

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 5:

# Preparing for Adolescence

If your child is between the ages of 7 and 10 then some major, overhaul changes are ahead in your child's life! The years of self-discovery, relational development, independence, and maturity are ahead. Don't let this scare you or them. With God and the church on your side, you've got this!

The best way to prepare your child for the changes and challenges of adolescence is to open up the lines of communication. Your pre-adolescent child could benefit from some one-on-one time with you to give them a basic understanding of what's coming before all these physical, relational, and emotional changes begin. The best conversation tend to happen when you create an environment of open communication, which includes a lot of nonjudgmental listening allowing your child the comfort to share, talk, ask questions, and discuss with you.

A foundational task for parents during this phase of your child's life is to help them know and experience the reality of God's love. Allowing your child to see you demonstrate your love for God and the priority your relationship with God has in your life, will help lead your child to a Christ-centered life full of loving God, making Christian friends, serving others, and sharing your Jesus story for himself or herself.

In this milestone resource you will find insights into the adolescent world, coaching for teaching your child healthy sexuality, and ideas for gradually developing independence and maturity in your child.

### **Understanding Your Adolescent**

The most common characteristic of an adolescent's physical and psychological state is change! Your adolescent's body, mind, emotions, and relationships are all changing dramatically and quickly. These constant changes can leave you and your child very unsettled and unsure of the future.

Physically, your child's body will deeply affect his or her opinion of himself or herself and other's perspective of them. If your son or daughter quickly matures he or she may experience an increase in acceptance and recognition. On the other hand if your child matures more slowly he or she may experience a decline in these same areas. Your

child may begin to notice that other people are suddenly paying more attention to how he or she looks than they are accustomed to. All the while, physical attraction and public opinion will likely become larger factors in his or her mind. This leads to a lot of conceit and/or self-consciousness.

Mentally, an adolescent is not fully developed. This immature thinking may result in your child having difficulty thinking things through, anticipating the consequences of his or her actions and making informed decisions. As a result, he or she can appear to be and often will be impulsive, hasty, and even selfish. Your child is also moving from concrete (black and white) thinking to abstract (grey area) thinking. During adolescence your kid will discover that they can have their own opinions, beliefs, and point of views. He or she will likely trying out new world views to find the right fit.

Emotionally, your child will have continual and sudden fluctuations in hormone levels causing him or her to be extremely moody. Also because his or her brain is not fully developed they cannot always emotionally regulate properly. Without the ability to emotionally regulate your adolescent cannot always consciously control how strongly he or she feels emotions like anger, joy or fear. On top of that your child's hormones create a natural shift in his or her normal 24-hour rhythm, which causes him or her to feel more fully alert later at night. This affects your child's' much-needed sleep. Unfortunately, he or she must still rise early for school and other activities. This lack of sleep can increase irritability and decrease concentration ability, and contribute to your adolescent suddenly finding it difficult to complete tasks that were once simple. This new struggle only adds to his or her frustration and moodiness.

Relationally, all these factors combined usually leave your adolescent desiring greater independence from family and more time with friends. Friendships with the opposite sex become more awkward, socially highlighted, and filled with emotional tension. During this time try giving your child a balance of clear behavioral guidelines with enough room to express their individuality and to practice, and sometimes fail, at independent decision-making.

This all may sound like a receipt for disaster, but remember you have God on your side, the church is here to support you, and it is only for a season!

### **Teaching Your Child Healthy Sexuality**

Now, let's talk about potentially the most uncomfortable topic to discuss with your child: healthy sexuality. Do you recall what you liked or disliked about the way your parents introduced you to sex? This is your chance to get it right for your child.

#### What's my job as a parent?

Dr. Jim Burns is the president of HomeWord an organization built to bring help and hope to families. Jim is also the author of the book, "Teaching Your Child Healthy Sexuality." His book is for the parents, but he also has a supporting book for pre-teens called, "The Purity Code- God's plan for sex and your body." These great resources may be verify helpful for you.

In Dr. Jim Burns book he outlines a parent's job in teaching their child healthy sexuality:

- Talk (developing a healthy atmosphere of conversation about sexuality)
- Be role models with honesty and integrity
- Facilitate an atmosphere of positive peer influence
- Extend grace and forgiveness
- Doing something is better than nothing

### When?

Jim Burns suggests not having “The Talk” about sex with your child. Instead he encourages a continual conversation that happens throughout daily life. In fact, Jim has found that often the best conversations will happen unexpectedly in a car ride in the midst of a busy day. You might need a catalyst conversation or trip that is outside of normal life. This could help with setting a vision for how your child’s internal and external changes will prepare their bodies for the joys of marriage and the miracle of creating new life. However, Jim would advise you not to let that retreat conversation be the end of the discussion.

Don’t stress about starting the conversation too early either. If you start too late someone could beat you to the conversation and teach your child things that you do not agree with. Also, with today’s technology if you start too late and your child has unanswered questions, odds are that they will look to Google to search for their answers. Internet searches could open them to a world of exposure that they are not prepared for.

Dr. Jim Burns encourages parents to start the conversation as early as 3-5 years old by introducing children to the special ways God made their body. Then at ages 6-9 you can begin to discuss how God makes babies, what puberty is, and God’s plan for marriage. Then you’ve laid the ground work so that your son or daughter is ready between ages 10-13 to talk about the more difficult topics of purity, dating, masturbation, pornography, birth control, sexual abuse, STD’s, etc.

Again, it is not encouraged for you to cover all these topics at once in one afternoon. That would likely leave you and your child extremely uncomfortable. Each of these topics might be better received in a number of different conversations over a period of months or even years.

### How?

In order for your child to have a healthy understanding of sex it is important that throughout the continual conversations you do not describe sex as shameful, evil, and taboo. In Genesis 2:18-25, God shows us that he created sex for the confines of marriage between one man and one woman. Within that context sex is a beautiful and pleasurable thing that should create no shame for a husband or wife.

When discussing sexuality with your pre-adolescent child, Jim Burns has found that the concept of purity is much more important than demanding or pleading for abstinence. The pursuit of abstinence leads to drawing thin lines on the edge of life altering mistakes. Purity on the other hand is like a guardrail that puts physical distance between your child and sexual dangers. Dr. Jim Burns sets a purity code that is outlined in four key standards:

- Honoring God with your body
- Renewing your mind for good
- Turning your eyes from worthless things
- Guarding your heart above all else

Try keeping yourself aware of these scriptures about purity so that you are ready to discuss them with your child throughout your continual conversation about healthy sexuality.

- |                         |                     |                        |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| • Proverbs 4:23         | • Galatians 5:19-21 | • Romans 12:10         |
| • 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 | • Galatians 5:16    | • Hebrews 13:4         |
| • 1 Timothy 4:12        | • Ephesians 5:4     | • 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 |
| • 1 Timothy 5:1-2       | • Romans 12:1       | • Genesis 2:18-25      |

### Dating

Every family has different perspectives on dating, and that is respectable. There are stories of students maintaining purity while dating during their growing up years and successfully finding a life-long loving marriage. There are also success stories of students waiting until they are ready for marriage to pursue a dating relationship. Whatever dating methods you plan to allow your child to pursue, the keys are to first clearly communicate those expectations early and often, and second to practically establish a plan to live out the purity code in the midst of whatever friendships or dating relationship they have.

There is some powerful research on dating during adolescence that you may want to be aware of. The University of Georgia did a 7-year study on dating with 624 different teens. The results of this study indicated that Students who date in middle school have significantly worse study skills, are four times more likely to drop out of school and report twice as much alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use than their single classmates. You can see this full research at: <http://news.uga.edu/releases/article/dating-in-middle-school-leads-to-higher-dropout-drug-use-rates/>

### Are there tools for helping your child maintain purity?

This concept of purity is quite counter-cultural, thus your child may need some help guarding their heart and mind, especially during these years of adolescence while you are giving your child more consistent, healthy, independent screen time on their devices. We encourage you to pre-agree with your child on what are acceptable entertainment options. You may also want to put some of these resources to use:

- <http://www.pluggedin.com/>
- <https://www.verizonwireless.com/support/familybase-activity-video/>
- <https://www.att.com/shop/wireless/smartlimits.html>
- <https://screentimelabs.com>
- <http://teensafe.com/>

Also below is a cell phone agreement that you might consider using with your child when you give them their own device.



# CELL PHONE AGREEMENT



**GOAL:** For you to have zero restrictions on your cell phone by the time you leave the house.

**REALITY:** We believe you are ready for some access to a phone and we want you to gain more freedom over time by making wise choices. To help you make those choices, let's agree that...

Your phone will charge in \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(ROOM) (TIME) (TIME)

For now, what you do on your phone is not private. To help you make wise decisions we will have access to: (EXAMPLE: GPS LOCATION, APPS, DOWNLOAD HISTORY, BROWSER HISTORY, PASSWORDS, ETC.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

You will not clear your Internet history.

You will not attempt to delete or hide evidence of poor choices (including text messages, downloads, etc).

You will not \_\_\_\_\_ while driving.

You are not responsible for what you receive. If you receive an inappropriate message from someone on your phone, you should tell us immediately so we can decide together what to do next.

Before purchasing an app or anything else on your phone, you must \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

It is your responsibility to stay within the texting, calling, and data usage limits of our monthly cell phone plan. If you keep this agreement, you will gain freedom and lose restrictions in time. If you do not keep this agreement, you will be responsible for paying any fees that may result from going over your data limit.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT SIGNATURE

## **Developing Independence And Responsibility**

Increasingly your child will need to make and assume responsibility for his or her own decisions. As you maintain your overall family values in media choices, individual responsibilities (chores, homework, etc.), drugs and alcohol, it is also very beneficial to direct your son or daughter in how to make wise decisions in areas of health, time management, financial decisions, and integrity. The first nine chapters of Proverbs can help guide an early teen on choosing wisdom over folly.

It is easy to confuse your child's desire for independence during these pre-adolescent years as a sign that they no longer want or need you in their lives. The truth is that your son or daughter needs you just as much as he or she ever have. They simply need you as less of a handholding teacher and more of a sideline coach. Instead of delivering commands or ultimatums, try asking questions and making gentle suggestions. For example, "You're not wearing that to school!" will likely lead to a battle. Instead, try, "You haven't worn that in a while, have you? Doesn't fit quite the way it used to. Go look in the mirror, and let's talk about it." Then you might ease sideways into a discussion about the appropriateness of what your child is wearing, especially if it's gotten too tight or small.

This transition in your role as a manager to a consultant is likely a big change for you and your child so consider discussing your role changes with your preteen before actually making the change. This will allow you to begin to guide him or her in the transition toward independence. It is also a great time to intentionally foster your child's relationships with other Godly adults who can positively influence their life.

### School Work

These pre-adolescent years are a great time to begin expecting your child to keep up with his or her own school assignments. Here are some ideas on how to do that.

Try starting each school year or semester by including your child in on your process for setting educational expectations and the consequences that will come from failing to achieving those expectations. Instead of nagging him or her to study, try a more subtle approach: "How should we celebrate when you've earned the grade you want on that science test on Tuesday?" Or when your child is heading to waist time on a free time activity or asking to do more extracurricular activities while you know they are falling behind in school try walking them through an assessment of their time. Add up the hours of their various responsibilities, wants, and needs and do the math with them. They have 24 hours each day and 168 hours in a week. Then you can ask him or her, "Are you spending your time the way that is best for you?"

With this consulting method of parenting you've planted a seed and allowed your child to independently become self-driven and responsible in their schoolwork. Mission accomplished, conflict avoided. Then in the times that they fail to complete their required assignments allow them to face the natural or previously agreed upon consequences of their educational shortcomings. If they see you fixing their mistakes, they will continue to depend on you.

## Financial Training

Dave Ramsey is the author of 7 New York Times best selling books including “Financial Peace.” He is the founder of Ramsey Solutions, a radio host, television personality, and motivational speaker.

Dave encourages parents that are preparing their kids for adolescence to go ahead and start teaching their children about managing money. He lays out this plan:

### Kindergarten/Elementary

1. Use a clear jar to save. The piggy bank is a great idea, but it doesn't give kids any visual. When you use a clear jar, they see the money growing. Yesterday, they had a dollar bill and five dimes. Today, they have a dollar bill, five dimes *and* a quarter! Talk through this with them and make a big deal about it!
2. Set an example. Little eyes are watching you. If you're slapping down credit cards every time you go out to dinner or to the grocery store, they will eventually notice. If, at the end of every month, you and your spouse are arguing about money, they'll notice. Set a healthy example for them, and they'll be much more likely to follow it when they get older.
3. Show them that stuff costs money. You've got to do more than just say, “That pack of toy cars costs \$5, son.” Help them grab a few dollars out of the jar, take it with them to the store, and physically hand the money to the cashier. This simple action will do more than just a five-minute lecture.

### Pre-teens

4. Show opportunity cost. That's just another way of saying, “If you buy this video game, then you won't have the money to buy that pair of shoes.” At this age, your kids should be able to weigh decisions and realize that each decision has a consequence.
5. Give commissions, not allowances. Don't just give your kids money for breathing. Pay them commissions based on chores they do around the house like taking out the trash, cleaning their room, or mowing the grass. This will help them understand that money is *earned*—it's not just given to them.
6. Stress the importance of giving. Once they start making a little money, be sure you teach them about giving. They can pick a church, a charity or even someone they know who needs a little help. Eventually, they'll see how giving doesn't just affect the people they give to, it affects the giver as well.

### Teenagers

7. Give them the responsibility of a bank account. By the time your kid is a teenager, you should be able to set them up with a simple bank account if you've been doing some of

the above all along. This takes money management to the next level, and it will prepare them for (hopefully) managing a much heftier account balance when they get older.

8. “Help” them find a job. Teenagers have plenty of free time—fall break, summer break, winter break, spring break. If your teen needs money (and what teen doesn’t need money?), then help them find a job. Who knew that working was a great way to make money?

9. Teach them the danger of credit cards. As soon as your kid turns 18, they will get hounded by credit card salesmen—especially once they’re in college. If you haven’t taught them why debt is a bad idea, they’ll become another credit card victim.

Remember, depending on your child’s development, you might start teaching some of these principles earlier or later.

### Bible Study

We encourage you to continue to have family bible studies leading up to and throughout your child’s adolescence. We provide Parent Cues each week that can help you to continue the biblical conversations that we are starting at church. To check out this weeks Parent Cue click [here](#).

However, as your student enters adolescence it is also time for them begin studying the bible on their own. Challenge your student to daily set aside 15-30 minutes to be alone with God. This could mean they need to wake up a little earlier, set aside everything else when they first get home from school, or head to bed a little earlier each night. Encourage them to fill that time talking or journaling to God, reading God’s word, or just silently thinking about God. Your student may benefit from a bible reading plan or devotional. We provide a bible-reading plan to go along with each sermon we teach in our middle school ministry. There are also some great student devotionals on the Youversion bible app or Christianbook.com . When your student takes time to get to know God for himself or herself, He will show up, and they will be amazed at the great God that they discover. If he or she truly encounter God on his or her own your child will naturally begin to believe in Him and worship Him with his or her life in every way possible.

We hope that these tips and resources have helped to equip you for these adolescent years ahead with your child. Please feel free to contact us at [family@mtpran.com](mailto:family@mtpran.com) if there is any other way that we can support you during this key time.



## **Recommended Resources & Content References:**

***Passport2Purity*** by FamilyLife.com

***Teaching Your Child Healthy Sexuality*** by Dr. Jim Burns

***The Purity Code*** by Dr. Jim Burns

***Raising a Modern-Day Knight*** by Robert Lewis

***Raising a Modern-Day Princess*** by Pam Farrel and Doreen Hanna

***Preparing for Adolescence Kit*** by Dr. James Dobson

***So You're About to be a Teenager*** by Dennis & Barbara Rainey

***Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*** by Paul David Tripp

***Preparing Your Son for Every Man's Battle*** by Stephen Arterburn

***Five Conversations You Must Have Series*** by Vicki Courtney

***Ready for Adolescence Family Night Tool Chest*** from heritatgebuilders.com

**[Daveramsey.com/blog](http://Daveramsey.com/blog)**

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