 'Prof' Hendricks." *Kindred Spirit*, 2013.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of Ephesians*. In *New Testament Commentary*, 1-290. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979.
- Hoehner, Harold. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Holmen, Mark A. *Building Faith at Home: Why Faith at Home Must Be Your Church's #1 Priority*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2007.
- Holmen, Mark, and Dave Teixeira. *Take It Home: Inspiration and Events to Help Parents Spiritually Transform Their Children*. Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2008.
- James, Steven. *Believe It! Bible Basics That Won't Break Your Brain*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2003.
- Johnson, Steven. "Milestones of Faith: Creating Rhythms through Rites of Passage." *StickyFaith.org*. Accessed June 17, 2014. <http://stickyfaith.org/articles/milestones-of-faith>.
- Jones, Timothy Paul. "The Family Discipleship Perception and Practices Survey." *The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 1, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2011): 50-52.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009.
- Kalland, Earl S. *Deuteronomy*. In vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, 3-235. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Keeley, Laura and Robert Keeley. *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith*. Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2009.
- Keil, C. F., and F. Delitzsch. *Psalms. Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. 5. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 73-150*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Klein, William W. *Ephesians*. In vol. 12 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Rev. ed. Edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, 19-173. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J., and David Jones. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- Lawson, Steven. *Psalms 76-150*. Holman Old Testament Commentary, vol. 12. Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006.
- Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of the Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969.

- Lewis, Robert. *Raising a Modern-Day Knight: A Father's Role in Guiding His Son to Authentic Manhood*. Rev. ed. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2007.
- Lincoln, Andrew T. *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42. Dallas: Word, 1990.
- Lingo, Susan L. *Basic Bible Skills*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2005.
- Mays, James Luther. *Psalms*. Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
- McConville, J. G. *Deuteronomy*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary, vol. 5. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002.
- “Milestones Ministry.” *Milestones Ministry*. Accessed May 1, 2014. <http://vibrantfaithmilestones.org/>.
- Miller, Patrick D. *Deuteronomy*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Powell, M. A., ed. “Asaph.” In *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.
- Ratcliff, Donald and Brenda Ratcliff. *Childfaith: Experiencing God and Spiritual Growth with Your Children*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010.
- Rhule, Patty, and César G. Soriano. “Teens and Self Image.” *USA Weekend*, May 1, 1998. [http://159.54.226.237/98\\_issues/980503/980503teen\\_survey\\_results.html](http://159.54.226.237/98_issues/980503/980503teen_survey_results.html).
- Rushdoony, Rousas John. *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, vol. 1. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973.
- Schaeffer, Edith. *What Is a Family?* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.
- Sell, Charles M. *Family Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.
- Selter, F. “Exhort—Noutheteo.” In *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Edited by Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Books, 1986.
- Smalley, Gary. *The Blessing*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984.
- Smith, Christian, and Melina Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Spurgeon, Charles H. *The Treasury of David: Charles Spurgeon Commentary on Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983.
- Staats, Linda. “Passing on the Faith—Milestone to Milestone.” *Lifelong Faith*, 2, no.1 (Spring 2008): 16–29.
- Stanley, Andy. “10 Years of Outreach: A Vision to Celebrate.” *Outreach*. iPad ed. January/February 2013.

- Steenburg, W. Ryan. "Effective Practices for Training Parents in Family Discipleship: A Mixed Methods Study." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010.
- Stinson, Randy, and Timothy Paul Jones. *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011.
- Strommen, Merton P., and Dick Hardel. *Passing on the Faith: A Radical Model for Youth and Family Ministry*. Rev. ed. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 2008.
- Strommen, Merton P., and Irene Strommen. *Five Cries of Parents: Help for Families on Troublesome Issues*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.
- Tate, Marvin E. *Psalms 51-100*. Word Biblical Commentary vol. 20. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991.
- Thayer, Joseph Henry. "Paideia." In *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997.
- Thompson, J. A. *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1974.
- Tigay, Jeffrey H. *Deuteronomy*. The JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996.
- Towner, Philip H. "Households and Household Codes." In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993.
- Tripp, Paul David. *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001.
- Tripp, Tedd. *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995.
- Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.
- U.S. Census Bureau. "American FactFinder—Results." Accessed June 11, 2012. [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_10\\_DP\\_DPDP1](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1).
- "Vibrant Faith - About Us." *Vibrant Faith Ministries*. Accessed May 1, 2014. [http://www.vibrantfaith.org/about\\_us.html](http://www.vibrantfaith.org/about_us.html).
- Weidmann, Jim, Janet Weidman, J. Otis Ledbetter, and Gail Ledbetter. *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children's Spiritual Passages*. Colorado Springs: Heritage Builder Books, 2009.
- Wood, A. Skevington. *Ephesians*. In vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaeblein, 1-92. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.
- Work, Telford. *Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009.

Wright, Christopher J. H. *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Wright, Steve. *ApParent Privilege*. Wake Forest, NC: InQuest Ministries, 2008.

Youth Smoking Prevention. "Teenage Attitudes & Behavior Study." Philip Morris USA, 2008. [http://www.philipmorrisusa.com/en/cms/Responsibility/Helping\\_Nav/Helping\\_Reduce\\_Underage\\_Tobacco\\_Use/Select\\_Historical\\_Programs/Final\\_2007\\_TABS\\_Report\\_March\\_2008.pdf.aspx](http://www.philipmorrisusa.com/en/cms/Responsibility/Helping_Nav/Helping_Reduce_Underage_Tobacco_Use/Select_Historical_Programs/Final_2007_TABS_Report_March_2008.pdf.aspx).

## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN USING FAITH MILESTONES AT CORNERSTONE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BRIGHTON, MICHIGAN

Timothy Andrew Brown, D.Min.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Timothy Paul Jones

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement an effective process to equip parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children in the home through the strategy of Faith Milestones at Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brighton, Michigan. Chapter 1 provides a summary of the goals and rationale for the project in its ministry context and the research methodology used to measure the project's goals.

Chapter 2 provides theological and biblical support for the project by examining four texts of scripture: Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and Ephesians 4:10-16.

Chapter 3 furnishes theoretical and sociological support for the project. The milestone strategy is advanced as a method to engage in the family-equipping model to respond to parental disengagement as observed through sociological studies.

Chapter 4 summarizes the details of the project. It describes the project as a whole, the planning and promotion of the project, and the implementation of the project.

Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project. The attainment of the project's goals is measured according the research methodology proposed in chapter 1. The strengths and weaknesses of the project are considered, followed by theological and personal reflection.

VITA

Timothy Andrew Brown

EDUCATION

B.A., Taylor University, 1996

M.Div., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001

MINISTERIAL

Associate Pastor, Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Brighton,  
Michigan, 2001-