

MOUNT PARAN NORTH

# FAMILY MINISTRY

Family Ministry Milestones are Mount Paran North's effort to resources families during key milestones in a child's life. Each milestone equips parents to follow the command of Deuteronomy 6 to be the primary spiritual leaders of their child, and helps them put Christ at the center of their home.



## Milestone 3:

# First Commitment

One of the greatest privileges you have as a parent is to help your child come to faith in Christ. Like many parents, you may not quite know how or when to approach one of the most exciting yet intimidating moments of parenthood. Some worry that they won't explain salvation properly. We, as the church, will partner with you to continually present the gospel in relevant and understandable ways for your child, but God has given you the most important and influential role when it comes to leading your child to Christ. This guide is designed to help you feel more comfortable about the process when that time comes.

### **Step One: Lay a Foundation & Tell Them Your Story**

Your son or daughter grows in his or her understanding of God by developing a foundation; attending church, hearing stories from the Bible, learning scriptures, seeing God at work in other people's lives, singing about Jesus and so forth. Your child is the most influenced by experiencing life in your home; watching your example, seeing your love for God, feeling your love, and learning right from wrong by what you teach and live.

Consider finding ways to introduce your child to your salvation story. You may not feel equipped to scientifically or theologically prove all biblical truth to your child like a 7 day creation, or who Cain married if he, Adam and Eve were the only three people on earth, or why God had Israel kill so many in the Old Testament. That is okay! You are still called and equipped to tell your child about the scripture truths you do know and lead them to salvation. We see this in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 that says, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

The blind man in John 9:25 didn't have any theological training or scientific education either and he led many to salvation in Christ. When asked to theologically explain who Jesus really was he simply talked from experience and said, "I don't know whether he is a sinner," the man replied. "But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!" Follow this blind man's example and simply tell your child what God has done in your life.

Your most powerful tool of influence is not what you know, but what you have experienced or what you live out in front of your child. The way you Love God, Make

Friends, Serve Others, and Share your Story is the best weekly sermon your child could hear. As your child witnesses you placing Christ at the center of your life in the midst of challenging and joyful situations, you will be leading them to Christ.

Everyone's story is unique and special. The best way to tell your story is to:

1. Explain who you were and what your life was like before Christ (B.C.)
2. Tell them why you decided to first believe in Jesus and accept him as your savior. (F.B.)
3. Then finish by introducing them to who you are and what your life is like after accepting Christ as your savior. (A.C.)

### **Step Two: *Understand the Gospel for yourself***

Before you can lead your child to salvation, you need to be sure you know what God requires before he offers salvation. Here are the basic points of the gospel.

- Jesus is God, the second part of the trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) (Galatians 4:4-7, John 10:30)
- God created us with a good purpose and gave us rules so that we could accomplish that purpose. (Ephesians 2:10, Galatians 3:24, Psalm 19:7-11)
- Sin is the act of choosing to break those rules that are for our good. (1 John 3:4)
- Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2, Romans 6:23)
- Sin against God must always be punished (Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- The penalty for our sins was paid by Jesus on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21, John 3:16)
- When we believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is God and our savior, God freely gives us forgiveness, a good relationship with Him, adoption into the family of God, the Holy Spirit (God in spirit form on this earth) to guide us, and acceptance into heaven after we die. (Romans 10:9, John 14:6, 1 John 1:9, Romans 8:15, 1 Corinthians 6:19)
- Accepting Jesus as savior makes Him the Lord (the boss) of our lives. (1 John 2:3, Luke 9:23, John 12:26)

### **Step Three: *Discern Readiness***

Do your best to discern when your child is mature enough to fully understand what it means to personally accepting Jesus as God and their savior. Choosing to trust in Jesus is a heavy, life-changing decision that is not to be taken lightly. Jesus himself even warns us to count the cost before choosing to be His disciple in Luke 14:27-30.

*"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'"*

Avoid letting fear concerning your child's eternal destination tempt you to push for a decision before he or she is ready to truly grasp the gospel. Here are some biblical truths that can put your eternal fears for your child to rest.

First, understand that salvation is a personal choice. Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, reminds us in John 3:36 that salvation comes from making a personal choice to accept Jesus. He says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." If your child is too young to make a personal choice to accept or reject Jesus then they are not accountable for their lack of choice. Giving your child time to mature and make their own choice to believe in Jesus does not put their eternal destination at risk.

Second, know that Jesus tells us in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Thus, simply fearing hell or being a good person does not earn anyone forgiveness and acceptance into heaven. God only offers forgiveness and heaven to people who love and trust in Jesus alone!

Your child may intellectually understand the gospel before being socially or spiritually ready to believe in Jesus for himself or herself. Young children often accept Jesus because they want to please their parents or church leaders and may not have a full sense of a separate self. If this process is rushed your child may build the foundation of their faith on the idea that they believe in Jesus because that's what their parents believe or that is what was expected of them. That is a sandy foundation that will crumble in the face of challenges. They must understand that accepting Jesus as God and their savior is a big personal decision and not just an opportunity to repeat memorized answers.

#### **Step Four: Ask Questions**

If you feel your child might be ready, ask a few questions to help gauge his or her level of understanding. For example, read Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." Then ask questions like, "What is sin?" "How does your sin affect your relationship with God?" "Who is Jesus?" "Why do you believe in Jesus?" "How would your life change if you made Jesus the Lord of your life?" "What is eternal life?" How they respond can help you sense when your child fully understands and believes the Gospel for themselves.

#### **Step Five: Guide Your Child to Accept Christ**

Romans 10 says, "...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." If you sense your child has a basic understanding of what sin is as well as what it means to accept God's gift of salvation and His Lordship, then your child may be ready for you to guide him or her to accept Christ.

Instead of quoting specific words for your child to repeat, try to guide them to cover the vital points of a salvation prayer while allowing them to use his or her own words. The key points of the salvation prayer are

- recognizing Jesus as God
- admitting and repenting of sin
- acknowledging that Jesus is your only hope of salvation
- accepting that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for your sins and earned you forgiveness
- believing that Jesus rose from the grave defeating your eternal death away from God, and
- asking Jesus to come be the master of your life for now and eternity.

If after reading through this guide and viewing the ***Preparing to Lead Your Child to Christ*** materials online, you would like additional assistance, feel free to request an appointment to meet with one of our Pastors by contacting [family@mtparan.com](mailto:family@mtparan.com).

If your child does decide to accept Christ and is ready for baptism please see the baptism milestone resources. We are happy to partner with you to prepare your child for that special step in their faith journey.

### **Step Six: Celebrate Your Child's Decision**

A simple decision and prayer may not feel like a big deal to your child, but it is! By accepting Jesus their old life has died and they have been given an entirely new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). All of their sins and mistakes are forgiven. They have been adopted into the spiritual family of God (Ephesians 1:5). They are now a son or daughter of God, and a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20). They have become a temple of the Holy Spirit who allows them to boldly approach God's throne in prayer (Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12), gives them guidance (John 16:13), and equips them with spiritual gifts to use for accomplishing all the great things God has planned for them to do for his Kingdom (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, Romans 12:4-6). As Jesus explained it to Nicodemus in John 3:3, it is as if they have been born again. It is key that your child understands how big and exciting their decision to follow Jesus is.

Consider giving your child something to remember the occasion. Possible a framed certificate, a new Bible, jewelry or any reminder of the decision made to follow Christ.

To make this milestone decision even more memorable, mark the date on your calendar each year as your child's spiritual birthday. Then each year do something significant on that day; get ice cream, have a party with family and friends, or give them a new devotional; book; or app that supports their growing relationship with God.

Please also contact your child's Children's or Student Pastor or [family@mtparan.com](mailto:family@mtparan.com) to let the church know about your child's decision to follow Christ. This will allow the church to better partner with you in helping your child grow spiritually.

## **Recommended Resources:**

***The Faith of a Child*** by Art Murray

***Leading Your Child to Christ*** by Marty Machowski

***Leading Your Child to Jesus*** by David Staal

***God's Great News for Children*** by Rick Osborne

***The Big God Story*** by Michelle Anthony