ABSTRACT

THE INTEGRATION OF CHURCH AND HOME: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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The American family is deteriorating according to current research. This deterioration stems from the church’s inability to develop Christians who practice life according to the principles of the Bible. In a culture characterized by an atomic worldview, the church and family must work together to develop Christians who live according to the relational worldview of Scripture. This project describes how one church developed and implemented a strategy partnering the church and family for the spiritual formation of the next generation. This project is designed as a model for churches seeking to impact the culture one home at a time.

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DEDICATION

To Hailey and Madelyn and the next generation of Christ-followers: May you grow up in homes and churches that work together to help you become the greatest generation of American Christians.

To Angela: Thank you for challenging me to think about our family as the greatest vehicle of discipleship our daughters will ever experience.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Christian church sits on one side of a great divide. On the other side sits the American family, untouched by the church and in rapid decline as a result. Statistics illustrate the reality of this problem. In 1960 fewer than half a million unmarried couples lived together in the United States. But in 1998 four million unmarried couples were living together. Families headed by single fathers are now the fastest-growing type of families. In 1998 a U.S. Census Bureau study found that a majority of firstborn children are born out of wedlock. As an adult stage in the life course, marriage is shrinking. Americans are living longer, marrying later, exiting marriage more quickly, and choosing to live together before marriage, after marriage, in between marriages, and as an alternative to marriage. Over one million divorces occur each year in the United States. The presence of a stepparent in a family is the best predictor of child abuse yet discovered. From 1980-1992 the rate of suicide among young adolescents increased 120 percent. About one-third of all adolescents in America say they have contemplated suicide.¹ These statistics illustrate the condition of family life in America. According to recent research by George Barna, Americans agree that children are not being prepared for life. Among the adults surveyed nationwide, both born again Christians and not born

again adults believed American children are least prepared in the areas of spirituality and morality.²

It is clear that the family in America is suffering. Both Christians and non-Christians believe the spiritual and moral development of American children is problematic. All of the problems and issues faced by American families in general are found in evangelical churches as well. Many churches handle family issues with reactive strategies. Counseling and care ministries are often the extent of ministry to the family. Herein lies the problem. The church must not simply react to family crisis but instead develop proactive strategies to prevent crisis. The answer to the deterioration of family is found in adherence to biblical principles for life beginning with the individuals who make a marriage and form a family. At the same time the answer for developing children spiritually and morally is found in biblical discipleship both at church and at home. A strategic partnership must be formed between church and family in order to impact the culture and multiply a legacy.

The Statement of the Problem

Defining the partnership between church and family in practical terms is the basic problem. At its core, this project combats compartmentalized Christianity. It does not allow for a strategy of discipleship that excludes, as a main component, the context of home. This project provides a guide for all local churches to build an intentional partnership between its discipleship ministry and the families represented within the church body. True discipleship must not be limited to the church but lived out in the

context of family life. As the local church embraces this concept of practical discipleship it can build a solid bridge between church ministry and home life.

The strategy defined is proactive in nature. The term “proactive” is used to describe ministry that is designed to equip families and the individuals composing those families, to live out their relationship with Christ in the context of their biblical role in the home. “Reactive” ministry is, on the other hand, counsel and care provided after a family crisis. By way of analogy, proactive ministry teaches a skier to ski before he leaves the top of the mountain; reactive ministry nurses the skier back to health after he as crashed and burned.

Second, the strategy defined will be fully integrated. The term “integrated” suggests a discipleship plan that links church and home for the purpose of carrying biblical truth learned at church into the home for additional teaching and modeling. The term “integrated” also suggests an age appropriate plan for spiritual formation that is coherent from the preschool ministry to the adult ministry and that will also encourage parents to participate in the spiritual development of their children.

Third, the words “home and family” will be used interchangeably within the context of the project. “Family or home” is defined as a married couple with or without children or at least one adult and one child living under the same roof. This is not the biblical definition but instead is a practical definition. In reality the church ministers to all kinds of families including the traditional family, the blended family, and the single parent family. All of these family types are implied when the term “home” or “family” is utilized.
Finally the strategy defined will be a partnership. The term “partnership” points to the biblical work that the New Testament church and the home must accomplish together in order to impact the culture effectively. As this strategy is implemented and worked over time, it will produce a generation of believers who have been discipled in church and at home. Thus the legacy of faith will be passed to the generations in such a way that is purposeful and biblical. Specifically this project will show how this proactive, integrated strategy is being implemented at Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas for the purpose of changing the culture for Christ one home at a time. Kingsland is a suburban, purpose driven church located in Katy, Texas just west of Houston.

The Statement of Limitations

Developing an integrated strategy between church and home can be all-encompassing. However, this project will not address all facets of church discipleship. For example, singles ministry will not be discussed, except where the single parent family is concerned. Senior adult ministry will also not be discussed. Though each of these ministries is highly important in the context of the church, they are outside the scope of this project.

The thrust of this strategy is proactive in nature and therefore will exclude all forms of reactive ministry. Holistic family ministry must include reactive ministries such as counseling, Divorce Care, Celebrate Recovery, and Stephen ministry. There is scriptural foundation for the development of these ministries. However, reactive ministries are outside the scope and purpose of this proactive strategy. This proactive strategy is not the totality of discipleship ministry in the local church. It is merely a
strategic enhancement that improves the current discipleship ministry by extending its reach into the family.

Likewise all aspects of family ministry will not be discussed. The project focuses on spiritual and moral development and therefore will not address practical information concerning elements such as discipline methods, physical development, parenting, or other types of family ministry issues not pertaining to spiritual and moral growth.

The Theoretical Basis

A strong biblical case can be made for the partnership of church and family for the purpose of effective discipleship. In the Old Testament the primary vehicle for faith training is the family. Two passages in particular illustrate the Old Testament process. The foundational passage known as the Shema in the Old Testament is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give to 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.3

This passage teaches the commands of the Lord should be passed from parents to children in the context of daily life and conversation. The command to love God with every part of self is to be part of the home symbolically, conversationally, and intentionally.

The importance of family in passing the faith to the next generation is noted again in Psalm 78:1-7.

3 New International Version. All Scripture quoted in this project is from the NIV.
O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Clearly both the writer of the Shema and the Psalmist assumed family as the primary vehicle for faith training. In effect these two Old Testament passages reveal that God himself commanded the family to intentionally pursue passing the truths of the faith to their children both in knowledge and practice.

The wisdom literature in the book of Proverbs advocates a family responsibility for training children in the ways of the faith. Beginning in Proverbs 1:8, the Scripture commands the reader to listen with sincerity as to a father or mother. “Listen my son to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.” This introduction is typical of Proverbs and evokes a domestic situation in which a father and mother give their son instruction for life. The exhortation leads children to listen to their parents as a wellspring of wisdom. Proverbs 4:1-2 says, “Listen my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching.” The biblical order of spiritual formation flows out of one generation to the next. Parents, in Scripture, pass down the wisdom of the faith to their children. Sadly, many parents today do not engage their children intentionally to help them become wise spiritually.

Perhaps the best known Proverb centered on the responsibility of the family is Proverbs 22:6. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not
turn from it.” This particular verse asserts general wisdom for training children in the truth. It describes a process of building truth into a child’s life within the context of family. The verse does not delegate the responsibility of faith training to a youth ministry, public school, day care, or a mother’s day out program. Instead, the responsibility for faith training lies squarely on the shoulders of parents.

A discipleship thread runs through the entire Old Testament giving family the responsibility for discipleship. It is important to note that the culture of the day naturally partnered the Jewish religion, including celebrations and ceremonies, with family life, thus allowing parents to be the primary faith trainers in the lives of their children. For example, fathers led in the teaching and celebration of the Passover in their own homes with their own families. A father would teach, explain, and serve the Passover meal, thus strengthening the faith of his family. Families would also participate in community events and temple worship surrounding the Passover. This example is one of many that show a basic integration of church and family in the Old Testament culture. In the Old Testament this partnership is naturally integrated because of the integration of religion and culture.

In the context of the New Testament, a partnership is evident between church and home. The New Testament church is centered in the worship of Jesus Christ, the growth of his disciples, and the evangelization of the world. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) directs the church to make disciples of all people including those who compose families.

The church has the responsibility for the evangelization and effective discipleship of adults, students, children, and preschoolers. Does this however alleviate family from
its Old Testament responsibility of faith formation? The answer is found in Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus. Paul addressed the relationships of Christians as husbands and wives and mothers and fathers. In Ephesians 6:1-4 Paul described a proper Christian family. “Children, Obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” In the New Testament, the Christian family is an integral part in the discipleship process. Therefore, a theological study shows that the church and family must partner to effectively accomplish the mandate of the Great Commission. The presence of the New Testament church does not excuse a family from its responsibility of discipleship but instead enhances its ability to do so.

Many Christian families have completely delegated the work of discipleship to the church. Conversely the church has lowered its expectations of Christian families in the process of discipleship. This proposal of integrated ministry in a proactive form reflects the heart of the Old and New Testament. The church and the family must work together to accomplish the Great Commission.

The Statement of Methodology

Design and implementation of an integrated, proactive ministry to families is a problem. However, the solution is both conceivable and attainable. The landscape of American Christianity is dotted with churches that have lost their reason for being. In many ways the local church has become ineffective in the ever-changing American culture. “It is time for the church to give serious attention to reinventing itself.
Researcher George Barna’s strong statement must be thoughtfully and thoroughly considered: ‘The church must reinvent itself at the same pace our culture does (every three to five years) in order to keep up with those who are seeking spiritual direction.’”

Reinventing the church does not require deviation from the biblical instruction concerning church purposes and principles. It does require examining how those purposes and principles are practiced in the context of the culture. The following guidelines are offered as precepts when pursuing innovation and change: “Give careful attention to the kind of church you want to become. Plan to move people to spiritual growth. Build on the vision of Christ for His church. Understand (the church) as a union of divine empowerment and human effort. Evaluate and measure the results against what Christ wants his church to be.”

It is with these principles in mind that a clear method emerges.

The problem of strategic design and implementation of a proactive, integrated family ministry takes into consideration its overall impact on the strategy of the church. “The heart of family ministry is the nature of the church, not merely its work. Serving people and helping them develop healthy Christian relationships at home stands at the heart of the church’s work.” For the purpose of this project, strategic design and implementation will be tested in light of the present and future ministry strategy of Kingsland Baptist Church. Success will be measured by ascertaining consensus, accomplishing key strategic changes, and measuring participation in the strategy. The

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5 Ibid., 66.

6 Ibid., 166.
nature of the project yields a long term requirement for measuring success. For instance, children who grow from birth to adulthood under this strategy will be the first visible product of the strategy. Therefore approximately eighteen years are needed to measure success in that regard. However, short term success can be measured in many ways. The following chapter summaries detail the method of development and implementation for this project.

Chapter 2: Problems Facing the American Church and Family

This chapter details the problems facing churches in regard to family in America. The statistical truth regarding the American family will be revealed and contrasted with the American Christian family. The results show no significant differences concerning the success of marriages or the moral and spiritual training children receive at home, the application of biblical truth when making choices, and the everyday life practices among secular and Christian families. This data insists the church become relevant in its ministry strategy to affect Christian families so that they live a life reflective of a biblical worldview and impact the culture accordingly. This impact is both present tense in the context of the local community and future tense in regard to the emerging generations.

A research instrument called a “Family Needs Survey”\(^7\) is described and used in this phase to ascertain the felt needs regarding discipleship and family at Kingsland Baptist Church. The results will be used to understand the problem as it relates specifically to the members of Kingsland Baptist Church. This chapter introduces the need for a proactive ministry strategy designed to equip people to live out their

Christianity in the context of family life. Chapter 2 illuminates the problem and indicates a need for a specific, integrated, proactive strategy for equipping people and families.

Chapter 3: Fundamental Strategic Elements

Chapter 3 describes the fundamental strategic elements necessary for effective design and implementation of a pro-active family ministry strategy. These fundamental elements include the mission, vision, and core values of the local church. Specifically the mission, vision, and core values of Kingsland Baptist Church will be discussed as an effective foundation for a proactive, integrated discipleship ministry for church and family. The importance of these elements will be stressed for the success of the family ministry strategy. The integrated, proactive process requires strategic design and implementation in conjunction with the mission, vision, and core values of the church.

Another key fundamental element includes staffing for strategic success. This chapter introduces the need for a staff pastor who gives oversight to the overall discipleship process of the church. This pastor will be a hybrid version of the Minister of Education. He will be a Discipleship Pastor with a heart for families or a Marriage and Family Pastor with a heart for discipleship. In either case the position requires someone trained and passionate about both areas. This position is paramount to the success of an integrated, proactive approach to discipleship that entails creative partnership between church and home.

Chapter 4: The Process of Design and Consensus

Consensus around a philosophy and a strategic design is imperative to the success of the project. Chapter 4 details the process for building consensus around the paradigm
of integrated ministry. The chapter is subdivided into key phases and assigned chronological values for each phase as applied at Kingsland Baptist Church. The first phase is the initial planning phase involving the work of a family ministry launch team. This phase includes the forming of a team of lay leadership who interprets the “Family Needs Survey” specific to Kingsland Baptist Church. The team is led by the Associate Pastor. The team then makes recommendations to the pastoral staff which begins phase two. Phase two entails disseminating the recommendations of the lay team to the Generational Team, who is a team of ministers serving as age level specialists. The team is composed of the Preschool Minister, the Children’s Minister, the Student Pastor, the Adult Discipleship Pastor and is lead by the Associate Pastor. During this phase the team participates in a development retreat specifically to design the integrated approach based on researched information from their age level perspective and from the “Family Needs Survey.” This chapter records the work of the Area Ministry Team to create and implement effective strategies of discipleship, integrating church and home.

Finally, chapter 4 details the communication process with the church leadership and the congregation as a key component toward consensus. Example elements including printed communication pieces, media components, sermons, and other forms of communication are provided as appendices. The final phase culminates with a semester long campaign to inform, educate, and allow the membership to respond by committing to become equipped for the purposes of discipleship in the context of their own homes. Philosophical and strategic consensus is imperative to the successful implementation of the process.

Chapter 5: Proactive Solutions in Practice
Integrating discipleship and family ministry yields a simple partnership between the church and home for the purpose of developing fully devoted followers of Christ. The mainstream paradigm of discipleship in America recognizes many churches specializing in a discipleship strategy that is primarily the work of church leaders, both pastoral and lay, investing in the lives of others. The biblical nature of this paradigm is not in question and in fact does indirectly impact home life when done well. At the same time, para-church ministries such as Focus on the Family or Family Life create resources and tools for discipleship at home in the absence of a church model including the family as a significant vehicle for discipleship. The missing link is a partnership between church and home incorporating a solid church discipleship ministry which resources and equips parents to adequately disciple their children at home. “The most promising system for family nurture is one that interfaces Christian education in the church with that of the home.”\(^8\) Though others make this observation, most neglect the practice of the philosophy in the context of the local church. This section details a design and practice of an integrated discipleship ministry. Several key factors determine the course of this approach.

Develop Common Discipleship Goals

First, leaders must develop an agreed upon, biblical, set of common discipleship goals for church and home. At Kingsland, these goals include the following: every person will pursue and experience (1) a personal, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, (2) a head filled with applied wisdom from Scripture, (3) skill in filtering life through a Christian worldview, (4) an ability to articulate the Bible and contend for the faith, (5) a

\(^8\) Charles Sell, *Family Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 296.
desire to make Christ known through life, work, service, and witness, and (6) a faith ready to leave home for students becoming young adults. These common goals for church and home lay the foundation for key strategic decisions.

Choose an Integrated Curriculum

One of these decisions involves making an integrated curriculum choice that elevates the importance of Scripture and allows families to study the same text at varying age levels. Factors to consider include a systematic approach to the teaching of doctrine for practical life application and an integrated thematic, scriptural approach allowing families to discuss and build upon common truths learned in Sunday morning Bible study. The goal in the curriculum choice is to find one that lends itself to effectively teaching the Word at every age level and gives families the ability to discuss similar truths no matter which class they attend on Sunday morning. At Kingsland this means a major change from multiple publishing houses to a streamlined curriculum approach.

Create Formal Bridges Between Church and Home

Agreed upon goals and curriculum enables the church to equip adults to disciple their children at home both formally and informally. Formal training involves intentional, consistent, faith training by the parent for benefit of the child. A key exercise for the local church becomes equipping parents to lead a weekly family devotion and developing tools for home use in conjunction with the Sunday morning Bible study. This is simply accomplished by writing devotions built from the lesson learned at church earlier in the week. Much effort goes into the establishing of writing teams for the purpose of creating

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relevant devotions for families in all seasons of life. Strategies equipping adults to lead devotions in their home that are fun, age appropriate and practical require time and attention. This section reveals practical ways to equip and resource parents to lead family devotions. This bridge from church to home is a clear practice of an integrated, proactive approach. “Studies reveal that as many as 70 percent of young people raised in the church have not embraced the Christian faith as their own by the time they graduate from high school. In fact, nearly 50 percent of churched teenagers base their choices concerning moral matters on feelings and emotions.”

This is true largely because of a growing trend toward compartmentalized Christianity that often impacts only one segment of a child’s life (Sunday at church) beginning in childhood. However when the church integrates its strategy with family, it impacts children in the most influential place of their lives, home.

Secondly, the church should equip parents to formally capitalize on natural milestones of spiritual development for the purpose of discipleship. A “milestone” is “an event, preceded by a period of instruction from parents, which celebrates a spiritual development point in a child’s life.” Basic milestones include baby dedication, baptism, preparing for adolescence, purity vows, rite of passage, and high school graduation. These natural milestones offer both the church and the family opportunities to disciple and celebrate a new phase of growth. Kingsland partners with adults to equip them to capitalize on the milestones and to provide events to celebrate the milestones. This section details the milestone ministry and its integration between church and home.

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A growing problem in suburban America is busyness caused by good activities. This busyness is often driven by a predominant philosophy among parents concerning success. Success in suburban America is often defined by materialism and the investment in self-esteem. Many parents believe their children develop positive self-esteem as they excel in extracurricular activities such as sports, the arts, or other good opportunities afforded by suburban life. As a result children, beginning in preschool, spend most of their time bouncing from activity to activity creating a sense of hurry and busyness. Often, this over-scheduling epidemic neglects the spiritual and moral development of children and contributes to dysfunction in the family. Child psychologist David Elkind, offers this observation regarding the scenario: “Sometimes children’s to do lists seem as crammed as adults. Over-scheduling is a major cause of stress in kids…In the hustle and bustle, kids can miss out on two very important things-family time and solo play.”

The church must equip families to choose the best things as opposed to all the good things. The effective church helps the family prioritize so that time to participate in integrated discipleship exists. For instance, this process requires a time investment for family devotions, milestone celebrations and capitalization on teachable moments. Therefore the church teaches the discipline of simplicity as it relates to the use of time and money. The church must also teach the biblical priorities of life and offer resources to help simplify as part of its overarching discipleship strategy.

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Along with equipping suburban Christians to simplify their schedule and their possessions comes the need for the church to practice a similar discipline. At Kingsland simplicity is a value to consider when determining programming. Two strategies are imperative for helping families maintain simplicity and balance. First, the church must, in practice, honor the Sabbath. Reducing Sunday meetings, rehearsals, studies, trainings, and fellowships in favor of protecting the Sabbath for families is an honorable strategic decision giving time for the family side of discipleship. Second, the church must calendar programming in such a way as to protect family time. Calendaring with the family in mind involves planning wisely in conjunction with the local school district’s calendar. It involves evaluating the holistic ministry and offering only those processes, events, and classes that align with the mission, vision, and core values of the local church. This allows the church to practice what it preaches in regard to simplicity and balance. “We often ask homes to sacrifice themselves to keep the church organization healthy and functional. Rather, we should ask the church to sacrifice its business priorities to keep the home healthy and functional.”

Chapter 7: Initial Results, Potential Problems, and Conclusions

The final chapter evaluates the initial successes and failures of the fully implemented proactive strategy to integrate the church and family for the purpose of discipleship. Specific short-term, measurable indicators allow Kingsland to understand immediate successes and failures of the ministry strategy. Certain speculations illustrating the potential for long-term effects are discussed in chapter seven.

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This chapter also analyzes identifiable problems with the strategy and suggests potential solutions for these obstacles. Potentially this integrated strategy will be useful to other churches. Solutions for implementing this strategy in churches of different sizes are discussed. The chapter concludes with a final challenge for the church to embrace this type of ministry strategy as an effort against the atomic worldview that drives ministry philosophy in the church. As an appeal to church leaders, the conclusion of this project calls for the church universal to re-think discipleship and include the family.

The Review of Literature

The following review includes literature categorized by subject areas pertaining to the content of this project. A review of a few significant resources in each category shows the importance of these works to the project.

Resources on the Integration of Church and Home


Freudenburg’s entire book centers around the partnership between church and home. Some of his concepts place too much emphasis on the home and not enough responsibility on the church. However, three chapters are especially important. Chapters 16 and 17 detail how faith development will change as the church empowers the family to disciple. It also shows a possible scenario for how church programming should change around the strategy. Not every idea is great but the work does create a foundation to build upon. Chapter fourteen, “Surfing the Paradigm Shift” is also important. It allows understanding to be gained concerning the implication of an integrated partnership between church and home.

H.B. London is a pastor with the family in the forefront of his mind. His book on winning the future generations through children’s ministry, points to the importance of church and home coming together and effectively ministering to the next generation. His chapter on empowering the partnership between church and home is especially significant. He also provides a chapter on the importance of Christ-centered marriages to the process of helping children become Christ followers.


Rainey writes a great chapter on making your church a marriage and family equipping center. This chapter gives a tangible approach to equipping people on campus for the job to be done at home. It embraces the concept of integration but speaks of the church’s responsibility to equip people so they can live out their faith in the context of their family life. This book is actually the catalyst for the entire thesis.

**Resources on Spiritual Formation**


George Barna does an excellent job of assisting the reader in understanding the truth about the spiritual and moral development of children in America at present. He makes an argument that four out of five parents believe they are responsible for the spiritual development of their children and that three out of five of these same parents abdicate the responsibility to the church. He argues for the church to mobilize parents to disciple their children. This is a discipleship paradigm shift according to Barna. The shift
occurs when the church refuses to comply with the idea that helping children develop spiritually is solely the responsibility of the church. This is a key argument for an integrated plan for discipleship.


Chapters two and three of this book provide important insights into integrated discipleship. First, the church must give back the primary responsibility of faith training to parents. Second, the church must partner with parents to give practical methods for discipling their children. This is done in the context of a partnership where the church and the home each understand their respective roles in the process. Fowler practices this strategy in the context of AWANA clubs international. Though the strategy of this thesis is not the same, AWANA is a discipleship strategy that is effectively practicing integrated discipleship.


Jim Weidmann and Otis Ledbetter provide a practical manual to help adults disciple their children around natural spiritual milestones that occur in life. This process is the basis for the milestone ministry of Kingsland Baptist Church. Though Weidman does not intentionally link church and home, this project uses the milestone idea for home and connects it to church. This book is instrumental in creating a practical way for parents to participate as faith trainers in the lives of their children. It also serves as a starting point for developing key strategies for the local church to equip parents by providing seminars and events that highlight the milestones.
Resources on Family Ministry


Dennis Rainey presents a compelling call to effective family life and family ministry. He calls attention to the issues of marriage and parenting and their impact of the spiritual and moral development of a culture. He coins the phrase “One Home at a Time” as the method by which to change a culture for Christ. This is an important work because its thesis serves as a significant portion of the vision statement for Kingsland Baptist Church. This work paves the way for the project at hand to be implemented.


Charles Sell’s work on family ministry is the mainstream text for holistic family ministry. Several important sections contribute to this project. Sell’s work on the theology of family ministry presents a foundation with which to build an integrated and proactive ministry. He also addresses the need for the church to equip and resource parents as the primary faith trainers in the lives of their children. He speaks of the body of Christ as the destroyer of cultural myths pertaining to marriage and family. The book is significant as a foundational piece in support of integrated and proactive family ministry.

Resources on Current Trends


Richard Land provides and excellent challenge to Christians and pastors in America regarding the family. His book contains a great summary of research by a
number of family professionals who consistently test the culture. It gives a solid basis for
drawing conclusions regarding the church and its impact on the American family.

Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton. Soul Searching: The Religious and

Smith and Denton conducted an extensive sociological research project on the
religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers. This research suggests that teenagers
are compartmentalizing their faith and determining that it is only useful later in life. Very
credible evidence concludes much of the reason for this is both directly and indirectly a
result of Christian parenting.

Resources on Christian Education

Eldridge, Daryl. The Teaching Ministry of the Church. Nashville: Broadman & Holman,
1995.

Dr. Eldridge’s text on the teaching ministry of the church does an excellent job of
making the reader aware of an integrated approach to teaching people. Chapter five
highlights the church’s role in teaching. Chapter six delineates the family’s role in
teaching. This is important because it represents a mainstream Southern Baptist
viewpoint on Christian education at church and at home. Though specific strategies are
not given for integrated discipleship, there is a distinct awareness of the church’s role
versus the family’s role. This is important supportive material from a Southern Baptist
perspective.

Tidwell Charles A. The Educational Ministry of a Church: A Comprehensive Model for

The purpose of Dr. Tidwell’s text is to teach seminary students how to develop a
ministry of education in the local church. The text reflects a practice typical of many
Southern Baptist churches in America. The text views family ministry as an emphasis ministry that is reactive in nature. This text is the antithesis of an integrated discipleship approach that utilizes the family as part of the developmental process. Certainly Tidwell would not deny the family’s role in spiritual formation, but his text feeds the “bring your children to us for discipleship” mentality. There is no emphasis on partnership. Challenging this mainstream viewpoint is the driving force behind this thesis.

Resources on Vision and Strategic Development


Barna calls the church of the status quo incapable of responding to the present moral crisis. It must reinvent itself or face virtual oblivion by the mid twenty-first century. Such an alarming statement lends Barna to help pastors develop vision for the future. Part of that vision includes the special role of the family. Chapter fourteen of Barna’s book gives insight into the church’s need to use the family as a vehicle for imparting a biblical worldview in the lives of the next generation. This chapter is important because it lends credence to the vision of this project and gives specific ways in which the home must fulfill its role.


Malphurs’ book on strategic planning provides the principles and framework for the process of strategic planning for the purposes of this project. Specifically, chapters eight and nine are very helpful in the development of this strategy as well as implementing the strategy. The book is a framework piece.
Other Theses as Resources


Dr. Burns develops an excellent plan for parents seeking to become spiritual mentors to their children. This is helpful for the purposes of an example strategy for parents. It does not however pursue a highly integrated approach.


Dr. Pitts gives an excellent plan for implementing a holistic family ministry in the local church setting. The thesis paints broad strokes regarding family ministry in the local church. It is helpful from the standpoint of highlighting the over-arching need for equipping husbands, wives, mothers, and fathers. Its focus is both proactive and reactive.
CHAPTER 2

PROBLEMS FACING THE AMERICAN CHURCH AND FAMILY

Families and churches today face challenges created by “a humanistic American culture with no apparent need for absolute, moral truth and a Christian culture that is eerily humanistic.” Humanism is the worldview choice for many Americans. Secular humanism dominates the public school systems, the media and entertainment choices, the business world, and eventually finds its way into the church and the family. Secular humanism gives people the right to define truth for themselves. Therefore America, the church, and the family face difficult challenges brought about by individuals who decide what is true for them as opposed to adjusting their own lives to the truth.

For example, the onset of secular humanism since 1955 has brought about the following changes in American culture according to Dr. Richard Land:

Less than half of our children currently grow up in intact families. In 1960, 80 percent of our children were reared in homes where the father and mother were both in the home and married to each other. More than a million children a year experience the pain of parental divorce. There has been in the last 10 years, a 400-percent increase in child abuse significant enough to require a doctor’s attention. Every hour our children watch 78 violent acts on television. Every day in America, 2,795 teenage girls get pregnant. Every day in America, 1,106 of those girls snuff out the lives of their unborn children through abortion. Every 78 seconds a teenager in America attempts suicide. In the last 30 years the suicide rate of teenage boys has quadrupled; the rate for girls has doubled. By the time students graduate from high school, 66 percent of them have used one or more illegal drugs.\(^\text{(15)}\)

\(^{14}\)Dr. Voddie Baucham, interview by author, Houston, TX, 2006, author’s notes, Houston, TX.

\(^{15}\)Richard Land, For Faith and Family (Nashville, Broadman & Holman, 2002), 16-17.
H.B. London paints a graphic picture of the problems facing the American family. According to London, one out of every three Americans is now a stepparent, stepchild, stepsibling, or some other participant in a stepfamily. Twelve million families are single parent families; ten million of those are single mother families which comprise twenty-six percent of all family groups. Nearly twenty-five million children do not live with their fathers. More than one-third of these children did not see their fathers at all during the course of a year. Half of all the children born since 1990 will live in a single-parent home at some time during their childhood. Divorcing before age thirty is becoming so common that it is creating a demographic phenomenon: the starter marriage. The union lasts a few years and then ends before children arrive.”

Facing the cold hard facts reveals biblical family as an echo in the past of historical America. Families splinter daily in the American culture. “The divorce rate in the United States is the highest in the world and is two to three times what it was for our parents and grandparents. Currently, about half of all couples who get married, divorce within seven years. Seven percent of American adults live with an unmarried partner. The number of unmarried-couple households rose 71 percent between 1990 and 2000. This picture is the dismal reflection of post-modern American family.

Some argue that the family is imploding in the culture of America but not in the context of the evangelical church. This is a lofty argument that does not hold up against the facts. In 2001, 66 percent of Americans said they had made a personal commitment

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17 Ibid., 11.
to Jesus Christ that is still important to them today.\textsuperscript{18} So the question becomes, if 66 percent of Americans made an individual commitment to Christ that is still important to them today, why are the people who compose the family making decisions contrary to the very Word of Jesus? The answer is the infiltration of secular humanism. Most Americans make decisions based on self-satisfaction and relativism instead of commitment, conviction, and moral principle.

**The Conundrum of Worldview**

Three basic worldviews influence the way people live in the twenty-first century. A person’s worldview provides a set of faith answers to the most basic questions concerning human existence. Questions such as “Who are we?” Where are we?” What is wrong?” and “What is the solution?” find different answers depending on a person’s basic worldview.\textsuperscript{19}

First, the oceanic worldview states that fundamentally reality is one. According to this worldview all of reality is made up of one basic material. Thinking of an ocean helps illustrate this view. If a person stands in the ocean and scoops up some water with a glass, the water is separated from the ocean but not really different from it. If the person then pours that water back into the ocean and scoops up a new glass full, he cannot be sure if it is the same water, different water, or some of the same water and some different water. It is impossible to differentiate because all of the water is one


substance. The same is true for the oceanic worldview. Well known religions embracing
this worldview include Hinduism and Buddhism.  

A second basic worldview is the atomic worldview. This view sees all of reality
as separate units. In this view everything is individual and disconnected from all other
parts. Think of this worldview as marbles in a cup. You can shake the cup and the
marbles will bump up against each other, but each marble is ultimately unaffected by the
others. Science teaches that reality is composed of atoms and molecules, and even these
are composed of smaller particles. Everything is separate. People who live according to
this worldview see themselves the same way. Each individual life is completely separate
from the next. In the west, the enlightenment produced an emphasis on the individual
that the earlier world had not ever known. Religions and views such as naturalism,
secular humanism, and individualism all find their foundation in the atomic worldview.

The atomic worldview embraces individualism at its core. America specifically
teaches and practices this worldview in more depth than any other culture. The
ramification of the atomic worldview to the American family is astronomical. “The
family has broken down as people who see themselves not as part of a group but as
individuals living under the same roof.” Therefore children expect the freedom to set
their personal boundaries as teenagers and parents feel as if they have no right to
discipline their children. The value of individual rights in the family now outweighs the
biblical authority God gives to parents and our culture pays the price. Often, fathers in

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
America view their lives as their own, not calculating the domino effect of poor choices on their wife and children.

The atomic worldview allows for compartmentalization in every aspect of life. Therefore, people who call themselves Christians can worship on Sunday and make decisions at work during the week that are contrary to scriptural principles. How can a man worship on Sunday and have an affair with his secretary on Monday? The answer lies in his atomic worldview: The Christian compartment of his life does not affect the work compartment or the relationships compartment of his life. How does a student attend a Bible study on the Ten Commandments on Wednesday night and cheat on a test on Thursday morning? The answer resides in his atomic worldview allowing for compartmentalization of principles.

The third basic way of viewing life stems from a biblical understanding also called the relational worldview. The relational worldview sees all of reality as interconnected. A spider’s web illustrates the viewpoint. If one part of the web is strained or pulled the whole web moves with it. The relational worldview expects one area of a person’s life to directly affect all of the other areas of his life. In the same way the relational worldview expects the life of an individual to directly affect all of the lives connected to it. Religions embracing the relational worldview include biblical Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The relational worldview, in the context of Christianity, means that a Christian views his personal life as interconnected with God and others. Therefore Christians as individuals are responsible to God and to others for their behavior and beliefs.

\[^{23}\text{Ibid.}^\]
The Bible teaches that proper life is lived in community. Acts 2:42-47 describes Christian life in the context of relationship.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The practicality of a relational worldview depicts a life of interconnectedness. The early church discovered the beauty of life in community.

A worldview conundrum exists for the church in America today. The people composing the American church largely live according to an atomic worldview. This worldview directly opposes the biblical mandate of the church and Christian life. Therefore the church faces the problem of developing Christians who willing choose to leave behind an atomic worldview and embrace a relational worldview. The difficulty of this task, and the extreme failure of the church to accomplish this work, paints a bleak cultural status quo in America.

**The Church is Losing on the Home Front**

The church in America fails to develop Christians who make life decisions using the filter of a biblical worldview. Therefore, the church continues to lose the family battle and will continue to do so unless change is implemented. This is seen more clearly when one considers the religious attitudes of American teenagers. In 2005, Christian Smith and Melinda Lindquist Denton completed a study on the religious and spiritual lives of

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24 New International Version
American teenagers. They found that among all teens in America claiming any religious affiliation, three-fourths of them consider themselves Christian. According to the research, these religious teenagers are shaped by two cultural scripts that pattern their faith: 1) religion will be more important when I am older, and 2) tolerance of all faith and religion is a non-negotiable. These two cultural scripts stem from a humanistic approach to religion as opposed to a biblical worldview.

George Barna confirms this phenomenon claiming that among teenagers who say they are Christian, a majority (54 percent) claim to be only moderately committed to the Christian faith. More than 10 percent said they were not committed at all to the Christian faith. How can the church expect to make a difference in the family if it is not producing Christians who make decisions from a biblical perspective?

When the church is pitted against the culture, consider the odds. The church, which has the attention of the most committed teenager for three hours per week, is up against an onslaught of humanistic strategies to shape the next generation.

A major core value in the United States is capitalism. “American teenage religion and spirituality is profoundly shaped by mass-consumer capitalism. Capitalism promotes a particular moral order, and institutionalized normative worldview comprising and fostering particular assumptions, narratives, commitments, beliefs, values, and goals.” The worldview asserted by capitalists is simply “self-satisfaction.” American teenagers have an immense amount of money in the market and are therefore a prime


26George Barna, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions (Ventura: Regal Publishers, 2003), 33.

advertising target. The conscience of American adolescents is being formed by expert agents with enormous resources motivated not to achieve youth’s good but rather to acquire their money. Our culture is competing with the church for the allegiance of its youth.28

The American church is up against overwhelming competitors in efforts to shape the lives of its youth. The American teenager watches 21 hours of television per week and views 360,000 television advertisements before graduation from high school. Furthermore, 65 percent of 8-18 year olds have television sets in their rooms.29 Compare that exposure against the three hours a week that the most committed Christian teenager gives his or her attention to the church. The possible biblical influence of the church is dwarfed in comparison to the humanistic influence of the culture. At this rate the church will continue to produce a generation of adults who compartmentalize their faith and make family decisions based on a humanistic need for self-satisfaction. Thus, God’s design for the family will continue to become an archaic historical trend in America’s past.

The most effective strategy of secular humanism competing with the Christian worldview in shaping the spiritual and intellectual lives of children is public education. Most children in America spend eight hours per day in a public school classroom immersed in humanistic thinking. Compare this time in the public school classroom to the one hour per week the most devoted evangelical child attends Sunday School. Typically the American public school classroom is dominated by the humanistic

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28Ibid., 178.
29Ibid., 179.
philosophy of John Dewey who emerged in the 1930’s as the father of humanism. Dewey’s impact on the public school and consequently generations of Americans is phenomenal. His philosophical impact created an educational philosophy that is atheistic in theology, naturalist in philosophy, relative in morality, evolutionist in biology, and socialist in the area of economics. The impact of Dewey’s worldview on the public school system in America is profound. “So much so that Humanists acknowledge there is now no way for a theistic worldview to compete. Education is the most powerful ally of Humanism, and every American public school is a school of humanism. What can the theistic Sunday Schools, meeting for an hour once per week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teaching?”30 The humanistic worldview taught in public school not only calls the Christian worldview ridiculous, but it also teaches students that the traditional family is a historical concept. Today students learn that no correct pattern of family exists. This ramification stems directly from the humanistic philosophy factoring God’s expectation for daily life out of the familial equation.

Another significant trend in American culture attacking the family is structural disconnection. Stemming directly from an atomic worldview, disconnection in American culture is damaging. Large numbers of teens today live their lives with little but the most distant adult direction and oversight. They spend the greater part of most weekdays in schools surrounded by their peers. Their parents are working and otherwise busy. Members of their extended families live in distant cities. Their teachers are largely preoccupied with discipline, classroom instruction, and grading. Their neighbors tend to

stay out of each others’ business. They have their own cars, own cell phones, and their
own money. When school is out, it may be hours before a parent comes home from
work.³¹ This is true of the majority of American teenagers both religious and irreligious.

The structural disconnection of American youth from the world of adults has
serious ramifications regarding to spiritual life. This disconnection causes students to
define religion as a distinctly adult affair. Thus, faith becomes an issue for later life and
is automatically distant. Students find it difficult to build meaningful relationships with
adults and therefore do not find the kind of nurture, instruction, and direction in the faith
that they want and need in the context of a relationship.³²

Although the American culture and the religious community often talk about a
pro-family and youth loving society, their practices do not support these claims. Most of
the structures of American daily life actually pull families apart. Work and education
separate families during the day. After school activities result in little unstructured time
spent together as a family. A minority of American families eat most of their dinner
meals together. The American legal system and cultural practices around divorce make it
clear that keeping families together is not a societal priority.³³ Most churches segregate
their congregations by age for educational purposes with little or no opportunity for
family worship and Bible study. “Contrary to our culture’s rhetoric, an alien
anthropologist might have good reason to conclude that American families have little
interest in spending time together.”³⁴

³¹Ibid., 185.
³²Ibid., 185.
³³Ibid., 190.
³⁴Ibid., 190.
A cursory reading of the major research involving the youth culture suggests the church is not making a broad or significant difference in producing young adults who make decisions based on a biblical worldview. In fact, the studies show that humanism prevails in American culture. The next generation of adults is destined to make decisions about cohabitation, marriage, family, abortion, and divorce from a humanistic perspective. Even the next generation of Christians is likely to be influenced by the mounting surge of secular humanism so prevalent in American culture. The current evidence regarding Christian students in America shows “Evangelical students know more about God than their secular counterparts but with some gratifying exceptions, neither home nor church has shaped a comprehensive and consistent faith that stands noon-bright amid the dim shadows of spiritual rebellion and moral profligacy.”

How does the next generation of Christian live life biblically as a person and in the context of family in a world full of humanists? What does the research suggest the church must do in order to reverse the downward slide in the American family caused by the onslaught of secular humanists and their sinister strategies? How will the Christian family survive?

**Sound Support for Integrating Church and Family**

Another program is not the answer. Consider the thoughts of Dr. Andreas Kostenberger on the topic of church and its impact on the American family.

It is not only the world that is suffering the consequences of neglecting the Creator’s purposes for marriage and family. The church, too, having lowered itself to the standard of the world in many ways, has become a part of the problem and is not offering the solutions the world needs. Not that Christians are unaware of their need to be educated about God’s plan for marriage and family. An abundance of resources and activities are available. There are specialized ministries and parachurch organizations. There are marriage seminars and

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retreats. There are books on marriage and the family, as well as magazines and video productions, Bible studies, and official statements focusing on marriage and the family. Yet for all the church is doing in this area, the fact remains that in the end there is shockingly little difference between the world and the church. Why is this the case? We believe the reason why all of the above mentioned efforts to build strong Christian marriages and families are ineffective to such a significant extent is found, at least in part, in the lack of commitment to seriously engage the Bible as a whole. The result is that much of the available Christian literature on the subject is seriously imbalanced.⁵⁶

Part of the answer then lies in communicating clearly the biblical design for marriage and family and leading believers to adjust their lives to that truth. Many churches in America do not hold up the standard of biblical truth in regard to marriage and the family and do not discipline accordingly. Therefore, many Christians make decisions about marriage and family based on the pop-psychology of the day which is largely influenced by secular humanism.

Research suggests another part of the answer lies in partnering the church and family in the spiritual formation of children. The aforementioned Oxford University/UNC Chapel Hill sociological study concerning the religious lives of American teenagers concludes that, “popular to misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.”³⁷ If the parent is the most influential component of the spiritual formation process in the life of a child, the church should work hard to expect, equip, and resource the parent to become an effective faith trainer in the child’s life.

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The current statistics suggest that only ten percent of churched families discuss faith at home with any degree of regularity. In forty-three percent of homes composed of churched families, faith is never discussed. When asked how often churched families have devotions or worship as a family, sixty-four percent reported that their family rarely or never did so. Only nine percent reported holding family devotions with any degree of regularity. Realistically, the church does not partner with the family to equip adults for the task of discussing the Christian faith in formal and informal ways in the context of home.

Currently mainstream evangelical churches practice discipleship strategies that exclude the family in the spiritual formation process of children. The influence of Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Community Church on discipleship strategies at the local church level produces both positive and negative results. Each of these church models grounds its philosophy on the need to accomplish the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) in the lives of twenty-first century Americans. Significant growth spurned by effective evangelism tactics and a deep sensitivity to the community yields numeric effectiveness and changed lives in both cases. Each church strategy is unique in the particulars of discipleship. Both discipleship strategies segregate children and youth from adults even in the most basic practice of worship. The primary texts, The Purpose Driven Church by Warren and Rediscovering Church by Hybels, describing the discipleship strategies at


39 Ibid., 14.

40 Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).
Saddleback and Willow Creek make no mention of family as a vehicle for discipleship. Many churches in America pattern their discipleship strategies according to the models of these effective churches minimizing the role of family in the process. Even the most effective churches need to ponder the positive impact of including family as part of the local church strategy for making disciples.

The church should build an intentional partnership with the family. Solid research indicates, “Faith practices in the home virtually double the probability of a congregation’s youth entering into the life and mission of Christ’s church.”

Though a partnership for spiritual formation seems natural, more than two out of three churched adults abdicate their responsibility to faith-train their children to the church. Ironically, eighty-five percent of churched adults believe they have the primary responsibility to train their child spiritually and morally. The typical American Christian parent does not know how to faith train his or her own children. Therefore, the church must partner with parents to equip them to assume the role of primary faith trainer. This is the child’s best chance at developing an authentic faith and a biblical worldview. A child who grows into an adult with an authentic faith and a biblical worldview makes decisions about marriage and family from a biblical perspective instead of a humanistic perspective. The chance to rebuild the American family is found in the next generation of Christians. The process begins with the parents of the next generation. Therefore, integrating the spiritual

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41 Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).


formation process of the local church with a practical home discipleship process is of primary importance to the family, the church, and the culture.

**Family Needs Survey At Kingsland Baptist Church**

In order to make a proactive, integrated discipleship strategy between church and home a reality instead of a theory, successful practice in the context of a local church is required. This project focuses on the implementation and development of the integrated, proactive strategy at Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas. Kingsland is located in a rapidly developing suburb of West Houston. The church is thirty years old and has a “purpose driven” mindset. Largely it is composed of families with teenagers, elementary children, and preschoolers. The congregation consists of approximately 2500 average weekend attenders and 3700 members.

In March of 2004, Kingsland Baptist Church conducted a family needs survey in conjunction with Family Life Ministry in Little Rock, Arkansas. The purpose of the survey was to understand both the real and felt needs of the congregation pertaining to family. The survey became the initial talking point for the development of a proactive strategy to assist families with spiritual development (See Appendix A). 1008 adults ages eighteen and older completed the survey during the Sunday morning worship services. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents were adults between the ages of twenty-one and forty-nine. The survey generated a ninety page report compiled by the church strategy division of Family Life. The most pertinent information summarizes the top ten most common needs related to family within the congregation (See Appendix B). Based on a series of questions under the heading, “…which issues do you currently need help

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44 Actual survey instrument used in the Family Needs Survey.
With in your life,” ten most common needs were identified within the congregation.\textsuperscript{45} Within those ten needs, three are the most commonly identified:

1. Spiritual growth (sixty-six percent)
2. Spiritual disciplines (sixty-one percent)
3. Children’s spiritual growth (forty-eight percent)\textsuperscript{46}

This foundational understanding of the congregants’ perceived needs is an important understanding. It allows strategic development for discipleship that considers the input and need of the congregation at large.

Several important understandings emerge from the family needs survey. The above percentages of adults attending Kingsland feel like the status quo is not completely effective in helping their families in the area of spiritual growth, spiritual disciplines, and the spiritual growth of their children. Most adults do not feel adequately equipped to facilitate personal spiritual growth, spiritual disciplines, and the spiritual growth of their children in the context of family life. Finally, Kingsland Baptist Church needs to become relevant and effective in meeting the top three identified needs within the congregation in order to effectively disciple. Obviously, adults at Kingsland grasp the danger of the culture and desire spiritual growth for themselves and their children. The common needs indicated by the people blatantly ask for assistance from the church in regards to family spiritual formation. It is this factor coupled with the numerous

\textsuperscript{45}The entire top ten list and percentages pertaining to each need are graphically demonstrated in appendix B.

\textsuperscript{46}Family Life Ministries, Family Needs Survey: Directional Plans for Church and Family. Specifically prepared for Kingsland Baptist Church, March 2004.
problems facing the church in general that demands a discipleship strategy reaching into
the home and enabling parents as primary faith trainers in the lives of their children.
CHAPTER 3
FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

Making a theoretical case for a discipleship strategy that is both proactive and integrates church and home is not difficult. The statistical landscape of American culture and the generally minimal impact of the local church on the family lend credibility to the case with ease. It is quite another thing however to implement such a strategy in an existing church. The strategy in theory develops healthy conversation surrounding what ought to be as opposed to the status quo. Implementation demands more than conversation. Implementation requires a paradigm shift for most churches (Southern Baptist) who currently practice the “bring them to us, we are the professionals” discipleship strategy. Successful implementation at the local church level requires agreed upon foundational elements. These elements (values, mission, and vision) provide the solid foundation on which to create such a strategy. This strategy emerges from the soil of clearly communicated values, mission, and vision.

The Importance of Clearly Defined Core Values

Uniqueness permeates the culture of every local church in America. Just as no two snowflakes are the same, churches develop a culture of their own. In every church a recognized or unrecognized set of core values dictate the direction and culture of the local congregation. Aubrey Malphurs describes the importance of core values to the life of a church by saying, “No two churches are exactly alike. What makes each church unique
is its culture and the most important ingredient in that culture is values."47 The value system of a local church drives decisions made about strategy. Therefore successful implementation of any strategy in the local church demands that strategy embrace the core values of the congregation. According to Malphurs, core values answer the question of “Why we do what we do.”48 Values are the constant, passionate, biblical core beliefs that drive any ministry. There are nine reasons why values are so important. (1) Core values determine the ministry distinctive of a local church. (2) Values dictate personal involvement. A ministry’s value system helps people determine the extent of their personal involvement in that ministry. (3) Core values communicate what is most important to the local congregation. They signal the ministry’s bottom line. (4) Values embrace good change. Successful strategic change entails agreement with the churches value system. (5) Values also influence the overall behavior of the body. Values influence every decision and beget attitudes that dictate behavior. (6) A congregations’ values inspire people to action. These values invisibly motivate people toward meaningful ministry. (7) Core values enhance credible leadership. Values driven leadership that aligns with the values of the body yields credibility and power to a ministry. (8) Values contribute to ministry success. A ministry that premises all of its policies and action on agreed upon biblical values often experiences success. (9) Finally, values influence ministry mission and vision.49 Clear, supporting, core values lay the groundwork for successful strategic change in the context of a local church.

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48 Ibid., 78.

49 Ibid., 79-83.
In this case, a discipleship strategy that integrates church and home requires a set of core values that pushes the church body naturally toward this way of thinking about and practicing discipleship. This strategy reflects a relational worldview more clearly in line with scripture. This motivation for change occurs at the values level and is therefore a credible catalyst for strategic change. In other words, considering strategic change stems from a desire to live out certain core values based on a biblical worldview as opposed to change solely for the sake of change.

The underlying value system at Kingsland Baptist Church drives the need for a strategic discipleship adjustment integrating the work of the church and the family. The pastoral staff and the congregation of Kingsland Baptist Church understand and agree upon the following six core values as listed in Kingsland’s values statement:

Core Value 1: Excellence

Kingsland seeks to conduct all ministry based on the scriptural principle of excellence found in Philippians 4:8-9 and Colossians 3:15-17. Each of these passages compels the individual Christian and the church to practice excellence in thought and action. Ministry done with excellence brings honor to God by representing Him well among people. Therefore an integrated strategy for discipleship linking Kingsland Baptist Church and the individual families composing Kingsland Baptist Church requires excellence that God might be glorified in the design and implementation of such a strategy.

Core Value 2: Family

The most pertinent core value of Kingsland Baptist Church in respect to integrated discipleship is the value of family. A deep conviction regarding family exists
at the core of Kingsland’s ministry philosophy. This core value finds its center in passages of Scripture such as Genesis 1:27-28, Deuteronomy 6:4-8, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and the entire book of Proverbs. This core value presupposes, based on Scripture, a partnership between the church and the family in the development of Christians. Believing that God first instituted the family even before the church drives Kingsland to care for the family with proactive and reactive strategies. This value insists that Satan’s greatest point of attack in twenty-first century America is the family. Therefore the proactive spiritual development of the family owns a seat of foundational precedence. The integrated strategy partnering the church and the family for the purpose of spiritual formation finds its most basic root system in Kingsland’s stated core value of family. This core value in effect gives the generational team at Kingsland a mandate to develop a strategy of spiritual formation impacting the generations through the family.

Core Value 3: Prayer

Kingsland Baptist Church values prayer as an element necessary for an intimate walk with Christ. Scripturally this value stems from verses such as Matthew 21:13, Philippians 4:6-7, John 15:5, and Mark 1:35. Prayer permeates every aspect of ministry at Kingsland. Specifically, the discipline of prayer is an integral part of the spiritual formation process in the life of a child or student. Therefore the integrated strategy of discipleship using the vehicles of church and family incorporates prayer as a practical discipline corporately and privately. One portion of the strategy challenges parents to pray consistently with their children both daily and in a weekly family devotion. Parents also learn methods of teaching their child to pray.
Core Value 4: Purpose Driven Ministry

Kingsland values purpose driven ministry. This value extracts five biblical purposes of the church from the Great Commission and the Great Commandment found in Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 22:36-40 respectively. These five purposes include worship, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and evangelism. The Great Commission commands Christians to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ and teach them how to live according to his expectations. Thus Matthew 28:18-20 reflect the purposes of evangelism and discipleship. The Great Commandment urges Christians to love God and love people fully. Thus Matthew 22:36-40 gives the church the purposes of worship, fellowship, and ministry. Collectively these five purposes provide the basic parameters for ministry in and through Kingsland Baptist Church. Though the proactive, integrated strategy for the spiritual formation of Christians partnering church and home embraces all five purposes, primarily it describes how Kingsland accomplishes the purpose of discipleship. This strategy answers the question, “How does Kingsland Baptist Church make disciples?”

Core Value 5: Relationships

Kingsland Baptist Church values relationships as a vehicle by which people grow in Christ and come to Christ. Acts 2:42-47 accurately describes the depth of relationship Kingsland Baptist aspires to as a congregation in the context of the local community. Acts 2:42-47 requires Kingsland to reject the common atomic worldview of western culture and instead embrace the relational worldview of the Bible believing that people hunger for community. Inside the church authentic relationships are formed and experienced through small groups and ministry teams. Primarily, relationships and their
value are learned in the context of family. Therefore, Kingsland Baptist Church seeks to bolster familial relationships in its ministry strategy. The sincere philosophy is that the church is only as healthy as the families that compose the church and the individuals who compose the family. This health is measured in the context of relationship. Proactively, Kingsland’s ministry strategy equips adults to model healthy relationships in the family and in the church so that children and students can become disciples who follow Christ in biblical relationship with others.

Core Value 6: Scripture

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is without error and therefore completely trustworthy. It is our final authority and contains all we need for life. It is God’s love letter to us as it reveals His grace extended to us in Christ. It was given for transformation not information. The Bible reveals to us salvation through Jesus Christ. The basis for all teaching, instruction and discipleship comes from our obedience to the Word of God according to 2 Tim. 3:16 and Psalm 19:7-11. According to these verses, the Bible is from God and is profitable for teaching, correction, and training in righteousness. The Bible also declares its perfection and speaks of reward for those who adhere to its truth. A biblical worldview based on the truth of the whole counsel of Scripture provides a necessary filter to answer the questions facing people in the world today. Essential to the spiritual formation of any individual is the development of a biblical worldview. A child most likely to become a man or a woman living life based on a biblical worldview learns the Scripture at home and at church. Kingsland’s strategy

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50 Alex Kennedy, Senior Pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church (Written specifically for Kingsland Baptist Church), 2004.
partnering the church and home in the discipleship process incorporates the teaching of scripture at home and at church for effective worldview development of Christians.

Each value (excellence, family, prayer, purpose driven ministry, relationships, and Scripture) helps set the table for the development of a proactive discipleship process integrating church and family. This method of practicing discipleship mirrors who Kingsland Baptist Church is at the values level. Minimal questioning occurred throughout the design and development phase of this process because the leadership team and the body understand the value of Scripture and family as core values. Any church attempting to integrate family into its discipleship model first ought to examine and recognize agreed upon core values. Taking the time to define, adjust, and communicate the corporate value system minimizes unnecessary tension in the implementation phase.

The Importance of a Defined Mission Statement

The mission statement of the local church answers the question, “What are we supposed to be doing?” Consider the fundamental importance of an understood sense of mission in light of implementing a proactive discipleship strategy that integrates church and family. A developed mission statement wins several battles at the implementation phase before the war even begins. A clear mission dictates the ministry’s direction. People need to know the desired destination before they embark upon a journey. The mission clarifies direction. The mission lends credibility to implementing an integrated discipleship process at Kingsland because it seems like a natural direction in light of the church’s overall mission statement. The mission also formulates the ministry function.\footnote{Aubrey Malphurs, \textit{Advanced Strategic Planning} (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1999), 100.}

The mission clearly defines the biblical function of the church. Therefore no question
arises as to the church’s purpose or function. When strategic change occurs in conjunction with mission, people understand the purpose of the change. A clear understanding of mission provides a guideline for decision making. Understanding the mission requires church leaders to make decisions every day in support of that mission. In a congregational polity, “a dynamic mission or intent not only focuses the church’s future, it sets important boundaries. It guides what the church will attempt and will not attempt.” The mission inevitably shapes the strategy of a local church. “A dynamic mission tells the church where it is going. It is the strategy, however, that gets it there.” The strategy works to the extent that the mission directs it. An effective strategy charts the course in order to arrive at the desired destination of the mission. The mission of the church comes first, providing fertile soil for effective strategies.

In the case of Kingsland Baptist Church, the mission of the congregation calls for strategies that best develop people as Christ followers. Kingsland’s Mission Statement is a concise statement clearly defining the mission of the church. The purpose of Kingsland Baptist Church is summarized in a single sentence based on two key scriptures:

“Kingsland's quest is Loving God, Loving People and Discovering Life’s Purpose.

1. Loving God is worship . . . We were planned for God's pleasure.

2. Loving people is fellowship . . . We were formed for God's family.

3. Loving people is ministry . . . We were shaped to serve God.

\[52\] Ibid., 101.

\[53\] Ibid.

\[54\] Ibid., 102.
4. Loving people is evangelism . . . We were made for a mission.

5. Discovering life's purpose is discipleship . . . We were created to become like Christ.

The two key scriptures that frame this mission are the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).”

The mission statement of Kingsland Baptist Church encourages every member to love God, love people, and discover life’s purpose. It demands a strategy that “guides” people toward a deeper love of God and people, and a clearer understanding of life’s purpose. Biblically this process takes place through the work of the local church and the family. This mission, coupled with Kingsland’s values of family and Scripture, yields the need for a strategy that integrates the church and the family in a proactive form of discipleship. The fundamental element of mission creates the platform for strategic development. Specifically it supports a proactive, integrated discipleship process that considers church and home as partners in the discipleship process. The mission statement for Kingsland Baptist Church defines the boundaries for strategic development. A mission statement based on biblical core values builds a solid foundation for creative but clear vision.

The Importance of Vision

Vision answers the question, “What kind of church would we like to be?” Vision is a fundamental strategic element necessary for successful strategic change. Some confusion exists over the difference between mission and vision. According to Malphurs, “The mission is used for planning where the church is going; the vision is used for

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55 Alex Kennedy, Senior Pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church (Written specifically for Kingsland Baptist Church), 2004.
communicating where the church is going.”56 The vision encompasses the core values and the mission statement, communicating the dreams of the church for the future.

Fundamentally, a clear vision statement creates several necessary elements for successful strategic change. First, vision encourages unity in the body. A shared vision promotes a togetherness associated with common dreams based on agreed upon values and purpose. Vision bolsters the need to work together to achieve common dreams. Second, vision creates energy in a local church. “When vision resonates with your values and mission, it generates the energy that fuels the accomplishment of the ministry task.”57 This phenomenon bears great importance on the successful implementation of specific strategy. Without the momentum created by vision, strategic planning carries little weight. Third, vision fosters risk-taking in a church.58 A congregation’s natural bent typically involves choosing the safest path with the least risk. Only a church with a clear understanding of vision takes the necessary risks to accomplish the vision. When the vision, based on biblical values and purpose, describes the church’s involvement in the growth of the Kingdom, people choose to take risks. These risks often involve time, money, and personal sacrifice. A clear vision makes these risks worthwhile.

In the case of Kingsland Baptist Church, vision encourages unity, creates energy, and fosters risk-taking as a proactive discipleship strategy integrating church and family emerges. Particularly, one paragraph of the vision statement for Kingsland Baptist Church creates the necessary positive momentum for successful implementation.

56 Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1999), 139.
57 Ibid., 135.
58 Ibid., 136.
WE SEE A CHURCH that helps people DISCOVER LIFE’S PURPOSE. We are called to mature spiritually on the journey of life and we call that process discipleship. We must and we will grow smaller as we grow larger. We see a place where thousands of adults are discipled on campus in Adult Bible Fellowships and thousands of adults are discipled off campus in Home Bible Fellowships. We also see Kingsland hosting conferences and retreats that will equip Christians in this region.

We see a church that understands that Katy is only as strong as its individual families and the individuals who live in them. Since marriage was the first institution that God created it is therefore holy and paramount in its strength and survival. We see a church that is proactive in equipping and in caring for it. A place where marriages are built on covenant before God and each other. We see a church investing into men to love their families as servant leaders. A place where men and women are equipped to nurture their children as treasures sent into the next generation to carry the light of the gospel. A church full of parents who see themselves as their children’s primary faith trainers. A church that no longer chooses to ignore the pain and heartache of divorce. A place that allows the heart of God to influence and define it rather than the culture around it. A church where children, students, singles, single parents, young marrieds to empty nesters, blended families, widows & widowers all have a place at the table. A table that forgets all those labels except for that of brothers and sisters. A church that is truly a family of God. A family whose loving Father cannot be ignored any longer in the community around it.

IT’S OUR DESIRE TO REACH KATY FOR CHRIST ONE HOME AT A TIME.\(^{59}\)

The vision of Kingsland Baptist Church, composed by the Senior Pastor and agreed upon by the pastoral staff and congregation, requires a strategy that makes disciples at church and at home. The expectation of the values, mission, and vision of Kingsland Baptist Church supposes a strategic discipleship approach integrating the process of spiritual formation in a clear partnership between church and family. In Kingsland’s case, these key foundational elements (values, mission, and vision) almost demand the proposed strategic change. The church seeking to integrate church and home

\(^{59}\)Alex Kennedy, Senior Pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church (Written specifically for Kingsland Baptist Church), 2004.
in the spiritual formation process also should allow these foundational elements to form the base on which to design and implement proactive, integrated discipleship.

**Staffing for Strategic Success**

A pre-cursor to effective strategic change involves surrounding the key leader with people capable of executing a transition from the status quo to the agreed upon future. Choosing the right leaders accurately predicts the fate of strategic change in the context of any organization. In the case of the church, the key leader is the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor influences the process and possibly chooses, depending on church polity, staff pastors who embrace and develop vision in the form of strategy. In speaking of staffing for success Jim Collins suggest, “The ‘who’ questions come before the ‘what’ questions – before vision, before strategy, before tactics, before organizational structure, before technology.” A wise pastor begins with the right staff understanding it will take people to develop the vision and implement strategy. Senior Pastors lacking the financial capacity to hire staff, surround themselves with the right lay people on the front end of the process to ensure strategic success.

Determining the “right people” requires understanding what quality traits compose the right person. According to Collins, “Good-to-great companies placed greater weight on character attributes than on specific educational background, practical skills, specialized knowledge, or work experience. Not that specific knowledge or skills are unimportant, but they viewed these traits as more teachable (or at least learnable), whereas they believed dimensions like character, work ethic, basic intelligence,

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dedication to fulfilling commitments, and values are more ingrained.”

The primary characteristics of the “right person” include a solid work ethic, demonstrated integrity, and demonstrated agreement with the values, mission, and vision of the church. Bill Hybels also agrees that character comes first in selecting the right paid or volunteer staff member. Hybels, as well as other wise pastors and leaders, search for men and women whose lives evidence qualities like commitment to spiritual discipline, honesty, teachability, reliability, and a deep commitment to Christ. Hybels looks for three elements when searching to staff for strategic success. “My selection process is based on “three C’s”: first character, then competence, and finally chemistry.”

Looking for the highest level of competence possible reduces the chance of hiring an honest person who is totally incompetent. Competence involves the appropriate levels of skill, knowledge, and experience necessary to develop and implement the strategy which allows vision to become reality. Finally, appropriate levels of chemistry or “relational fit” makes a person an appropriate hire for the task at hand when coupled with character and competence.

Implementing a strategic process which integrates church and family in the process of discipleship requires hiring a key team leader or empowering an existing one. The vision needs a leader capable of keeping the team focused on the mission while understanding the status quo, the process, and the desired end result. In the Southern Baptist Church, the idea of integrating church and family in the process of discipleship is relatively new in practice. Theoretically, the Southern Baptist Church embraces this concept theologically, however practically discipleship revolves completely around the church. Therefore the traditional Minister of Education typically practices discipleship as

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61 Ibid., 51.

62 Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002), 81.
a church program as opposed to an integrated process involving both the church and family in equal partnership. Staffing for strategic success surrounding a proactive, integrated model, means hiring a person who values church and family as equal partners in the spiritual formation of children and who exhibits high levels of competence and relational chemistry with the staff and the congregation.

In the case of Kingsland Baptist Church, staffing for strategic success meant creating a new role. The new position titled “Associate Pastor” emerged as a necessary fundamental element for the development and implementation of a strategy supporting the values, mission, and vision of the church. Specifically the Associate Pastor at Kingsland leads in the strategic development process by shepherding the generational team consisting of a Minister to Preschool, Minister to Children, Student Pastor, Adult Discipleship Pastor and Minister to Senior Adults. Together this team of pastors works to integrate the spiritual formation process of the local church with that of the family. By design, the Associate Pastor is formally trained in discipleship while possessing a demonstrated passion for family. The Associate Pastor’s main responsibility involves developing and implementing a spiritual formation strategy that produces the kind of church described in the vision statement of Kingsland Baptist Church.

Each of these elements including values, mission, vision, and staffing is fundamental to the successful implementation of a proactive, integrated strategy that inseparably links church and family in the spiritual formation process. Building a strategy, involving structural, operational, and programmatic change, on anything less than these fundamental elements is an early mistake translating into tension and failure.
CHAPTER 4
THE PROCESS OF STRATEGIC DESIGN AND CONSENSUS

Every church operates according to some sort of strategy. Often the strategic processes of local churches find their roots in tradition and personalities or power groups as opposed to a clearly defined mission and vision. Once a church agrees upon an intentional mission and vision, a strategic design emerges to answer the question of “how.” If mission answers the question of “what we are supposed to be doing” and vision answers the question of “what kind of church we would like to be” then strategy answers the question of “how we will do it” and how we will become the church dreamed about in the vision statement. “A good strategy is the vehicle that enables the church to accomplish the mission and the vision.”

Developing an effective strategy involves taking the time to create a blueprint of sorts for accomplishing ministry in a unique context. Eric Geiger and Thom Rainer believe the most effective churches in the country clearly define their process for life transformation. Their research emphasizes the importance of being clear about the ministry process in the context of church life.

A strategy develops from a process of planning and design. At Kingsland Baptist Church, an intentional planning process yielded a strategic design integrating church and family for the purpose of effective disciple-making. This deliberate and lengthy process of design and consensus spanned a two year time frame. In the course of twenty-four

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64 Eric Geiger and Thom Rainer, Simple Church (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2006), 114.
months Kingsland participated in three distinct phases of strategic design and consensus. This chapter details the planning and design of Kingsland’s integrated discipleship ministry partnering church and family.

**Initial Planning Phase (February to May 2004)**

The beginning phase of the strategic design process for Kingsland began as a chosen “launch team” from among the congregation met to develop a process based on the agreed upon values, mission, and vision. The team consisted of a broad range of leaders from across the congregation. Members included a young couple without children, a couple with three elementary age children, a couple with teenagers, a blended family couple, an empty nester couple, and a senior adult couple. Each of these members serves in a leadership capacity at Kingsland Baptist Church. Some of these members described themselves as long-time Southern Baptist Christians. Others characterized themselves as Christians from Bible church or non-denominational backgrounds. Still others spoke of themselves as relatively new believers. Each person chosen exhibited a different perspective related to their seasons of life and denominational backgrounds. Therefore the team fairly represented the diversity of the congregation. The Associate Pastor led the team in the planning phase.

The purpose of the team in the initial planning phase encompassed developing a set of recommendations for the pastoral staff regarding the spiritual formation process at Kingsland in light of our newly agreed upon core values, mission statement, and vision statement. The development of these recommendations consisted of two key phases.
Evaluation of the Status Quo

Prior to 2004, the strategic model at Kingsland involved a strong Sunday school ministry for all ages as well as excellent pre-school, children, and student programming. All discipleship took place on campus in the presence of ministry professionals. In 2004 Kingsland developed a new set of core values, a clear mission, and a vision statement looking forward to the days ahead. This new set of values and clear vision described a church that partnered with family in the discipleship process. Early on, the launch team determined the strategic process at Kingsland required change in order to elevate parents, in practice to the primary faith training role for their children.

In order to gain a more scientific understanding of the status quo as it pertained to discipleship and family, the team partnered with Family Life Ministries in Little Rock, Arkansas to administer a “Family Needs Survey.” The survey, developed by the church strategy department of Family Life, determined the perceived needs of families within the congregation. One thousand eight adults ages eighteen and older completed the survey in February 2004 during morning worship services. Also, thirty pastoral staff members and other leaders completed surveys specifically designed to assess their impressions of the church in light of its function as an equipping center involving family.

The results of the survey generated a ninety-three page report designed to help churches make directional decisions. The team used this survey as the basis for understanding the status quo and as a gauge for understanding perceived needs among the families of Kingsland Baptist Church. The most revealing information came from a section of the survey indicating, “. . . which issues you currently need help with in your life.” The answers in this category generated a “Top 10 Most Common Needs” list. Of
the ten most common needs the top three were: (1) spiritual growth (2) spiritual
disciplines (3) and children’s spiritual growth.\textsuperscript{65}

A careful study of the report shows that eighty-two percent of the adults claiming
to need help with their children’s spiritual growth also wanted help from the church.
Seventy-eight percent of adults indicating a need to establish and teach Christian values
in the home also wanted help from the church to do this.\textsuperscript{66}

The survey also generated a clear understanding of how adults invest in their
children spiritually. According the survey, sixty-two percent of the parents surveyed
“rarely to never” participated in a family devotion. Another twenty-two percent only
“occasionally” participated in a family devotion. Seven percent said they experienced a
family devotion several times a month; five percent indicated several times a week; and
five percent indicated participating in or leading a family devotion almost every day.\textsuperscript{67}

Generally, the survey revealed a need for a strategic process to help adults
progress in their personal spiritual development as well as to equip them to help their
children’s spiritual development. The current process (as of 2004) in no way addressed
the needs of adults as faith trainers for the children composing their families. Over a
period of weeks, the team created a list of recommendations for the pastoral staff to use
in the design of strategy that addressed spiritual growth pertaining to the individual and to
the family.

\textsuperscript{65}Family Life Ministry, Family Needs Survey: Directional Plans for Church and Family.
Specifically prepared for Kingsland Baptist Church, March 2004. 1.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 23.
Recommendations to Pastoral Staff

The following recommendations were developed in the initial planning phase for use by the pastoral staff in designing a proactive strategy integrating church and family for the purpose of life change and culture change.

1. Integrate the discipleship ministry and the family ministry so that they are one ministry with a set of common goals.
2. See the discipleship process as beginning in the family for children.
3. View this process as a proactive, long-term investment that will have generational ramifications as opposed to a quick fix.
4. Use existing processes, when possible, to facilitate practical discipleship that helps adults grow spiritually and equips and resources them to lead their children spiritually.
5. Make it simple and practically useful.
6. Measure success by transformational growth through the years as opposed to numbers.
7. Offer consistent opportunities for parents to learn how to lead their children spiritually.

These general suggestions made by the launch team and based upon results obtained from the family needs survey form the basis of a specific strategy designed to enhance the discipleship ministry at Kingsland Baptist Church.

**Strategic Design Process (September 2004-November 2005)**

Equipped with an agreed upon vision statement and recommendations based on the family needs survey, the generational team at Kingsland began working on a clear
strategy to answer the question of how. The generational team at Kingsland consists of generational discipleship specialist including the Minister of Preschool, Minister of Children, Student Pastor, Adult Discipleship Pastor, and Minister of Senior Adults. Led by the Associate Pastor, this team began to develop a process for proactive family ministry involving the integration of church and home for the purpose of effective spiritual formation.

Reading and Research

Step one in the process of strategic design involved a study of discipleship in the Bible. Beginning with the Old Testament and following the theme of discipleship through the New Testament, the study led the team to a clear conclusion: discipleship, especially with regard to children, takes place in a shared process, partnering the family and the church in the spiritual development of the child. The generational team also concluded that the hope for cultural change involves motivating and equipping the parents of this generation to invest intentionally in their children spiritually. Several key passages of Scripture became foundation blocks for the generational team in the design process. These building block passages, carefully reviewed in chapter one, include Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Psalm 78:1-7, Proverbs 22:6, and Matthew 28:18-20. The biblical ideal for this process involves a meshing of the Shema of the Old Testament with the Great Commission in the New Testament. Therefore a strategic process reflecting a biblical structure incorporates the work of the family, impressing their faith on the next generation, and the work of the church, reinforcing family discipleship as part of the Great Commission. This conclusion became the largest driver for a paradigm shift in the thinking of each team member. In practice at Kingsland, discipleship involves trusting
parents with the spiritual development of their children as opposed to designing growth processes around the church alone. Therefore equipping, motivating, and providing resources for parents to disciple their children evolved into a major strategic thrust.

The second step of the “reading and research” aspect of the process required the generational team to spend time reading several different books on the subject of family and discipleship. The following books shaped the thinking of the team in the strategic design process: Rock Solid Kids: Giving Children a Biblical Foundation for Life by Larry Fowler, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions by George Barna, The Family Friendly Church, by Ben Freudenburg, Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families by Dennis Rainey, For the Kids’ Sake: Winning the Tug-of-War for Future Generations, by H.B. London, and Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Child’s Spiritual Passages by Jim Weidmann. The generational team drew seven conclusions from these books:

1. Biblically, parents are to be the primary faith trainers of their children.68

2. The church should partner with parents in the process by equipping adults and coming along side them to disciple their children.69

3. The church should share common goals with the family in the spiritual growth of children.70

4. The church should become the extended family for children and students whose parents will never disciple them.71

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69George Barna, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 83-84.

5. The church is tragically fragmented in its discipleship process, removing family from the equation in many cases.\textsuperscript{72}

6. The foundation for this entire process is effectively teaching adults the Bible for application.

7. There is a simple and practical way for the church and the family to work together.\textsuperscript{73}

Particularly the concurrent theme of fragmentation in the existing discipleship process of many churches in America burdened the generational team. This fragmented discipleship directly results from a subliminal adherence to the atomic worldview. Fragmented discipleship also characterized Kingsland well according to the team. Every team member expressed a deep desire to build an integrated strategy partnering church and family as opposed to fragmenting church and family. This strategy would embrace the relational worldview of the Bible.

The third phase of the “reading and research” aspect of the strategic design process involved viewing strategic models of other churches to see if other churches integrated family and church for the purpose of discipleship. The generational team interviewed staff members from churches in the Houston area whose average attendance equaled 2000 or more. The following churches allowed the generational team at Kingsland to view their strategic models and understand their philosophy of discipleship:

- Houston’s First Baptist Church
- Second Baptist Church
- Metropolitan Baptist


\textsuperscript{72}George Barna, \textit{Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions} (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 81.

\textsuperscript{73}Larry Fowler, \textit{Rock Solid Kids: Giving Children a Biblical Foundation for Life} (Ventura; Regal Books, 2004), 32.
Church. In each case, these leading churches in the Southern Baptist Convention presented models that reflect a clearly traditional Southern Baptist approach to discipleship. In all of these settings the practice involves parents bringing their children to church for the purpose of discipleship. Each of these churches provides incredible events and programs as well as dynamic age group ministries to facilitate discipleship. However, none of these churches support strategic processes that intentionally involve, equip, and resource parents for the purpose of discipling children and students. In theory, all of these churches agree that Godly parents lead their children spiritually formally and informally. Practically however, no provision exists to engage parents in this process strategically. Most likely, the majority of Southern Baptist Churches in America also practice a model that affirms parents as primary faith trainers but removes them from the process by default because of a fragmented model. In fairness, each church offers family ministry opportunities. Parenting classes, marriage seminars, and a host of reactive family ministry opportunities exist as a part of a family ministry program. However, the family ministry process and the discipleship process involve different staff leadership and different purposes. None of these churches integrated family and discipleship in 2004.

The generational team at Kingsland then turned to reputable para-church organizations for possible strategic models. One such organization, Focus on the Family, echoed the heart of the generational team regarding the involvement of parents as primary faith trainers. The best idea for a strategic model came from a book by Jim Weidmann called *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children’s Spiritual Passages*. In this book written to parents, Weidmann presents six spiritual milestones that
occur over the course of a child’s life from infancy to adulthood. The thrust of the book equips parents to celebrate these milestones and disciple their children toward each of them. These milestones include baby dedication, baptism, preparing for adolescence, purity vows, rite of passage, and high-school graduation.74

Intrigued by the practicality of this process for parents, the generational team invited Jim Weidmann to come and present his ideas to parents at Kingsland in the form of a parenting conference. The generational team also spent time with Weidmann discussing the option of embracing these six milestones as growth points for children in the spiritual formation process of a local church.

These conversations resulted in a desire to pursue a strategy for spiritual formation at Kingsland that created a clear path involving six milestones. Between each milestone, key core competencies needed to be developed and taught both in church through the existing Sunday School model and at home in family devotions. This path would align the process for church and home expecting the family to participate in the process but would also minister to children and students whose parents might never participate.

**Generational Team Strategic Design Retreat**

Armed with recommendations from the family launch team and a well of information from Scripture, current books, and an idea for an integrated spiritual formation process, the generational team scheduled a retreat designed to clarify the strategy and prepare for implementation. In preparation for the retreat, each generational pastor met with his or her paid staff to gain some much needed understanding. A planned

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conversation took place relative to specific age levels and led by the generational pastor with direct oversight to that ministry. Those involved included staff members and influential volunteer leaders for the purpose of introducing the concept of integration for the first time. Particularly, the generational team ascertained their age level staff’s feelings regarding entrusting parents with faith training and equipping them for the process. The general question sought to understand what leaders thought about parents actually using family devotions as a practical tool to lead children along a progression of spiritual milestones. Most importantly milestones needed to be defined and discussed as an avenue for spiritual formation at church and at home in a broader group. Dialogue sheets were developed and discussion occurred for the purpose of gaining information, involving others in the process, and gaining consensus around the milestone path (See appendix C).

Finally the generational team focused on specific strategic solutions during a two day working retreat at Crier Creek retreat center near Austin, Texas. A series of significant strategic decisions quickly clarified the process after much thought and preparation. The following decisions solidified the strategy as revealed and implemented in chapter five.

1. Six goals for spiritual growth synonymous for church and family were written and agreed upon.

2. Six milestones were agreed upon as clear markers of progression along a path of spiritual formation for use at church and at home.

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75 Sample dialogue guides for age level leaders relating to milestones and family devotions are available in appendix C.
3. Core competencies were identified and agreed upon as steps along the path of progression between milestones and would be taught at church and at home.

4. A simple visual representation of the process was created to help adults understand the strategy.

5. Key events were identified as vehicles for leading children and students toward developmental milestones.

6. A strategy for equipping parents to train their children in spiritual matters was defined using Adult Bible Fellowship on Sunday morning, Lifebuilders discipleship classes on Wednesday evenings, and a one day “Parent Summit” offered twice a year on Saturday.

7. A decision to simplify our curriculum choices in Adult Bible Fellowship was made to elevate the study of Scripture and to integrate thematically the lesson for adults and students.

8. A commitment to write a short book to motivate parents and explain the milestone progression practically was made by the Associate Pastor.

9. A commitment to write family devotions stemming from the previous week’s Sunday morning Adult Bible Fellowship lesson was made by the student ministry and the children’s ministry.

10. Each ministry represented on the generational team committed to becoming an expert on the milestones that occur during their particular age level ministry.
11. Each minister on the generational team agreed to develop seminars for adults equipping them to lead their children toward the next milestone along the path.

12. Each minister on the generational team agreed to a role change. No longer would they minister only to the children in their specialty area, but they would also become experts at motivating and equipping the parents of the children under their care.

13. The adult specialists agreed to support the integration by equipping leaders of adults to understand the milestone progress and point parents and grandparents to it.

14. The team committed to developing a “Legacy Milestone Resource Center” that stocked all of the written resources plus supplemental resources as agreed upon by the team.

15. The team agreed to capitalize on the opening of a new children and student space (63,000 square feet) by naming it the Legacy Building and visually representing the milestone path inside the building.

16. The team agreed to call this integrated path of spiritual formation “Legacy Milestones.”

17. The team agreed to accomplish all writing and printing before August of 2006 when the first Parent Summit would be hosted.

With complete consensus, the generational team returned to Kingsland with a plan in place to transition our discipleship strategy to an integrated approach that proactively addressed the spiritual development of children from both church and home perspectives.
This strategic shift supports the core values, mission, and vision as adopted in 2004 by Kingsland Baptist Church. The effort supposes the next generation, trained by their parents and their church, will follow the biblical principles for family life. In this way this integrated discipleship strategy is proactive for the next generation of parents. The generational team at Kingsland concluded that, though it is a long-term investment, the path of legacy milestones linking church and family would leave a lasting legacy and eventually change the culture at least among Christ followers.

**A Plan for Communication and Consensus**

Having made significant strategic decisions that would eventually cause change at every level, the generational team at Kingsland compiled a communication plan to build consensus around the integrated process. The Associate Pastor, as a member of the executive team, spent an entire day with these most influential leaders in the church (Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor, Worship Pastor) defining the process, answering questions and receiving feedback regarding the strategy. Once the executive team agreed to the approach, a presentation was made to the entire staff regarding the strategic design and the potential changes as a result of the integrated discipleship model. This occurred during a special three hour staff session including every pastor, assistant, and part-time worker. A dialogue ensued and questions were answered. Once obvious consensus developed among the entire staff, communication with the key lay leaders in the church began.

A presentation to the deacons, very similar to the presentation to the entire staff, culminated in consensus and excitement. The Senior Pastor presented his annual “State of the Church” message in January of 2006. Much of his message focused on an
abbreviated presentation of this integrated discipleship process for church and home (See Appendix D). This sermon generated excitement and hope among the parents in the congregation.

In late January of 2006 the student ministry of Kingsland Baptist Church presented a preview of the strategy to parents of teenagers in a one day format. The Student Pastor and the Associate Pastor hosted one hundred parents to communicate the integrated strategy, answer questions, and show parents how they could begin immediately walking the path with their students. Resources were provided for family devotions. Staff gave assistance identifying milestones and core competencies unique to specific families with children at multiple age levels. Resources for adults to increase biblical knowledge surrounding the core competencies were provided. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

In May of 2006 all key discipleship lay leaders (300+) attended a Friday evening town hall meeting to learn about the new strategic process and how it would impact each generational ministry. Many questions arose and healthy dialogue occurred. Overwhelming consensus was established among the key lay leaders.

In the summer of 2006 the new strategic process was communicated for the first time via web at www.kingsland.org. A specific home page button was added called “Legacy Milestones.” Pages under the “Legacy Milestone” heading include milestones, family devotions, and resources. This clearly communicated to all the church’s commitment to the new process and how each individual could participate.

76 Appendix D summarizes the Senior Pastors’ January 2006 presentation of the strategy in expectation of implementation in August of 2006.
August of 2006 brought about the most significant communication elements. The Senior Pastor began a six week sermon series the Sunday after school began called, “It’s Time to Be a Family.” Each sermon in the series communicated the vision behind the integrated discipleship process and how parents will be equipped and expected to participate in the spiritual formation of their children. Concurrently, *Walk The Path: A Guide to Training our Children Spiritually* was published and released specifically to assist Kingsland parents in understanding the integrated discipleship approach at Kingsland (See Appendix E).  

At the same time the new “Legacy Building” opened for children and students. The building effectively communicates the strategy in visual ways. A path design is in the carpet throughout the building. At each ends of the main hallway, a stone stands six feet tall with Deuteronomy 6:4-7 etched in. Along the hallway stone plaques representative of each milestone reminds parents of their responsibility in the process.

On August 26, 2006 the first “Parent Summit” was held to communicate the strategy. Parents were able to discover the next milestone along their family’s path as well as attend seminars designed to help them lead their children spiritually toward the next milestone. Parents learned the concept of a weekly family devotion and how to develop this parental teaching point. Each participant received a copy of *Walk the Path: A Guide to Training Our Children Spiritually* as well as seminar notes specific to the milestones relating to their family.

Finally, in October of 2006 a quarterly e-newsletter called “e-milestones” was developed and sent to all parents at Kingsland with helpful tips for understanding the path.

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77 Appendix E includes the entire book *Walk the Path: A Guide for Training Our Children Spiritually*. This is a short book designed to help the congregation understand the process and motivate them to participate.
of legacy milestones and how to teach core competencies to kids in formal and informal ways.

Currently consensus among the members of the body at Kingsland Baptist Church around this proactive, integrated discipleship model for the purpose of developing people and families remains high. Kingsland experienced no significant pushback in the strategic design and consensus phase. Key factors in this successful design and consensus building phase include patience in development, a strategy design based on agreed upon values, mission, and vision based upon early recommendations of lay leaders. The Senior Pastor’s enthusiasm for the strategy as an extension of his vision and ministry is a strong driver. Communicating the strategy continues as an ongoing process at Kingsland.
Implementing a proactive, integrated ministry impacting the family requires a practical course of action that engages individuals and propels them toward Christ. In this case, practical solutions helping families grow toward each other and Christ enhance the existing discipleship ministry at Kingsland Baptist Church. These solutions synchronize the formal spiritual formation process for church and home regarding children from infancy to high school graduation. Adults experience growth as they seek equipping and personal development in order to become effective primary faith trainers for their children. Adults without children at any life stage still experience spiritual growth through the conventional methods of Adult Bible Fellowship (Sunday School) or Home Bible Fellowships (small groups off campus) and event oriented discipleship. Children and students whose parents never embrace their role as primary faith trainers experience growth along the same path of progression. In this case Kingsland becomes the extended family of these children, mentoring them for spiritual growth through our conventional processes.

These solutions provide opportunity for families without alienating singles, empty-nesters, and children with un-believing parents. The path is the same in the church and in the family. At the same time, these proactive solutions equip parents to fulfill their biblical roles as faith trainers as well as providing effective, integrated
discipleship supporting the work of the parent in a child or student’s life. This strategy elevates the family to its proper place and allows the church to avoid fragmented discipleship and instead operate as part of the solution. The following solutions implemented at Kingsland support a proactive, integrated strategy for equipping people and strengthening families.

**Integrated Goals for Church and Family**

The most important element in putting integrated solutions into practice involves developing and communicating specific goals applying to the spiritual formation process as it relates to both church and home. Kingsland Baptist Church agrees upon the following integrated, proactive objectives for spiritual formation:

Every person will pursue and experience (1) a personal, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, (2) a head filled with applied wisdom from Scripture, (3) skill in filtering life through a Christian worldview, (4) an ability to articulate the Bible and contend for the faith, (5) a desire to make Christ known through life, work, service, and witness, and (6) a faith ready to leave home for students becoming young adults. These six integrated goals provide the framework for strategic solutions. Each of these goals uniquely impacts the strategy in major ways such as the elevation of the teaching of the Word and the building of formal bridges between church and home to accomplish these goals.

Each of these goals finds uniqueness in practice only when the church and the family intertwine as partnering and equally important vehicles to accomplish these goals. A cursory study of Southern Baptist discipleship ministries in churches across the country offer agreement around these six objectives for spiritual growth. Kingsland uniquely accomplishes these goals by involving the church and the family intentionally in the
realization of these goals. The answer to the family problem in America is not another
book or program. The solution involves a biblical process, defined by biblical objectives,
that engages parents as primary faith trainers in the lives of the next generation. In order
to facilitate ministry around these goals enhancing familial involvement, Kingsland
focused on two areas of strategic implementation.

Enhanced Bible Teaching Ministry

The Bible provides guidance and wisdom different and more powerful than any
other book in the history of the world. The Bible says of itself in 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.” The basis for an integrated discipleship approach requires effective Bible
teaching at the foundational level. The Scripture comes from the heart of God and gives
parents a solid reference and powerful truth with which to train their children.

Early in the design process, the generational team at Kingsland recognized the
need to enhance the Bible teaching ministry in the adult arena. Initially, questions such as
“How can we trust biblically illiterate adults with the responsibility of discipleship?”
surfaced as a legitimate concern. Entrusting parents to become primary faith trainers in
the lives of their children meant trusting them to teach the Bible effectively to their
children. Overcoming this apparent risk, for the church, meant becoming more effective
at helping adults develop a biblical worldview based on an expanding understanding of
biblical doctrine for practical life application. In order to accomplish this enhancement,
the issue of curriculum for Adult Bible Fellowship and Home Bible Fellowship at
Kingsland required attention.
Streamlined, Integrated Curriculum Approach

At the beginning of 2005, Kingsland offered seventeen unique curriculum options in Adult Bible Fellowship (Sunday school) and Home Bible Fellowship. Each teacher determined what curriculum their respective group would use during the course of a semester. Each of these curriculum options came from five approved publishing houses. The generational team at Kingsland Baptist Church spent a series of weeks analyzing the curriculum offering in the adult ministry. Most groups at Kingsland chose topical curriculum relating to family issues supported by a smattering of Scripture. The generational team decided to streamline the curriculum choices, offering literature driven by the biblical text as opposed to a specific topic. This decision stemmed from a clear belief that parents need to learn doctrine for application in order to develop the personal spiritual foundation to train their child spiritually.

In August of 2006 the church implemented a streamlined curriculum approach elevating the study of the Bible. Kingsland offered three curriculum choices for adults: *Bible Study for Life* (Lifeway), *Explore the Bible* (Lifeway), and hybrid version of Precepts. These three curriculum choices allowed the generational team to create two tracks for Bible study regarding adults. The first track is an “integrated” track. Kingsland chooses to call this the “family track.” Using *Bible Study for Life* produced by Lifeway Christian resources, adult classes study biblical doctrine for practical application. Simultaneously, the student ministry, also using *Bible Study for Life*, studies the same doctrine for application. Therefore parents involved in this integrated track, understand exactly what biblical truth their student discussed on Sunday morning. This provides common ground for important conversation at home concerning biblical
doctrine for life application. In Adult Bible Fellowships, teachers lead parents to use the biblical lesson to develop a family devotion. The student ministry and the children’s ministry at Kingsland produce family devotion guides written from the learned biblical truth taught on Sunday morning. Adults access these guides on the church website. Parents attending the integrated track of Adult Bible Fellowship receive the biblical truth they need for the coming week’s family devotion. This solution allows parents attending Adult Bible Fellowship to download an age appropriate family devotion and lead it with effectiveness. Therefore the child or student receives effective biblical instruction at home in a weekly family devotion led by their parents and at church in their age appropriate Bible study. Kingsland encourages all parents to participate in the integrated track. Currently about seventy-five percent of the adults attending Bible study on Sunday morning choose this integrated, family option.

The inductive track, including *Explore the Bible* and *Precepts*, meets the needs of those desiring a verse by verse study with less familial emphasis. Empty-nesters, single adults, and senior adults often choose this curriculum line. Some parents choose this track because of a deep desire for verse by verse study. Typically those parents who choose this line require less assistance in developing family devotions. In comparison to the number of parents choosing the integrated track, parents choosing the inductive track are few. Still, Kingsland provides alternative resources to these parents for family devotions. A parent choosing the inductive track can still fully participate in all the benefits of the integrated ministry strategy at Kingsland Baptist Church. The negative for a parent choosing the inductive track involves missing the opportunity for Bible study on campus aligned thematically with student Bible studies on campus at Kingsland. This
negates the use of family devotions written from the Sunday morning learning experience. Parents in the inductive track choose other resources to build family devotions.

Leadership Development

Enhancing the teaching of the Bible on Sunday morning at Kingsland involves an intentional investment in teachers and leaders of small groups. In 2005, seventeen different curriculum offerings made leadership development a virtual impossibility. Streamlining the curriculum options in 2006 allowed the generational team an opportunity to interact with teachers around the text on a weekly basis. This solution increases the ability of teachers to correctly teach doctrine for application in effective ways in a group format. A pastor leads each track and shepherds the teachers involved in his particular section. Teachers dialogue around the text and interact with their pastor regarding difficult textual issues or doctrinal issues before the questions arise in Adult Bible Fellowship or Home Bible Fellowship.

Leaders involved in the integrated track discover ways to illustrate the biblical truth for family life. The Associate Pastor leads this particular track offering practical suggestions and encouraging teachers to point parents toward a weekly family devotion based on the text learned on Sunday. This strategic meeting with leaders keeps the process in front of the people every Sunday in smaller groups. The solution enhances the excellence of teaching and allows key leaders direct access to the generational team for support and assistance. Foundationally, this strategic solution centers the overall process on the truth of God’s Word as opposed to Christian psychology or the opinions of religious leaders.
Formal Bridges between Church and Home

The partnership between church and home in the process of spiritual formation requires constructing formal bridges between church and family. These metaphorical bridges allow information, resources, and people to influence the life of the child on the home front and in the local church. The fragmented church unintentionally disallows an effective partnership between family and church in the discipleship of a child. Charles Sell, renowned family ministry specialist describes the congruent work of church and family in the following way: “The Christian church and the Christian home are as closely bonded as Siamese twins. If they are cut apart, a major artery may be severed that causes one or both to hemorrhage or die.”

Formal bridges reconnect the church and the family in the process of discipleship. “God intended for the family and its church to gain strength from one another. As we have seen in the Bible, God formed the biological family. He later established the family of God, the church, on the Day of Pentecost. From that day forward until now, he has intended for the church and family to fortify, augment and resource each other.” With this understanding in mind, Kingsland Baptist Church practices four clear formal bridges allowing church and family to synchronize their spiritual formation efforts in the lives of children. These bridge processes include family devotions, the path of legacy milestones, the parent summit, and the legacy resource center.

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Family Devotions

According to the Family Needs Survey conducted in 2004, of the parents completing the survey, only seventeen percent of them indicated participating in a family devotion with any degree of regularity. Every parent needs an intentional method of training his or her children spiritually. Kingsland encourages parents to embrace the concept of a weekly family devotion which provides parents the opportunity to teach biblical truth for the purpose of cultivating a biblical worldview in a child. According to the Family Needs Survey, parents want help building this practice into their lives. As of 2004, feelings of inadequacy and inability permeated the hearts of many parents at Kingsland causing them to avoid the issue altogether. These feelings coupled with the hurried, busy lifestyle of those attending Kingsland create an obstacle for family devotions.

Overcoming these obstacles requires a simple and practical approach to equip and resource parents to lead an effective, age appropriate, family devotion. Kingsland’s integrated curriculum approach creates a primary solution. Parents attending an Adult Bible Fellowship learn a biblical doctrine, topic, or principle, from a passage identical to the truth discovered by their student in an age level bible study on Sunday morning. Therefore the parents’ knowledge base concerning the biblical passage expands and they determine practical ways to apply the truth of the passage to their individual lives and to their family life. In order to provide a resource for parents, the children’s ministry staff and the student ministry staff at Kingsland Baptist Church, develop family devotions focused on the central truth learned on Sunday morning. These staff teams work together

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with volunteers whose ministry is writing family devotions in a user-friendly way for parents. The devotions are made available on the church website by Sunday afternoon following church. Parents access the web and download the devotion for their personal use in family devotion the following week (See Appendix F). This process provides a practical solution for time-crunched parents who feel ill-equipped to teach their children the Word.

Kingsland offers a two hour seminar for adults in several different formats called, “How to Have a Family Devotion.” This seminar, offered six times per year, teaches the importance of parental involvement in the formal spiritual development of a child. Adults participate in this seminar either in a Wednesday evening format or in the context of the bi-annual parent summit. During the seminar, parents learn of the world’s consistent teaching points in their children’s lives. The concept of combating secular humanism as taught in public school and through the media motivates parents to create their own formal teaching point at home. This seminar communicates Kingsland’s process for resourcing and equipping adults to lead healthy family devotions. Beyond family devotions written for the integrated Bible study track, the seminar introduces other age appropriate family devotion resources from such ministries as Focus on the Family and Desiring God. All of these resources are made available for purchase at the time of the seminar and can be viewed on-line at www.kingsland.org/legacymilestones/resources. A special page summarizing the seminar is available on the church website to help parents begin the discipline of a weekly family devotion in their home. This resource is available at www.kingsland.org/legacymilestones/familydevotions.

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81 Appendix F provides an example of a family devotion written by the student ministry staff based on the integrated curriculum option.
The practice of family devotions as a strategic component in this integrated, proactive model lends credence to the philosophy that the most important influence in a child’s life is his family of origin. The family devotion, as a solution, provides parents a consistent teaching point allowing them to address life biblically as a child becomes an adult over a period of eighteen years. Family devotions construct the smaller steps along the strategic path of legacy milestones as defined by Kingsland Baptist Church.

The Path of Legacy Milestones

Adults need to understand a simple strategy for developing their children spiritually. The path of legacy milestones at Kingsland Baptist Church allows children to experience a congruent growth and development pattern both at church and at home. This strategy also allows parents to understand the process visually as well as how the church walks alongside their family during the entire journey. A milestone, according to parenting expert Jim Weidmann, “Is an event, preceded by a period of instruction from parents which celebrates a spiritual development point in a child’s life.” Kingsland incorporates Weidmann’s idea of spiritual milestones by creating a path of six identified milestones that the church and the family can walk, hand in hand. Kingsland labels this path, “the path of legacy milestones.” This solution allows the church to align its events, programs, and process along the path of milestones to facilitate the spiritual growth of children. This alignment allows parents to understand how the church leads children in a process of progression. The path gives parents a method for helping their children progress spiritually using the integration of family and church.

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Each milestone consists of a church event, a home celebration, and a series of core competencies introduced as a child approaches a milestone. Teaching these biblical core competencies occurs at home in family devotions and at church in Sunday morning Bible Study and through other intentionally planned experiences. This strategy creates synergy for the family and the church to work in partnership, teaching biblical core competencies for spiritual growth and strengthening the family both now and in future generations. The following description of the path of legacy milestones specifically illustrates Kingsland’s strategic model:

**Milestone #1: Parent/Baby Dedication**

Staff Contact: Barbara Brennan, Minister to Preschool

Campus Event: Parent/Baby Dedication in worship

Parent Seminar: *First Steps* (2 hour required seminar)

Core Competency: Parent as Primary Faith Trainer

The first step on the legacy pathway is parent/baby dedication. This is a seminar and a ceremony designed for parents who have children between birth and one year of age. Parents, through a two hour required seminar, learn how to become the primary faith trainers for their children and accept the long-term responsibility. This milestone serves as the entry point for the path of legacy milestones. Parents gain a general understanding of all six milestones and receive a copy of *Walk The Path: A Guide for Training Our Children Spiritually* (See appendix E). Parents also receive practical training for parenting during the infancy and preschool years of their child’s life. The purpose of the seminar is to teach parents the basics of the commitment they are making during the future parent/baby dedication ceremony to become the primary faith trainer in the life of their child according the commands of Scripture. The seminar provides an

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83 *Walk The Path* is a book written uniquely for Kingsland Baptist Church. It helps parents understand the integrated process at Kingsland for leading children spiritually. The entire book is available in appendix E.
understanding of how Kingsland Baptist Church will partner with them as parents for the spiritual growth of their child.

*Milestone #2: Salvation & Baptism*
Staff Contact: Vicki Hoyle, Minister to Children
Campus Event: Baptism
Family Celebration: Spiritual Birthday Party
Parent Seminar: How to Lead Your Child to Christ
Core Competencies: Jesus, truth, sin, repentance, salvation, baptism

An important spiritual milestone in the life of every person is salvation and baptism. For the child growing up in a Christian home and in the context of a local church, a decision point is often reached between the ages of seven and eleven. This decision may also occur later in life. Between milestone #1 and milestone #2, parents lead their children toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation. Parents can attend a seminar at Kingsland that teaches the Biblical truth about salvation and baptism. Parents are equipped and given resources at this seminar to lead family devotions at home which teach age appropriate truths regarding salvation and baptism. Parents are also taught to celebrate this milestone by throwing a party at home commemorating the child’s spiritual birthday. Special guests at the spiritual birthday party include family, friends, and other spiritual influencers in the child’s life. The seminar, “How to Lead Your Child to Christ” along with the accompanying suggested resources ensure a parents understanding of key core competencies regarding salvation and baptism. These competencies include Jesus, truth, sin, repentance, salvation, and baptism. Parents discover effective ways to lead their elementary age children toward a personal relationship with Christ and to celebrate the milestone of baptism when it occurs.
It is important to help children prepare spiritually, emotionally, and physically for adolescence. Between the ages of 10 and 12, parents should intentionally prepare their children for the teen years as a Christ follower. In order to prepare to lead preteens through this process, parents should attend a seminar at Kingsland called Preparing for Adolescence: Parent Edition. This seminar teaches parents the basics about helping changing kids navigate relevant issues such as physical changes, identity in Christ, and sex. In this seminar parents will learn how to use James Dobson’s CD series called Preparing for Adolescence in the course of a road trip designed to facilitate a fun but intentional weekend for the parent and the maturing child. Family devotion resources provided at the seminar assist adults in leading devotions to help older children prepare for adolescence. Issues such as the changing body, puberty, emotions, and the importance of making choices pleasing to God receive intentional conversation through family devotion and one-on-one parent chats. Kingsland partners with parents by introducing the same issues from a biblical perspective as older elementary students attend church ministries designed for their growing faith and changing life. Specifically the fourth and fifth grade retreat intentionally addresses issues pertaining to preparing for adolescence with children. Kingsland teaches the core competencies of identity in Christ, spiritual growth, and spiritual discipline during the course of children’s Sunday morning Bible study in the fourth and fifth grade years. Parents receive the resources necessary to
teach the same competencies at home in family devotion while their children progress through the end of elementary school.

_Milestone #4: Commitment to Purity_

Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor  
Campus Event: True Love Waits Commitment Ceremony  
Family Celebration: Purity Ring Presentation  
Parent Seminar: Purity for Life  
Core Competencies: Biblical purity, healthy friendships, identity in Christ, biblical sex

In the twenty-first century American culture, the church, and the family must address sex from a biblical perspective early in a student’s spiritual development. It is imperative that students learn the principles of biblical manhood and womanhood, relationships, and sex primarily from their parents. During the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade years, parents receive encouragement to focus on these issues in family devotions. The Kingsland student ministry partners with parents by providing biblical and practical resources for those family devotions in the course of a parent seminar called “Purity for Life.” The student ministry partners with parents by teaching the importance of accountability, healthy friendships, and biblical standards of purity through Sunday morning Bible study and other ministry events. During the eighth grade year, parents and students participate together in a True Love Waits weekend at Kingsland Baptist Church. Parents present their students with a purity ring to symbolically represent a purity commitment to God, to parents, and to a future spouse.

_Milestone #5: Rite of Passage_

Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor  
Family Celebration: Rite of Passage Ceremony  
Parent Seminar: Preparing My Student for Adulthood  
Core Competencies: Roles of men/women, spiritual gifts/service, catechism

The passing of a child into biblical adulthood is a significant milestone. The Scripture requires parents to equip their children to become men and women of God. The
age of sixteen characterizes a significant time of freedom in American culture. The rite of passage milestone is not about superficial freedoms such as keys to the car or a cell phone; instead it delineates new responsibilities associated with becoming a man or a woman of God. The church partners with parents by teaching a seminar equipping adults to lead their freshmen and sophomore students toward this significant milestone occurring around their sixteenth birthday. Key core competencies such as spiritual gifts, the roles of men and women, spiritual disciplines, responsibility in the Kingdom, dealing with failure, and other biblical issues will be explored both in family devotions and on campus at Kingsland. Parents learn to host a very special “Rite of Passage” ceremony as a very meaningful launch into adulthood. After the rite of passage ceremony, students receive opportunity to participate in the church body using their spiritual gifts. This milestone allows students to experience some of the responsibility of adulthood in the context of family and church giving them a secure opportunity to grow.

Milestone #6: High School Graduation
Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Minister to Students
Campus Event: Senior Summit
Family Celebration: The Written Blessing
Seminar: Preparing My Student to Leave Home
Core Competencies: Apologetics, Courtship/Marriage, God’s will, life-skills

Between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, parents must help their students develop practical and spiritual skills to leave home. During this phase, Kingsland equips parents to prepare their children for the world outside the nest using a seminar called “Preparing My Student to Leave Home.” This stage of a child’s life yields a healthy time in the family journey if parents continue to keep the lines of communication open with their students. Core competencies such as basic apologetics, courtship and marriage, determining the will of God, life skills necessary for surviving away from home, and
other biblical issues will be explored in family devotions and through the student ministry at Kingsland. The student ministry offers workshops and seminars around these competencies for students and for parents. Students receive biblical instruction around these competencies in the student version of Sunday morning Bible study. As families near the end of the legacy milestone path, Kingsland equips and encourages parents to write a spiritual blessing for presentation to their student at the “Senior Summit” just before high school graduation. These important years of discipleship provide parents the last chance to shape the faith of their children before they leave home. Using family devotions and teachable moments well in this stage requires commitment and skill. This final milestone culminates an eighteen year journey of integrated spiritual formation along Kingsland’s path of legacy milestones.

The Parent Summit

Another practical solution supporting an integrated discipleship process for church and home involves equipping parents to walk the path of legacy milestones with their children. Twice a year Kingsland offers a one day conference on Saturday called the Parent Summit. This conference provides important information allowing adults to understand the integrated process and equipping them to become effective primary faith trainers. The Parent Summit involves two general sessions led by a special speaker to motivate parents toward the importance of embracing the role of primary faith trainer. The general sessions allow parents to understand the path of legacy milestones and grasp the importance of family devotions in the process. The general sessions teach parents to disciple their children along the path of legacy milestones and illustrate how Kingsland Baptist Church partners with families in that process. During the first general session,
parents discover their family’s unique place along the path of legacy milestones according to the age of their children. Parents choose the most important of the six milestone seminars offered in the course of the seminar. Adults then attend the milestone seminars in support of the season of life unique to their family. Potentially, adults experience two milestone seminars in one day. The Parent Summit is designed for adults to attend on multiple occasions throughout the years of spiritual growth in the life of their children. The Parent Summit provides an interactive experience for adults to comprehend the complete integrated process and its benefit to their family. All resources and practical tools supporting each milestone are available for purchase in Kingsland’s Legacy Resource Center on the day of the seminar.

The Legacy Resource Center

The Legacy Resource Center at Kingsland provides a formal bridge between church and home. The resource center, designed in support of the integrated process, makes all of the supporting resources for each legacy milestone available for purchase every Sunday and Wednesday. The resource center is a bookstore, organized by legacy milestone, for the purpose of providing adults with easy access to resources and tools that will enable them to grow in their ability to train their children spiritually. A complete list of resources exists on the church website for quick viewing. Parents view this list at www.kingsland.org/legacymilestones/resources (See appendix G).84

All of the above solutions build practical, formal bridges between church and home for the purpose of effectively equipping children for life as Christ followers. Involving parents in this process in practical, simple ways, and motivating them toward a

84 Appendix G is a complete list of supporting resources for the path of legacy milestones as presented to parent at Kingsland.
personal commitment to train their child spiritually enhances Kingsland’s spiritual
formation process. This plan in practice proactively adjusts families to the truth of God’s
Word and His plan for the next generation.
Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the practical use of a proactive integrated strategy partnering church and family involves time and how people spend it. In learning about the commitment level as a primary faith trainer parents often ask the question, “How will I have time to do this?” As the conversation continues obviously parents feel stressed out over seemingly small issues such as choosing a thirty minute time block once a week to participate in a family devotion. Parents struggle to find the time to read the recommended resources necessary to gain the understanding required to lead their child to the next legacy milestone. Specifically, the average parent at Kingsland Baptist Church suffers from a chronic disease caused by the absence of margin in day-to-day life. Margin in day-to-day life provides room to breathe. Margin makes room for family and relationships. Living with margin is intentional.

Adults in Katy, Texas reflect characteristics stereotypic of suburban life. Generally adults in Katy value progress and success. “There can be little doubt that the contemporary absence of margin is linked to the march of progress.”\textsuperscript{85} Residents of Katy live in large homes, drive fancy cars, and accumulate material possessions with passion. The average household income in Katy is $93,000 and rising. Adults in suburban west Houston measure success and progress by the degree of material wealth acquired.

Consumerism is an unwritten core value for most families in Katy. When it comes to the

children, the picture is also bleak. Children find self-worth in achievement reinforced by their parents. Competition in Katy rates at unhealthy levels in the area of academics and athletics. Consequently the people of Katy place a high value on winning and recognize the small group of children who consistently succeed. Therefore, a large group of children subliminally feel like losers seeking approval by bettering themselves academically or athletically.

This attention to progress and success produces a lifestyle illustrated only by the proverbial rat race. In practicality everyday life for the average family in Katy is chaos. Dad experiences a one hour commute both ways to work. Consequently he leaves at five o’clock in the morning in order to beat the traffic. He returns home at seven after a long day. Often mom’s schedule is similar. Many families live on two incomes valuing progress and success over family and relationships. The children attend school for eight hours every day followed by a plethora of after extra-curricular activities. These activities start as soon in life as four years old and commence as a student graduates from high school in Katy. By seven o’clock the entire family arrives at home exhausted. An unhealthy meal consisting of takeout or a frozen dinner is thrown on the table. Everyone in the family eats when convenient. The evening is filled finishing homework, scrambling to do the household chores, and watching television or using the computer. The entire family crashes late in the evening only to start the whole thing over again the following day. Consequently no time remains for family interaction. This phenomenon devastates the landscape of family life in Katy.

Unfortunately the same mentality creeps into Kingsland Baptist Church as parents buy the atomic worldview lie of progress, success, and materialism. When challenged to
become the primary faith trainers for their children, some parents at Kingsland struggle with knowing how to find the time in an already chaotic schedule. Therefore Kingsland recognizes the need to partner with families in order to help them achieve balance and simplicity as a lifestyle.

The Problem of Busyness

The problem of busyness permeates not only the culture of Katy but also many other places in the western world. Suburban and urban contexts across America suffer with busy sickness. The description of Katy fits the lifestyle of many Americans. The root cause of this problem is worldview. The atomic worldview drives the individual to seek contentment in personal success no matter the cost to others around him. This deep sense of individualism implies a warped set of priorities in comparison to the biblical worldview. The result of life lived for self in a fast paced society is a train wreck called the family. Specifically, children suffer immensely living with parents who value progress and success more than relationship. “Our relationships are being starved to death by velocity. No one has time to listen, let alone love. Our children lay wounded on the ground, run over by our high speed good intentions. Is God now pro-exhaustion? Doesn’t he lead people beside the still waters anymore?”

The busyness of the suburban American family causes children to lose in several ways. First, children lose the ability to be creative. Adults organize all of the activities in which kids participate. Everything from little league baseball to a pre-school play date finds its formation in the mind of an adult. This change in the cultural landscape diminishes the opportunity to come home after school and play freely with the

86 Ibid., 27.
neighborhood children. It is likely in America, that most parents do not know their neighbors well enough to allow free play in the community even with available time. Children, therefore, do not typically use their imaginations to fill their time.\textsuperscript{87} This contributes to the inability of students to think creatively.

The lost art of mentorship in children’s lives tragically resonates from the busy suburban lifestyle. Children typically play with children their own age under the guise of arranged friendship either through organized athletics, age-graded school systems, arranged play opportunities, and even age-graded children’s ministry. In this lifestyle children miss the opportunity for an older mentor in a one-to-one format. The family, originally responsible for the mentorship of children, delegates this responsibility to daycares, public schools, coaches, and teachers. The lifestyle selected for children as a result of progress driven, time crunched parents “robs them of opportunities to experience and cultivate rich intergenerational mentoring relationships.”\textsuperscript{88}

Health concerns in childhood stem from overly scheduled, stressed children. In the name of giving children opportunity, parents over schedule children and thus over schedule the family. Child psychologists agree that over scheduling children causes stress and disease. The variety of activities parents arrange for children are not immoral but they may be detrimental. Childhood obesity, early onset diabetes, childhood cancer, depression and other physical and mental sicknesses find their root cause in the hurried lifestyle. Children not only suffer physically. They also miss out on two very important

\textsuperscript{87}Randy Frazee, \textit{Making Room For Life} (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003), 96.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 99.
aspects of childhood: family time and solo play. The average suburban American child cannot fathom life with time enough to play with the family. At the same time, if a moment of unscheduled time comes, children express their boredom quickly.

Living hurried lifestyles in pursuit of success fragments the American family. Consider the concept of the family meal. A generation ago, every meal eaten took place around the family table with every member in his or her chair. The family ate together seven days per week. Today, the lucky family eats together two or three times per week. In most cases, families average one meal together at home around the table. The family table symbolically represents the importance of family. Schedules do not prioritize the family. Instead, schedules prioritize the individual leaving the family as a lesser priority. This small indicator of family life in America shows the impact of busyness on the family. The time left for family is little to none. This presents a problem for a discipleship strategy expecting parents to prioritize time to lead their children spiritually each week. Teaching the discipline of simplicity and modeling the proper priorities becomes an initiative of Kingsland Baptist Church in the quest to assist parents in discipling their children.

The Discipline of Simplicity and Balance

The discipline of simplicity requires a worldview shift. For suburban Christians, this lifestyle paradigm shift involves rebelling against the culture. The atomic worldview embraced by the western culture accentuates the desire for individual progress, success, and achievement. The biblical worldview calls for simplicity and balance in the context

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89 Ibid., 99.
90 Ibid., 131.
of relationships. The atomic worldview values the individual above all. The biblical
worldview values relationships. This issue requires attention as part of an integrated
strategy for spiritual formation partnering the church and the family. Priorities change
when a person’s worldview changes. The issue of simplicity and balance is counter-
culture in the hurried suburban life. The task for Kingsland involves teaching people to
value relationships over success and progress. The importance of the task cannot be
understated. The magnitude of the task requires diligence and patience. Helping the
members of Kingsland Baptist Church to live simply equates to slowing down a fast
moving aircraft carrier and turning it one hundred and eighty degrees. The task requires
time and consistent attention from many different ministry points.

Psalm 90:12 says that as Christians we should “number our days aright that we
may gain a heart of wisdom.” In the twenty-first century American culture, applying
this verse means simplifying lifestyle and balancing priorities. Many people define the
simple life in different ways. However, simplicity has “always represented a shifting
cluster of ideas, sentiments, and activities. Certain common threads can be identified.”
The simple life is voluntary and intentional. People choose to live simply. It cannot be
forced but instead chosen as an intentional act of free will. Simplicity provides freedom.
Anxieties about reputations, possessions, and futures are minimized in the simple life.
Materially speaking, simplicity de-clutters life. Instead of practicing possession gluttony,
the simplistic lifestyle insists upon de-accumulation. The simple life is margined. This
lifestyle recognizes the importance of biblical priorities and balances life leaving time for

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91 New International Version.

92 Richard Swenson, Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Our
relationships. Discipline characterizes the simple life. Comfort is not the goal of simple life. Instead authenticity is the desired result.\textsuperscript{93} This lifestyle allows time, money, and energy for the most important aspect of life: relationships. Families that practice simplicity place a high value on time together. Practicing simplicity and balance prioritizes time for parents to engage in the spiritual development of their children. The greatest threat to parent involvement is the complexity of life.

**The Role of Kingsland Baptist Church in Cultivating Simplicity**

Teaching the people of Kingsland Baptist Church to live simply and balance priorities is a daunting task. However daunting an effort on behalf of the church to lead its members to value relationships by simplifying lifestyle requires persistence. In practicality Kingsland Baptist Church partners with the family in the area of balance and simplicity in two ways: teaching and modeling.

**Teaching Simplicity and Balance**

Teaching simplicity and balance starts in the pulpit at Kingsland. Several times per year, the Senior Pastor preaches on different aspects of living simply to further the Kingdom. Most recently the Senior Pastor completed a series on the family that included an entire sermon on the issue of simplicity for the sake of the family. During the course of every year, the Senior Pastor teaches on worldview issues pertaining to 21\textsuperscript{st} century America. Often attacking the individualism and consumerism of the atomic worldview, the Senior Pastor teaches simplicity as a way to live out a relational, biblical worldview.

The Senior Pastor also teaches the church to practice the principle of Sabbath rest. In Exodus 20:8-10 God commands Sabbath rest in the context of weekly life.

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., 174.
“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you will labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.” This principle of godly living is entirely ignored in suburban America. There exists a rhythm in life created by God Himself. Men and women work during the week, but there is a time to rest and to worship. The Sabbath day is the seventh day of the week in Jewish life. Literally the word “Sabbath” means to cease or to rest. In the time crunched culture of the American suburb, consistent Sabbath does not exist. Consequently families no longer enjoy church together in the morning followed by a leisurely afternoon and evening together. Instead children change in the bathroom at church to head to the soccer match only to arrive back to the church in time for children’s choir at five o’clock in the afternoon. Observing the Sabbath practically applies the principles of consistency and balance in the context of a chaotic culture.

Small groups at Kingsland prove effective vehicles for teaching simplicity and balance. Some groups form for a small duration of time specifically to address issues related to simplicity and balance. These kinds of groups utilize curriculum such as The Hurried Family by Tim Kimmel, Good Sense Money Management by Bill Hybels, Making Room for Life by Randy Frazee, and Margin by Richard Swenson. These small groups specifically teach practical ways to move from a progress driven, complex lifestyle devoid of relationships, to a simple, free lifestyle characterized by community.

Adult Bible Fellowships using the integrated curriculum resource, often discuss the issues of simplicity and balance. Crucial to the strategic link of church and family for the purpose of discipleship, the integrated curriculum tract pulls out simplicity issues from the text of the day. Using Bible Study for Life by Lifeway Christian Resources,
Kingsland naturally teaches the practicalities of simplicity and balance from a biblical perspective.

Finally, the marriage and family ministry at Kingsland Baptist Church teaches simplicity and balance from many different perspectives. All engaged couples intending to be married at Kingsland by one of Kingsland’s pastors, participate in a required seminar called “Altar-ations.” The seminar by design, equips young couples with the basic tools for married life prior to the wedding day. A major aspect of the seminar deals with choosing to live simply from the very beginning of family life. These engaged couples learn the difference between the complex lifestyle of the culture and the lifestyle depicted in the Bible.

Parenting seminars also prove effective in teaching the aspects of simplicity and balance. Parents recognize their chaotic lifestyles and long for more time with their children. Using the Parent Summit twice a year, Kingsland Baptist Church offers ideas for simplicity and balance relating to every life stage. Kingsland also provides resources throughout the year through the Legacy Resource Center enabling adults to deepen their understanding of simplicity and balance for the sake of healthy family relationships. Specifically, parents who apply these principles gain the necessary time for leading their children spiritually.

Modeling Simplicity and Balance

With great conviction, the pastoral staff at Kingsland Baptist Church believes that modeling simplicity and balance is more effective than disseminating information on the topic. The pastoral staff at Kingsland attempts to model simplicity and balance in two forums: Personal and programmatic.
Personal Simplicity and Balance

The pastoral staff at Kingsland Baptist Church values personal simplicity and balance. Most, but not all, of the pastors choose to live on one income demonstrating that it is possible to live in Katy on much less than the average household income of 93,000 dollars per year. Pastors at Kingsland take a day off during the week to observe a time of rest and disconnection from work. Pastors are required to take their allotted vacation every year in order to enjoy rest and familial relationships. Generally pastors at work hard from eight o’clock in the morning until five o’clock in the evening and then they go home. Some exceptions occasionally occur, but the expectation is for pastors who are first parents, to be home with the family in the evening. After seven years of service at Kingsland pastors observe a four week sabbatical designed to help them experience soul rest and renewal. Certainly life is chaotic at times, but generally speaking the pastors lead they way to simplicty by modeling it in their own lives.

Programmatic Simplicity and Balance

The pastoral staff seeks to create a ministry strategy that leads people to the simplicity and balance necessary to practice effective relationships in the context of family, church, and community. Therefore the programmatic structure at Kingsland values the time of its people. The church then becomes part of the simplicity solution instead of adding to the complexity problem for its membership. Kingsland accomplishes this in a number of ways.

First, the church chooses to teach Sabbath rest and also to model it. Therefore the ministry strategy at Kingsland Baptist Church includes removing all Sunday evening activities for the purpose of giving back time to the family for rest, family devotion, and
fun time together. The church’s removal of Sunday activities works in conjunction with its teaching on the Sabbath. Some families fill the time with other activities not conducive to the practice of Sabbath. However many families find they look forward to worship and Bible study in the morning and relational time together the rest of the afternoon and evening. The programmatic challenge lies in finding other times, equally as family friendly, to hold necessary meetings, practices, and groups.

Second, the church chooses to plan its annual ministry calendar with the family in mind. Kingsland is truly a family friendly church. Annual planning involves developing a ministry plan considering the local school schedules, the expectation of family vacations, and the creation of weekly ministries that avoid taxing the family too often. The philosophy of weekly ministry at Kingsland Baptist Church generally makes everything happen on Sunday morning through worship or Bible study or on Wednesday night through existing discipleship, worship, and missions programming. A limited amount of weekend events are calendared except when deemed necessary to facilitate the vision and mission of Kingsland. The pastoral staff at Kingsland respects the evening as time for the family. Therefore, weekday evening activities are highly minimized.

Finally, the church chooses to constantly discuss how to simplify the ministry calendar without compromising its mission, vision, and core values. One effective strategy involves forming partnerships between ministries. For example, the children’s ministry may want to host a father and son campout. At the same time the men’s ministry may also want to host a father and son campout. Instead of having two separate campouts at different times of the year, the ministries partner to host one effective campout minimizing the time and financial resources required of the family.
A second effective strategy for simplifying the ministry calendar is the process of alignment. The process of alignment evaluates the ministries of the status quo and aligns them with the overall ministry strategy. Those events, programs, groups, or processes that support the overall ministry strategy are aligned sequentially to support the process. Those ministries that do not support the process are removed. In the case of a proactive ministry strategy integrating church and family, the path of legacy milestones becomes the process by which all discipleship ministries are aligned. Beginning with the preschool ministry and extending into the adult ministry, all discipleship programming must support the integrated path of legacy milestones. Those that do not are deemed a waste of time and financial resource and are therefore removed.

In the process of alignment the church leadership models a relational worldview by agreeing that ministries exist in relationship to other ministries working together for a common goal. No individual ministry is more important than the other in the process. The atomic worldview, in the context of church strategy, would define the preschool ministry and the student ministry as two isolated ministries that never meet. Kingsland’s relational worldview partners these ministries as well as others along a simple path for developing Christ followers. The value of priority, balance, and simplicity is therefore modeled in the ministry strategy and in the way pastors leading those ministries work together in the context of relationships.
CHAPTER 7
INITIAL RESULTS, POTENTIAL PROBLEMS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Measuring the effectiveness of the proactive, integrated strategy for spiritual formation in the initial phases of implementation is difficult. The true test of success will take place some eighteen years from now when the children who began the process at milestone number one, parent baby dedication, graduate from high school and begin to live as young Christian adults. If the next generation of Christian adults emerging from Kingsland lives in such a way as to reflect the presence of Christ in every aspect of life, the strategy succeeds. However, the subjective nature of this measurement coupled with the duration of the test presents a difficulty in measuring success quantitatively. However, several initial indicators point toward long-term success.

**Initial Results and Early Indicators**

In the area of Adult Bible Fellowship, two key indicators show potential for long-term success. First, the choice of curriculum by Adult Bible Fellowships in conjunction with the integrated strategy indicates an overwhelming interest in the process. In May of 2005 the generational team at Kingsland presented two curriculum tracks available to any Adult Bible Fellowship. These tracks included the integrated track, designed in support of the integrated strategy, and the inductive track designed for those wanting a healthy Bible study option without the family integration. After presenting the vision, the generational team allowed each Adult Bible Fellowship to choose the Bible study track in
which to participate. Kingsland hosts a total of thirty different Adult Bible Fellowships. Twenty-one of those Adult Bible Fellowships chose the integrated curriculum track in support of the proactive strategy integrating church and home. This early indicator shows that seventy percent of Kingsland’s Adult Bible Fellowships chose to participate in the integrated strategy at a very base level of involvement. Therefore, all of these Adult Bible Fellowship participants gain access to weekly teaching and community in support of the integrated strategy, family devotions written from the weekly Bible study, and integrated scriptural study between adult classes and student classes.

The ratio between worship attendance and Bible study attendance at Kingsland is a second early indicator of success. Currently eight-two percent of those attending worship also attend Sunday morning Bible study. This ranks Kingsland above average among other churches of similar size in the Union Baptist Association. Kingsland’s pastoral staff attributes the integrated strategy as one factor among several in the high percentage of worshippers also attending Bible study.

Another early measurable indicator is interest and involvement. The initial launch of the proactive, integrated strategy beginning in August of 2006, allowed for general measurements of the number of people currently interested and involved in the process. During the parent summit, two hundred and seven family units committed to engage in the process by leading a weekly family devotion and celebrating legacy milestones with their children. Since the launch of the strategy, three hundred and thirty four families have purchased the book Walk the Path: A Guide for Training Our Children Spiritually which defines the strategy and the path toward involvement.
The first semester of events corresponding with the path of legacy milestones indicate that people are seeking out events along the path and participating. For instance, in semester one of implementation, fifty-four couples participated in the required seminar for parent/baby dedication which is the first step in the process. At the same time one hundred and two families participated in the milestone two parent seminar for adults whose children are seeking salvation and baptism. All other milestone events on campus are scheduled for the spring of 2007.

Each of these measurements provides a very early understanding of the number of families actually participating in the strategic plan. One potential indicator involves the addition of a counter to the Kingsland website. This will allow the church to measure interest by counting the number of people clicking on the legacy milestone pages. The counter will also allow the church to measure involvement by counting the number of people who download the family devotions for in-home use.

A final but less scientific measurement of success is personal testimony from participants. One family called after hosting a rite of passage ceremony for their sixteen year old daughter. “We learned about the rite of passage ceremony at the parent summit. Tonight we held the ceremony for our sixteen year old daughter. It was neat to see the culmination of the things we learned at Parent Summit. We blessed our daughter as did other Christian influencers in her life.” A second family related the story of their seven year old daughter praying to receive Christ for the forgiveness of her sins during their family devotion. The father said, “What a blessing to teach our daughter why we need Jesus and in two months see her reach out to Him for salvation. Her mother and I are so glad she trusted us with that moment and that we knew how to handle it because of the
salvation and baptism seminar during the parent summit.” A single mother of girls wrote the following testimony. “For our family, attending the Parent Summit was absolutely a great tool in starting up our family devotion activity that we now try to do weekly. Some weeks go better than others. I feel I have the tools and some excellent resources, after purchasing several of the books and reading Brian’s book. I got so much out of the book. As my 7 year old approaches that special time when she asks, ‘When can I be baptized Mom?’ I feel I am equipped to talk with her and help her as she prepares to take the special next step in her spiritual journey. Also, being able to get weekly resources about the family devotion from the Kingsland website has been great as well.” These testimonies as well as others demonstrate early indications of effectiveness.

**Potential Problems**

Every ministry strategy presents problems to address. A ministry strategy void of problems operates in the context of a vacuum. Whenever a strategy involves people, problems exist. This integrated, proactive ministry strategy partnering church and family is not without problems to solve. Several identifiable challenges require thought and practical attention.

**Where Does A Family Start When It Did Not Start at the Beginning?**

The most identifiable problem in the strategy revolves around the fact that every family in the church cannot begin the path at milestone number one. In the beginning, only a small number of families at Kingsland will actually start the path of legacy milestones at parent/baby dedication. This occurs for several reasons. First, the newness of the strategy eliminates parents of older children or teenagers from beginning at
milestone number one simply because the strategy did not exist when the teenagers attending Kingsland were infants. Secondly, new families come to Kingsland all the time from different churches, backgrounds, and geographical regions. Typically these families have children older than milestone number one requires for participation. Therefore, how should a family participate if it does not start at the beginning?

This quandary requires a simple solution. As parents discover the path of legacy milestones, they evaluate the point of progression for each child in the family. Then the family begins to walk the path right from those points forward. It is counterproductive for a fifth grader to go back and participate in parent/baby dedication. Instead, parents assess the progression of the fifth grader along the path of legacy milestones and start where appropriate.

This particular problem is addressed at each and every parent summit in a workshop called understanding and practicing legacy milestones. The issue is also addressed in the book developed to support the ministry process called *Walk The Path: A Guide for Training Our Children Spiritually*. In order to avoid the feeling of defeat before a family even begins, the staff communicates the simple answer to this problem at every opportunity.

How Do We Teach Parents to Avoid Pressuring Children Toward Salvation?

One of the pitfalls regarding placing an age range on a particular milestone is the pressure success driven parents feel to make sure their child accomplishes each milestone by the given age. Milestone number two, salvation and baptism, presents an especially difficult problem. The strategy at Kingsland places an age range of seven to eleven on

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94 See Appendix E, Chapter 7 “Charting Your Course.”
the salvation and baptism milestone. The age range is based on a compilation of experience and child development principles suggesting children growing up in a Christian family and attending an evangelical church likely will make a legitimate decision to follow Christ between the ages of seven and eleven. A problem arises when progress driven parents living life according to an atomic worldview push their children to accept Christ and inadvertently act as the Holy Spirit in the life of the child. In a culture driven toward success, this scenario is a significant possibility.

The solution thus far involves educating parents about their role in their child’s salvation. This education process begins in the seminar for milestone one, parent/baby dedication, and continues in the parent seminar for milestone two, salvation and baptism. The key principles include teaching parents to recognize the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of their child and helping them see the age range as a common scenario but not a hard and fast rule. A key element of salvation involves true repentance. Therefore evidences of conviction and authentic repentance are signposts of a child ready to receive Christ.

The parental responsibility is not to rush a child toward salvation but instead to teach a child the truths necessary for making a personal salvation decision. Kingsland teaches parents to exercise patience and wisdom in the process and to rely on the Holy Spirit. Often when speaking about the salvation of children, the pastors at Kingsland suggest, “Salvation is not a box to check off in a series of life achievements.” Parents at Kingsland learn to share the truth about salvation in family devotions and watch for signs of conviction and repentance.

Parents also learn to recognize the appropriate time in a child’s life for salvation by using listening skills. Parents who bring their children to church and teach biblical
truth at home build an environment conducive to their child’s salvation. The church
teaches parents to listen to their children in the context of that environment. When
children begin asking questions about sin, death, repentance, Jesus, heaven, hell, or other
related topics, they signal their parents as to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.
Through prayer and conversation a parent leads their child to Christ by joining the work
of the Holy Spirit. This effort requires prayer, patience and wisdom. By addressing these
issues Kingsland engages the cultural problem of parents pushing their children toward
salvation prematurely.

How Do We Keep The Strategy In Front of the People?

One of the greatest difficulties involves keeping the strategy in front of the people
continuously. Since the parent summit occurs only twice a year, keeping the people
focused on the strategy consistently is a challenge. Currently the generational team at
Kingsland chooses to implement a multifaceted solution to this problem. A key element
to keeping the strategy in front of people includes life-size standing stones throughout the
building illustrating the principle of parents as standing stones or primary faith trainers in
the lives of their children. The standing stones contain silhouettes of families with
Deuteronomy 6:4-7 etched in the stone. Between the stones, mounted on the wall, hang
plaques representing each milestone along the path of legacy milestones. In this way
parents are reminded weekly of their responsibility to lead their children spiritually along
the path of legacy milestones.

Secondly the church produces a quarterly electronic newsletter called e-
milestones to send to every family with an e-mail address on record. This newsletter
always highlights different aspects of the strategy and provides practical tips for
involvement. The quarterly newsletter directs people to other constant reminders of the strategy including the legacy resource center, both on-line and on-site, as well as the book, *Walk the Path: A Guide for Training Our Children Spiritually.*

Perhaps the most effective method for keeping people engaged in the process utilizes Adult Bible Fellowships as a means for connecting parents to the strategy. Currently the generational team trains teachers representing Adult Bible Fellowships choosing the integrated curriculum, to continually remind participants of the process. The teachers accomplish this by directing parents to family devotions written from the integrated curriculum, using illustrations from their own family devotions and milestone celebrations, and highlighting effective resources. The difficulty with this solution revolves around the individual teacher and his or her effectiveness and passion for connecting parents to the path of legacy milestones.

What About The Children Whose Parents Do Not Participate?

A major tenet of this spiritual formation strategy is parental involvement. Clearly every child’s parent will not participate. Some parents will participate fully. Others will only partially embrace the strategy. Still others will not participate at all. Any level of parental involvement improves the status quo. However, some children will never receive the benefit of a parent who effectively leads them as their primary faith trainer. In this case, a child attending church receives discipleship in the traditional way. Though fragmented and less than ideal, God’s grace is sufficient. Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, and other volunteers often become the spiritual surrogates. However, a more intentional approach could enhance a child’s spiritual development.

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*See Appendix E.*
One example of intentional ministry to children whose parents neglect the faith training responsibility involves senior adult mentors. Partnering senior adults with children for the purpose of spiritual formation is an idea in its infancy at Kingsland. Though likely not as effective as healthy parental involvement, an adult mentor trained in spiritual development can enhance the discipleship experience of a child. Currently the Senior Adult Ministry at Kingsland is working with the generational team to determine the best method for training senior adults and linking them with children whose parents do not participate. This would involve leading devotions for the child or student weekly in the context of a relationship as well as celebrating legacy milestones. A secondary function would be to engage the parents and lead them gently toward Christ and the spiritual development of their child. This concept needs significant work and structure before implementation occurs. If implemented this strategy would be a phase two aspect of the project.

How Do We Help Parents of Varying Abilities Lead the Most Effective Devotions Possible?

A potential problem for maximum effectiveness is the varying degrees of skill levels among parents in regards to leading family devotions. Some parents will do little more than read a downloaded devotion. Others will be creative and effective in their preparation and presentation. Assisting the least effective parents in leading good family devotions is imperative to the process. Several methods currently enable Kingsland to equip parents for the purpose of leading effective family devotions.

Throughout the year a seminar called “How to Lead Family Devotions” is offered in a variety of formats. Parents can attend this at the parent summit twice a year or they
can participate in a Wednesday evening format several times per year. The seminar details the basics of presentation and preparation for family devotions.

A second method of equipping parents to lead beneficial family devotions requires the church to resource the parent well. Currently the strategy resources the parent for family devotions best if they attend a class using the integrated curriculum in Adult Bible Fellowship. Interactive family devotions are written using the Bible lesson from Sunday morning. Creative and interactive elements enhance a parent’s ability to lead memorable devotions. Other age appropriate family devotion resources are made available in the Legacy Resource Center on the church’s campus.

A final method, yet to be developed, involves creating a “plug and play” option for family devotions. One option for parents who need assistance with presentation skill is a DVD curriculum for family devotions. This strategy would allow parents to utilize a digital version of family devotions taught by a professional communicator. The positive result of this method would be a clearly communicated, interactive family devotion every time. However, the negatives outweigh the positives at this time. The development of a DVD curriculum, though possible, involves a considerable amount of time and money. Perhaps the worst effect of this option is that once again the church is saying, “Let the professionals handle the spiritual formation of your children.” A key component in the integrated strategy for spiritual formation is parental involvement. Philosophically and theologically parent led devotions are more conducive to the strategy than a “plug and play” pastor leading a family devotion.

A healthier version of this strategy could be to create training videos for parents geared toward teaching them how to do the family devotion each week but not
necessarily doing it for them. An affordable and convenient media format for these training sessions is a webcast or a podcast from the church website each week. If implemented, this aspect of equipping would be a phase two aspect of the entire project.

How Could a Smaller Church with Less Resources Utilize This Strategy?

Incorporating a proactive, integrated strategy for spiritual formation such as the legacy milestone strategy is possible for a church of any size or denomination. The strategy is not dependent on facilities, staff, or resources. The strategy is dependent on the willingness of any church to recognize the family as an equal and perhaps favorable vehicle for discipleship. This paradigm shift has little to do with monetary resources and much to do with vision and commitment.

A small to medium size church that is passionate about equipping parents to disciple their own children can embrace this strategy as detailed. For instance, any church can develop an integrated track for Sunday morning Bible study that incorporates the curriculum with a written family devotion. A more simple approach involves a church choosing the *Bible Study for Life* Curriculum produced by Lifeway Christian Resources, allowing utilization of the family devotion produced by Kingsland Baptist Church and accessed through the website.

Any church can use the path of legacy milestones as a strategy to integrate the ministry of the church with the ministry of the family. Every church can allow a lay person to lead one section of the path. For instance, a lay children’s ministry coordinator could oversee milestones one through three. A lay youth director could oversee the work
of milestones four through six. Similarly part-time staff or full-time staff in small to medium size settings can also oversee the path of legacy milestones.

Smaller churches can lead parent seminars supporting the legacy milestones for the cost of reproducing a study guide. Leader guides for each milestone seminar can be obtained for the cost of printing and postage from Kingsland Baptist Church. A small church needs only to purchase one set of the parent seminar guides. Kingsland gives churches permission to reproduce as many copies as necessary of the parent seminar guides allowing churches access to practical resources at a low cost.

Every church can produce a resource list of supporting material for each milestone. Parents can use this resource list to purchase books and helpful materials on their own without any cost to the church. An on-site resource center is a luxury but not a necessity. The resource list on the website, www.kingsland.org, or the resources organized by milestones in the book, Walk The Path: A Guide for Training Our Children Spiritually, can be used as a template for developing a list conducive to any church family.

Finally, churches of any size can host simple events that support the milestones. For example, every church can host a parent/baby dedication seminar and ceremony in conjunction with milestone number one. Churches of any size can host a True Love Waits ceremony in support of the purity vows milestone along the path of legacy milestones. This proactive, integrated strategy is user-friendly for churches of any size.

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96 See Appendix E
Speculations and Conclusions

This project details a strategy specific to the vision of Kingsland Baptist Church. Within that ministry context, certain speculations about the strategy are becoming apparent. First, not every family will participate. Some parents will continue to find satisfaction in delegating their children’s spiritual formation entirely to the church. Secondly, parents who do commit to the process both in message and model, are more likely to produce children who embrace and live by the relational worldview of the Bible. Children of parents who do not participate, get a lesser and fragmented version of biblical discipleship.

Other speculations involve parents who choose to lead their children along the pathway of legacy milestones in partnership with the church. Parents who lead their children spiritually utilizing the milestone strategy and live as authentic Christ followers daily are likely to develop Godly children. Parents who lead their children spiritually utilizing the milestone strategy and live legalistic or hypocritical lives do more damage to their children than if they only brought them to church.

Though this strategy is developed for Kingsland, its principles and design can be easily utilized in any church setting. The church of Jesus Christ in twenty-first century America is forced to grapple with the spiritual demise of the family. Expecting parents to disciple their children and equipping them to lead their children spiritually is the business of the church. It is no longer appropriate, in light of the biblical text, the American culture, and the sickening demise of the family, to exclude the family from the discipleship process.
The church of Jesus Christ needs to make a strategic paradigm shift aligning itself with God’s method for spiritual formation. He first set people in families and then set families in churches. The church and the family must work together for the spiritual formation of the generations. This project presents a simple and practical approach to accomplish the Great Commission by integrating the church and the family for the purpose of spiritual formation.

“He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.”

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97 Psalm 78:5-8, New International Version.
**APPENDIX A**

**FAMILY NEEDS SURVEY**

Thank you for taking time to complete this Family Needs Survey. This tool is designed to help your church better understand the needs and issues facing you and your family.

- Your answers are completely anonymous. In fact, this survey form is read only by a computer.
- Please be sure to completely darken the bubbles signifying your answers.
- You may use a pen or a pencil.

The following section will help identify the issues most important to you. Please complete each question in its entirety before moving on to the next question.

**Question 1)** From the following list, please indicate (in the □ column) which issues you currently need help with in your life.

**Question 2)** Of those, please indicate (in □) which issues you would desire this church to help meet this need in your life.

**Question 3)** Of all 31 items, please rank only the top 3 issues you currently need help with in your life, in the order of their importance to you. (Darken the ① bubble beside the ONE issue MOST important to you, the ② beside the issue next most important, and the ③ beside the third most important issue.)

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<td>6) Having a ministry in the lives of other people</td>
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<td>7) Handling divorce</td>
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<td>8) Adjusting to my season of life</td>
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<td>9) Adjusting to a change in employment</td>
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<td>10) Developing and maintaining spiritual disciplines (prayer, quiet times, Bible study, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11) Dealing with current or past drug / alcohol abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>12) Dealing with current or past sexual / physical / emotional abuse</td>
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<td>13) Developing healthy living and eating habits</td>
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**MARRIAGE**

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<tr>
<td>14) Dating and preparing for marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>15) Understanding different personality types</td>
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16) Understanding biblical roles and responsibilities for a husband and wife
17) Understanding your spouse’s needs / expectations
18) Developing and maintaining good communication
19) Developing and maintaining sexual intimacy in marriage
20) Rekindling and maintaining romance
21) Building a strong marriage
22) Relating to in-laws
23) Living in an interfaith marriage

PARENTING
24) Developing and sharpening parenting skills
25) Releasing and moving a child toward adult independence
26) Developing and improving family communication
27) Developing a child’s character, identity, and morality
28) Disciplining a child
29) Helping a child succeed at school
30) Helping a child grow spiritually
31) Establishing and teaching Christian values in the home

For those engaged or married (questions 32–35):

32) Using the following scale, how satisfied are you with…

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Somewhat dissatisfied
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat satisfied
5. Very satisfied

1 2 3 4 5 …your relationship with your spouse
1 2 3 4 5 …your marriage
1 2 3 4 5 …your spouse as a partner
1 2 3 4 5 …yourself as a partner

33) Please answer each of the following questions by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with the idea expressed.

1. Strongly disagree
We regularly have great conversations where we just talk as good friends
I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what rough times we may encounter
I believe we can handle whatever conflicts will arise in the future
My relationship with my partner is more important to me than almost anything else

34) Use the following scale to rate how often you and your partner experience the following:

Almost never
Once in a while
Frequently

Little arguments escalate into ugly fights with accusations, criticisms, name-calling, or bringing up past hurts
My partner criticizes or belittles my opinions, feelings, or desires
My partner seems to view my words or actions more negatively than I mean them to be
When we have a problem to solve, it is like we are on opposite teams
When we argue, one of us withdraws…that is, doesn’t want to talk about it anymore or leaves the scene

35) Have there been any instances of pushing, grabbing, shoving, hitting, or slapping with your partner in the last year?

Never
Once
Twice
3-5 times
6-10 times
More than 10 times

For parents, with children (18 & under) living at home:

Please answer each of the following questions by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with the idea expressed.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree
1. I am involved in my child’s life
2. I am predictable in the way that I relate to my children
3. I have a good handle on how my child’s needs change as he/she grows up
4. I am aware of my child’s world (their friends, activities, development, etc.)
5. I don’t have much confidence in my parenting skills
6. I know what encourages my child most
7. I know what embarrasses my child
8. I express myself openly and often to my children
9. The benefits of being a parent far outweigh the costs

For all:

37) How long have you been a Christian?
   - 0-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 10+ years
   - I’m not a Christian
   - Don’t know

38) On average, how often do you attend worship services?
   - Less than once a month
   - Once a month
   - Twice a month
   - Three times a month
   - Four or more times a month

39) Please mark the point on the following scale which best indicates your current level of
    spiritual development.
    
    0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9
    No
    Maximum
    spiritual
    development

40) On average, how often do you do each of the following?

- Read the Bible
- Have some concentrated prayer time
- Have a family devotion
- Pray with your spouse (excluding meals)
Read or discuss the Bible with your spouse

Talk about spiritual issues with your children

Pray for your children

Pray with your children

Share Christ with others

Watch Christian television

Listen to Christian talk radio

Listen to Christian music

Read a Christian book

Read a Christian magazine

Listen to sermon/teaching tapes

View Christian websites

And finally, just a little information about you…

41) Gender:  □ M  Male  □ F  Female

42) Age:  □ 19 & under  □ 40-49  □ 70 & above
         □ 20-29  □ 50-59
         □ 30-39  □ 60-69

43) Current marital status:  □ Married
         □ Engaged
         □ Unmarried

44) Have you ever been… divorced:  □ Y  Yes  □ N  No
         … widowed:  □ Y  Yes  □ N  No

45) Years married:  □ Not married  □ 10-19  □ 40+
         □ 0-4 years  □ 20-29
         □ 5-9  □ 30-39

46) Number and age of children:  □ O  I have no children

   Ages  Number of Children (in this age range)
   0-5     0  1  2  3  4  5  +
   6-9     0  1  2  3  4  5  +
   10-12   0  1  2  3  4  5  +
   13-18   0  1  2  3  4  5  +
   19+     0  1  2  3  4  5  +

47) Are any of these children from a previous marriage or relationship?

□ Y  Yes  □ N  No

48) Are you a grandparent?

□ Y  Yes  □ N  No

49) Work status: (pick the single best description)  Yours  Spouse
<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Employed part-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed, seeking work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
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### Parental Issues

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<th>Issue</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Family issues</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Development of child</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Education of child</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Health issues</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Family issues</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Development of child</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Education of child</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Development of child</td>
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### Marital Issues

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Financial strain and crime</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Divorce/child support</td>
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<td>4</td>
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### General Issues

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<th>Issue</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Children getting Along</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Stress level</td>
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**Top 10 Most Common Needs**

Based on Question 1, which issues your community needs help with in your life.
Please work together to answer the following questions. Give careful input to each question. Pray about this strategy. It is huge and will only enhance the discipleship of people at Kingsland. Please e-mail me your input by Thursday, September 22.

Definition: A **Milestone** is an event in a child’s/students life that should be used intentionally by parents to solidify a child’s Christian world view.

*Here are the major Milestones as I see them:*

**Baby Dedication** (Infants and young toddlers) (Preschool Ministry)
This is the entry point for the journey of spiritually equipping our children.

**Baptism** (Age 7 and up) (Children’s Ministry)
Celebration of salvation at church and home.

**Preparing for Adolescence** (Age 11) (Children and KSM)
Mom and Dad intentionally preparing the child to enter the realm of student life.

**Purity Vows** (Age 13) (KSM)
Mom and Dad leading their student in purity discussions and commitments.

**Rite of Passage** (Age 15) (KSM)
Mom and Dad intentionally leading their student to adulthood. Involves teaching character of Godly adulthood, establishing identity in Christ, helping child accept responsibility of his own spiritual growth, establish mentor relationship with other adults, conveys parental blessing.

**High School Graduation** (Age 18) (KSM)
A commissioning of sorts that launches the student into new freedom and responsibilities. It involves the people who have had spiritual impact on the child in her development. The goal is a send off with a reminder to represent Christ and the family well in new freedoms and responsibilities. Parent becomes coach at this point.

(Questions on Page 2)
Questions To Ponder with Your Team

1. Look at the Milestones that fall in your Area of Ministry. What will you do as a ministry to come along side the family and help them be successful in these milestones?

2. Brainstorm about the milestones in your area. What are some good ideas for implementation on the homefront? On the Church side of things?

3. What should you do to equip parents/adults in your area to become effective in using and celebrating milestones?

4. What does the discipleship/marriage and family ministry need to do to help adults see the big picture relating to milestones?

5. As a parent would you realistically do this in your home?

6. What should our overall strategy to equip adults for “milestones” look like?

7. What format should people receive this information in (Book, seminars, lifebuilders, conferences, sermons, testimonies, media, etc)?

8. What needs to be done to launch this ministry by January 2006?

9. Are their any major milestones I left out?
1. **What must be done to help the congregation embrace the concept of Family Night Devotion as a must?**

   The Congregation must see value in FND in order to embrace it. Two ways you do this are by showing the benefits and the negative consequences. Another way is that they hear about it in multiple venues and see it being lived (modeled) out in other families.

   Are we putting the concept of FND in a box? Are we willing and comfortable with showing many different ways to have a FND?

   The ways of doing FND are in plenty. One idea is to encourage a family night to begin. Allowing for teachable moments or gradually moving into a more focused devotional time. The flaws with FND are that Parents are not equipped to be primary disciplers of their kids if they are not participating as disciples themselves.

   The biggest benefit seen to us by doing FND of any kind is that kids see their parents as spiritual beings and see them filling their God given roles.

2. **How can we help families become disciplined enough to actually implement a weekly devotion plan for the whole family?**

   This happens through them being discipled and held accountable. It also happens only when we start where they are and not where we want them to be, executing patience as we assist in implementing. Sometimes we make the process of Family discipleship too complicated.

   Idea: Let’s start with a test group, like a Sunday morning bible study, i.e. Parents for Christ. Have them begin FND in their group’s families, tracking their frustrations, excitements, changes, ECT. They also find accountability and ideas from these other families. This also creates a buzz and people to buzz.

   Times for these FND may require HS lifegroups to move to an earlier time and for families to let go of some of the thousand things they do during the week.

   How long is a FND?
BIGGEST POINT: A FND can not be manufactured, especially for students.

3. **What resources do people need in order to effectively lead a FND?**
   1. A BIBLE!
   2. Creative Ideas
   3. Topics to start
   4. ways to navigate to spiritual conversations
   5. accountability
   6. Adult discipleship

   This will not be Family Ministry in a box, but must be easy to access.

4. **What kind of training do people need in order to effectively lead a FND?**

   DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING – things like Lifebuilders and Bible studies where they are growing in the ways of the LORD.

5. **What concepts and truths should be focused on for students during FND?**

   Concepts and Truths that focus on owning your faith as well as how our basic life skills flow from our faith are appropriate for any age. Also topics that speak to moral and sexual purity, self image and relationships.

6. **How can we write devotions that will be effective for all age children?**

   *You don’t write devotions.* We suggest topics and scripture guides that are meant to be discussed over a meal in the morning or night and see this as more effective than a sit down meeting of the family. This calls for planned spontaneity and again keeps away from manufactured realness (which isn’t realness). The basic way is for their to be a though provoking question to be asked and family members to answer according to their age and view. There should be scripture accompanying the question and prayer being a very important element of the time shared. If you desire written out devotions, having students help lead their siblings during this time is one way to make connections of many levels.

7. **How can we make this concept cool for students? Typically students are not interested in doing anything with their parents. How do we make this “student worthy”?**

   We disagree; students are interested in being with their parents. The more that they see their parents living what they are talking, the more time students will want to spend with their parents and the more respect they
will have for their parents. Students want you to model what you are preaching and asking of them, and that can not be generated, it must come from authentic discipleship being lived out in their parents. We see life skills and morals as being the biggest way parents can seek teachable moments and live out their faith.

Problems we see in parenting that make students not want to be home:
1. Kids aren’t ever home
2. There is NO RELATIONSHIP!
3. Students don’t have responsibilities, and therefore there are not as many parenting opportunities.
4. Parents do not let their students fail, and therefore are missing out on parenting opportunities.

FND do not have to focus on being fun – just real.

8. How can you reference, resource, and promote FND through your existing ministry program?

You start presenting and encouraging parent ministry with ministry leaders. In our case that is Sunday Morning Youthworkers and Lifegroup leaders who are interacting directly with students and their parents.

Other ways to promote:
1. website
2. word of mouth
3. mailings to parents
4. encouraging existing discipleship classes to parents
5. online book reviews for parents on KBC site
6. Endorse books and resources on our site that are high quality and supportive of our ministry plan.
7. web forum to share parenting ideas

9. Are you and every member of your team willing to take the lead in this endeavor on a personal level no matter your season of life? Obviously if you are single with out children, your personal devotion time is your imperative.

Yes! We want to model it for families!
Vision Statement: We see a place where men and women are equipped to nurture their children as treasures sent into the next generation to carry the light of the Gospel. A church full of parents who see themselves as their children’s primary faith trainer...It is our desire to reach Katy one home at a time!

Facts:

   (1) Spiritual Growth
   (2) Spiritual Discipline
   (3) Children’s Spiritual Growth

2. The Family is the most influential experience in any person’s life either positively or negatively.

3. God intended “Family” to be an effective vehicle for spiritual growth and development according to Dt. 6, Ps. 78, Eph. 5 and countless other Scriptures.

Strategy:

1. The church will EXPECT parents to disciple their children and teach them to think and live according to a Biblical Worldview.

2. The church will EQUIP parents to disciple their children effectively.

3. The church will PARTNER with families for faith development by integrating its campus discipleship strategy with a home based strategy.

How:

1. We will teach families of preschoolers, children, and students to facilitate age appropriate FAMILY DEVOTIONS. We will provide doctrinally sound, practical resources for parents to use as tools in leading those devotions.

2. We will establish a path for spiritual development based on 6 MILESTONES of spiritual growth in a person’s life. We will teach families what those milestones are and how to equip their children toward the coming milestones. We will provide sound, practical resources for parents to use in preparation and celebration of each milestone.

3. We will INTEGRATE our campus and home discipleship strategy by providing family devotions written around the ABF/HBF curriculum. We will host events on campus to help parents celebrate milestones in a monumental way. We will provide on-going conferences and seminars to equip adults to lead their children spiritually. We will provide a resource center on campus for adults to obtain the tools necessary to disciple their children. Every age level ministry on campus is now responsible for equipping and resourcing adults for discipleship at home around the 6 milestones.
WALK THE PATH
A Guide for Training Our Children Spiritually

by
Brian Haynes
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Angela, my best friend, my wife, whom God gave to me undeservedly: You are a wonderful woman!

To Hailey and Madelyn who are teaching me what God must feel like sometimes;

To Mike and Phyllis who were faithful;

To Ed and Mabel who were also faithful;

To Alex who leads me;

To Cynthia, Barbara, Vicki, Patrick, Paul, and Mike who follow me;

To Todd who kicked me in the pants from the Negev to the Golan Heights;

To Ray Vander Laan and “That The World May Know Ministries” for standing stones and thrown rocks;

To Gary who invested in me;

To Steve who is a standing stone in my life;

To the families of Kingsland who compel me;

To the parents raising the boys who will marry my daughters: Please be standing stones!

To the next generation: I see you walk the halls of our campus and I have a great hope for you. Hold on to Jesus.

To Katy: May the strongholds be obliterated.

To Jesus: Who is this giant to defy the armies of the living God? May this rock thrown in faith be guided by your power and may it land squarely between the eyes of the giant in my culture. And may the whole world know...
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Everything you could possibly need to read to prepare you to lead your child to the next milestone.
INTRODUCTION

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. – Jesus
John 10:10

So you want to become a better spiritual influence in the life of your kids. You want to raise a child who becomes a mighty man or woman of God. So do I. As you prepare for this adventure you should know some things. First, there is a plan, devised by Satan himself, to steal from you and your family; to kill each member of your family; and to destroy the purposes of Christ in the life of every member of your family. It is really no secret. Jesus told us about the plan in John 10:10.

In thinking about this, your emotions may swing from unbelief to terror. You may think, “That will never happen to us.” Let me ask you a question: What are you doing as a parent to foil Satan’s plan for your daughter or your son?

Recently I watched as Satan worked his plan in the life of a momma who was too young to die, and in two young men who believed a lie that cost them their lives. I have seen Satan rip apart marriages as men and women believed the lie that the grass is always greener on the other side. Satan is a spiritual terrorist plotting your demise.
Believe me, the evil one is real and he is working, and he has a plan for you. Don’t be afraid. God did not give us a spirit of fear. Just don’t forget it. You are in a war for the generations beginning with your own life.

Jesus, on the other hand, came that we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Even when Satan kills the body, Jesus grants eternal life. Even when Satan destroys marriages, Jesus restores them. Even when Satan tries to bombard our kids, Jesus shepherds them. He is the Good Shepherd and He laid down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). He also has a plan for you and your family. It is a plan that is the best and is motivated out of love for you.

This book is designed to introduce you to a process at Kingsland Baptist Church that will help you become the primary faith trainer in the life of your child. It is all for nothing, however, unless you begin by knowing Jesus as your King. You do not have the power to do this alone. You need Jesus.

Parenting brings to mind all of our inadequacies. We are reminded that we are dreadfully inadequate because of the sin in our own life. Jesus is the trump card. He forgives us of sin and restores us so that we can have an authentic relationship with God. All of what you are about to learn and experience requires that Jesus be the helm of your life. Without God’s mercy and grace, the rest of this book really means nothing. As a Christ-follower, I am desperate for God’s grace. As a parent, I am hungry for the mercies of God because inadequacy stares me in the face. Pray this with me:

Lord, would you please grant me mercy in Christ? Would you provide for me the grace I need to represent you well with my children? I give you this day my head, my heart, my hands, and my feet. Protect me and guide me as I join you in the work of helping my child know you. Lead me as I lead my children. Teach me to follow you well that they may also know how to follow you. Help me to live in the freedom of obedience that my children may also live in that freedom. Most of all, Jesus, be honored in the way I shepherd my children. You are gentle but firm. You are courageous and compassionate. Help me to be just like you. AMEN.
I

LISTEN TO THE

Wind

Then we will no longer be like infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

Ephesians 4:14

I will never forget it as long as I live. I packed up her new pink backpack, tied her shoes, and strapped her in the car seat to take her to school. It was the first day of Kindergarten and Hailey, my oldest daughter, was ready to go.

I, on the other hand, was a mess. I was worried about everything. As we paraded to school in a long line of SUV’s, I began to think of all the things I should have taught her before Kindergarten. Things like, what to do if some boy tries to kiss you at recess or how to pay the lunch lady for your milk.

As my wife and I escorted her to class, a realization reverberated inside my head like a sounding gong. It was so loud, I remember covering my ears:

“I have just sent my baby into the world to learn how to be like the world!”

“I have just sent my baby into the world to learn how to be like the world!”
In one split second I thought of all of the influences that entered my daughter’s life at that moment. There was her teacher, whom I did not know from Adam. There were the 22 classmates that she would be with some 7.5 hours a day. With them, they brought their religions, morals, ethics, and values consistent with their families and their cultures. In that classroom of 5 year olds, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, atheism, paganism, and rampant secular humanism would all be present and accounted for and valued more than Christianity. My prayer life deepened dramatically that day as a dad trying to raise a Christ-follower in a world full of lies.

Can you hear it? The wind I mean. It began as a soft wind, a gentle breeze. At first it felt warm and comfortable. It was tolerant and inclusive and made everyone feel good. Now, the wind is fierce and blowing in your face—if you are a Christ-follower.

The wind is the momentum of our culture filled with the schemes and evil teachings of Godless men and women disguised as good and tolerant and fair (Col. 2:8). And the wind is blowing hard!

If you and I were to sit down and have a cup of coffee and engage in the kind of authentic conversation that goes beyond small talk to what matters, you would find a level of sadness in my heart. Not hopelessness, not the absence of joy, but a real sadness for the cause of Christ in the United States of America.

Why? Why would you say that? He is all powerful! He can do whatever He wants! True. But He chooses to work through the obedience of His people. And He chooses to raise up the next generation of Christ-followers through the work of Christian parents. This is the problem. In America today we are facing the consequences of a generation who mistakenly thought raising their children in the faith meant taking them to church for one, maybe two hours a week. “Bring them to us,” the church said. “We are the professionals. We will make your kids grow spiritually.”

The problem is, this removes Mom and Dad from the equation and develops a model of compartmentalized Christianity. In other words, faith is what we do inside the church building on Sunday. What about the other days and the other buildings of life? Don’t believe me? The wind is blowing!

In 2005 Christian Smith and Melinda Lindquist Denton published a sociological study called Soul Searching on the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers. In this detailed research collaboration between Oxford University and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, some sobering conclusions are drawn. First,
of all teens in America claiming any religious affiliation, three-fourths consider themselves Christian. These Christians are shaped by two glaringly evident cultural scripts with which they all agree.

1) **Religion will be more important when I am older.**

2) **Tolerance of all faith and religion is a non-negotiable.**

Do you hear it? The Christian teenagers of America today believe faith is for later and all faiths are to be viewed as equally true. This is a problem! Jesus taught that faith is for now, and He used a band of 12 disciples to revolutionize the world in order to prove it. Jesus said He is the only way (John 14:6) and, though we are to love all people, we can not tolerate as equal, improper faith claims concerning concocted gods and human philosophies.

Do you hear it? The wind of humanism is blowing fervently in the lives of even the Christian teenagers in America. Guess what? These Christian teenagers are the next generation of Christian adults who will be parents, pastors, teachers, business men, senators, counselors, professors, etc. The tragedy is, unless something changes, no matter how old they get, they will live like Christianity is for later and they will embrace all philosophies and religions as equally true. They will also teach their children to do the same.

Do you hear it? The once gentle breeze is now a bad thunderstorm and in one generation will be a category 5 hurricane slamming into every Christian home in America.

As you think to yourself, “I really just wanted to enjoy a cup of coffee and light conversation,” you begin to wonder, “What about my kids? What can I do for them?”

Actually the answer to this question is the hope for Christianity in America. It is also the hope for your kids and mine. “Listen to the wind,” I would say as we sip coffee surrounded by music, subtle messages on coffee cups, and a room full of diverse conversations all blowing in the wind and beckoning us to follow.

As we get up to throw our cups away and say our goodbyes until next time, I say something that intrigues you. “Maybe we should become like standing stones: staring into the wind; immovable and obvious. At least then our children would have something to hold on to.” Then they might…

*Instead, speaking the truth in love, grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.* Ephesians 4:15

Though we are to love all people, we can not tolerate as equal, improper faith claims concerning concocted gods and human philosophies.
BECOME LIKE STANDING STONES

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:3-6

In the blowing wind of the culture, our children need something to anchor their lives to. God's design from the beginning was that we, as parents, would be the rock in which our children find stability and shelter from the cultural storm.

In the Middle East today as you travel on foot you will occasionally find large stones sticking out of the ground set by men in obvious places so that everyone who passes by can see them. These stones are obvious to all. They are commonly called standing stones. The practice, in days gone by, was to erect these large stones in recognition of a magnificent work of God. Whenever someone passed by the standing stones they would instantly recognize that God had done something great in this place. The stones were and are a constant reminder of God's presence, His provision, and His power. Sometimes the stones stick out of the ground 10 feet in the
air. They are really an awe inspiring sight and a testimony of God. They are anchor points for people to tie off on in the midst of a cultural wind that blows in a direction that is opposite of God.

Throughout Scripture God uses people as standing stones just as men used big rocks. He sets these people He chooses in obvious places so that as people pass by, they see a testimony to God's presence, provision, and power. In our modern culture God also chooses to remind us of His presence by using people as standing stones—set in obvious places and living lives that point others to God. Think about it. Billy Graham, your local pastor, that small group leader that teaches you every week, your mom, your dad, that guy in college that chanced telling you about Christ. All are standing stones.

Two such standing stones in the Bible are Samson and John the Baptist. Samson's life story is detailed in Judges 13-16 and John's life is detailed well in the beginning of the books of Luke and John.

The lives of these two men are strikingly similar but also are glaringly different. God called each man to become a standing stone for his people while each was still inside his mother's womb. Both Samson's mother and John's mother were shocked to get pregnant because of their age as well as their previous inability to have children. Both men were called to a higher standard of living from the beginning. The Scripture says they were set apart inside their mothers' wombs. Neither mother was permitted to drink wine or eat anything unclean because this would be the holy life standard for both John and Samson.

Why no wine and no unclean meat? It made them stand out as men who were obedient to God. It made them noticeable in a culture where wine was common. It made them obvious standing stones.

Both men were called to God-sized tasks. Samson was given the task of delivering the people of Israel from the Philistines. John was given the task of preparing the hearts of the people of Israel for Jesus, the coming Messiah.

Unlike John, for most of his life Samson was more like a stumbling block for the people than a standing stone. Samson took a Nazirite vow which prohibited him from drinking wine, touching anything dead, being with foreign women, and cutting his hair. This vow, that he was called by God to take, was the distinction that set him apart from the people. He was both their leader and their model. Consequently, everyone was watching him.
In Judges 14-16 we find accounts of Samson drinking wine at a feast, touching dead men and dead animals, desiring marriage with a Philistine woman, sleeping with a Philistine prostitute, and cutting his hair. Samson did what was right in his own eyes instead of obeying God. In two chapters he broke every aspect of his vow and everyone knew about it. He forsook his role as a standing stone. He became weak and ineffective. The cultural wind literally gouged his eyes out and rendered him useless.

Most of us know how the story ends. After the cunning Delilah cut his hair and turned him over to the Philistines, Samson rebounded. He turned to God for the first time in a long time. God answered his prayer because God is always faithful. Then, Samson died with many Philistines as he pushed the columns of a temple to Dagon over in one last effort of standing against the culture. Impressive? Yes, but he did not completely fulfill his call as a standing stone.

You see, Samson’s legacy is recorded in Judges 17. It is tragic to read in Judges 17:6 “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” The people did what was right in their own eyes even after the death of Samson. Why? Because Samson lived his life doing what was right in his own eyes. In a sense he became a stumbling block for the people of God. He was faithful in the end, but his entire life determined his legacy.

John on the other hand, according to the Scripture, lived as a standing stone throughout his life. John took the same kind of vow Samson did from the beginning. No wine, nothing unclean, etc. The difference was, John lived the standard of holiness in front of the people. He was a true standing stone. Everyone noticed John. In fact, some thought he was crazy. He wore crazy clothes and ate plants and wild honey. He lived in the desert. He is described as one crying in the wilderness. Some thought he was delusional. Others recognized his passion for obedience to God.

John’s legacy is much different than Samson’s. John actually paved the way for Jesus. God used him to prepare the way of the Lord. John was used because he was faithful and obedient. He got everyone’s attention because he lived just like God asked him to live.

On one occasion recorded in John 1, the religious leaders of the day were questioning John as to his identity. They even asked him if he was the Messiah. That tells me something important about John. He lived his life in such a way that people wondered if
He lived his life in such a way that people wondered if he was the Messiah who would save the people. Did you get that? He was mistaken for the prophesied Savior of the World. John was a standing stone, set in an obvious place so that all the people who passed by could see God’s provision, presence, and power. He was effective because he was faithful and obedient to God.

Really two kinds of Christian parents exist in the world today. There are those parents who live spiritually as standing stones and those who live as stumbling blocks (Psalm 69:6).

Standing stones walk as Jesus did. They are the real deal. They are not perfect, but they have an authentic relationship with God that manifests itself in a life characterized by loving God and loving people. You can identify them by their passion for obedience. Parents who are standing stones are the anchors for their children in the midst of the humanistic cultural wind blowing through America.

Stumbling blocks are more like Samson. They take the vow, they go to church, but they do not walk as Jesus did where it matters (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5). Where does it matter? In the obvious place God has set you—at home.

Honestly, the most difficult place for me to be the standing stone God has called me to be is not at church which is my place of vocational ministry. Instead, it is at home, where Angela, Hailey, and Madelyn know everything good and bad about me. It is in that place that I have been both a standing stone and a stumbling block in days gone by.

My girls are now 6 and 4. Angela and I are more determined than ever to become standing stones in their lives. What does this mean practically? It means we really have to walk as Jesus did. It requires an authentic passion for obedience stemming from a genuine love for God. If it’s fake, my kids will know and I will cause them to stumble. If it’s real, they will know and they will see the truth of God lived out in front of them.

My legacy with my girls is determined by how I live every day. Your legacy with your kids is determined by how you live every day. My prayer is that we all become like standing stones, set in obvious places pointing the way and anchoring our children in the cultural storm.

As a pastoral counselor, I have on many occasions, listened to young adults who are struggling to connect with God. Inevitably they tell stories of a parent who took them to church but did not
represent God well at home. Dads that yelled, moms that screamed. Dads that never spent any time with them. Moms who were too busy to be a standing stone. Parents who did what was right in their own eyes and became stumbling blocks. Did those parents love their kids? Undoubtedly. But they missed opportunities to be standing stones. Instead they became stumbling blocks in the spiritual lives of their children.

In stark contrast, I have also spoken with many young adults whose parents were authentically in love with Christ and gave their whole heart to His work in their lives. As those kids become adults, they may not be perfect, but they know who God is, what He looks like, and what it means to follow Him. Their faith development is so affected by Mom’s and Dad's walk with Christ.

You have to choose your path before you can ever even begin to think about being the primary faith trainer in the life of your child.

**Who are you? Standing stone or stumbling block?**

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:3-6

**CONVERSATION PIECE:**

*Identify people who have been spiritual standing stones in your life. What characteristics do they possess that make them a standing stone? Ask your spouse or a close friend how he or she sees you. Have honest conversations with your older children or teenagers about how they see you as a Christ follower. Describe what a standing stone is and what a stumbling block is. See how they evaluate you. Give them permission to speak freely. Then, be willing to adjust. It is never too late to become a standing stone.*

Once you determine who you are, it’s time to think about building your parenting strategy on a solid foundation.
III

Two Foundation Stones

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be 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.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Being a parent is not easy. It’s rewarding—I love it—but it is not easy. Being a parent in 21st century suburban America is down-right perilous. Living in suburban Houston is a great experience. In many ways, it is the best place to raise a family. Good schools, great churches, nice people. In other ways, it is the worst place to raise a family. It all looks really good. The neighborhoods are beautiful, the people are nice and everything appears perfectly manicured. However, below the surface a very different scenario exists. Rampant materialism, isolationism, sexual immorality, wrecked marriages, massive financial debt, busyness, unhealthy levels of competition, compartmentalized Christianity, and a warped desire to give the kids everything they want has created quite a mess.
In this suburban façade, how do our children stand a chance of not becoming exactly like the culture? Simply put, we lead them in a different direction. We fully embrace our responsibility to be the primary faith trainers in the lives of our children. We, from the first day of their life, lead them Biblically.

In the Scripture, two foundational texts speak to the role of parents as primary faith trainers in the lives of their children. These are not some obscure passages of Scripture. Instead they are foundation stones. They are the huge foundational building blocks on which you and I build our parenting strategy. They are the foundation stones that God commanded the people of Israel to build upon, one family at a time, one generation at a time.

The first major foundation stone is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Known as the “Shema” in Hebrew culture, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is the first passage of Scripture that every devout Jewish boy memorizes. As soon as he can talk he is taught the Shema. Why? Because it is a summary of all of God’s commands. All of the commands of God really boil down to this: Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deut. 6:5)

It is interesting to me that the literal translation of the Hebrew word “Shema” is “HEAR!” How do our children hear? They hear by our teaching, by our conversation, and by our model. The passage goes on to say,

“These commandments that I give to you are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Don’t work too hard here. There is no hidden understanding in the Hebrew. Parents are commanded to intentionally teach their children how to live as worshippers of God in a world that worships everything but God. We are supposed to impress this lifestyle on them in formal teaching. We are supposed to relate and converse about this life in informal settings, like when we are just sitting around at home, or going for a walk, or just going to bed. We
are supposed to model this life for them by the way we live it in front of them. That my friends, is a lot deeper than just taking them to church on Sunday morning so that “the professionals” can help them grow spiritually. We will help. But you are the primary! And that is a biblical foundation stone.

In the spring of 2006 I was able to journey through the country of Israel for the first time in my life. I was excited to experience the culture and to walk where Jesus walked. In Jerusalem I encountered many orthodox Jews. They had long beards, black clothes, and often times, symbols on their arms and their foreheads in obedience to a very literal interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. I admired the lengths to which they are willing to go to obey God. Should you also tie a box to your head? No, but you should live in such a way that your kids see your love for God evidenced in your life as clearly as if you had a box bound to the center of your forehead.

One afternoon as we were driving to the Golan Heights to hike to a place called Gamla, I asked my new Jewish friend, Boaz Shaulgie, a question that was burning in my mind. “How does a contemporary Jew live out Deuteronomy 6 in his own home?” Boaz was interested in my question. In typical rabbinic style he began to answer my question with his own question about faith development among Christians in America. I explained the absence of faith training in the context of family in America. This baffled him. It baffled him because it was so radically different in his culture. He asked me about my own home. He knew I was a Christian, not a Jew. But he also knew I accepted all the books of the Old Testament as the true Word of God.

When he finally answered my question he said that everything for followers of the Torah (Jews) is about building the faith in the next generation. He spoke of leading children to obey and honor God with their lives. Every meal, every journey, every celebration, every Sabbath pointed to this. Talk about a culture conducive to faith training!

Ironically, as the conversation ended, I got off the bus and began a heart-pounding hike to the ancient settlement of Gamla. Historically, Gamla is a place where Jewish mothers, fathers and their children hid from Rome. These mothers and fathers of Israel were zealots for the faith. They had an unwavering passion for obedience to God’s Law. Consequently, they pushed back against the Roman Empire as its lifestyle conflicted with God’s Law. Rome insisted on destroying them and crushing the rebellion in Israel.
Interestingly enough, this rebellion was against the self-centered, western thought and culture that Rome brought with them as they conquered Israel. It is the same stuff that is prevalent in our western culture. It did not honor God. They heard it—they heard the wind of the coming culture and weathered the storm of persecution. It became so terrible that they ran and hid at the remote, well-protected site of Gamla. Once surrounded and realizing capture was imminent, they made a choice. A choice viewed as courageous faith by some and idiocy by others.

They climbed to the highest point at Gamla. I stood there. You feel like you have just entered one of the Lord of the Rings movies. It is breathtaking and sobering all at once. Those mommies and daddies, zealots for God, chose to gather their children and jump rather than face the torture and atrocity of Rome. For them it was a giant leap of faith ending in their physical death.

I am not suggesting that we hide out from the culture or commit some form of suicide. I am not even saying we should become like the Jews. I am saying we can learn from them. Why have they persevered for thousands of years when so many people in the world have hated them? God’s hand and the passing of the faith to the next generation have assured their endurance. They embrace Deuteronomy 6 with their whole life. It is tragic that they have not yet embraced Christ.

I sometimes think about parents with godly motivations for their children who simply practice their motives improperly. You know what I mean—the kind of Christian parents who want to give their children everything—every opportunity, every chance at success in life. Hey, I’ve been there and will probably journey there again tomorrow. There is nothing inherently wrong with that. In fact, all of that parental effort genuinely stems from love. But there is a better way. Live the Shema. Make time to live the Shema. Intentionally embrace its truth and find a way to give its principle to your kids. Make this the first priority of your parenting.

Socrates once asked a very pertinent question of his western, Hellenistic listeners. “Fellow citizens, why do you turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all.” Nothing is as important as the faith training of our children who will one day become the next generation of Christian leaders in America.

Just so you don’t think you and I are some how excluded from the Shema because we follow Christ and live under a New
Covenant, I should remind you of Jesus’ own words. One of the Pharisees, an expert in the law, tested Jesus with a question. “Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus replied by quoting the Shema. “The Most Important one, answered Jesus, is this. ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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 second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.’” He quoted Deuteronomy 6:5. You can read all about it in Mark 12:28-32. If it is the greatest for Jesus, it should be the greatest for us.

A second foundation stone in the Scripture is found in Psalm 78:1-8. It reads like this:

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things things from old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers—a stubborn and rebellious generation whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

Did you catch that last sentence? Somewhere along the way, the people of God became stubborn and rebellious. A whole generation was described as people whose hearts were not loyal to God and whose spirits were not faithful to him. This from the same line of people who were commanded to memorize and teach their children to, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” This is the same group of people who jumped at Gamla. What happened? A generation of adults did not pass down the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord to their children. A group of parents neglected to teach their kids how to live according to God. Therefore a generation emerged that was rebellious and self-oriented. I believe history is repeating itself with American Christians. We must do something about it.
Angela, my wife, is my best friend. She tells me what no one else will. God often speaks to me directly through her. She is discerning and wise and she sees right through me. It is scary sometimes. We began our ministry eleven years ago in a small country town outside of Dallas. We were fish out of water. Two suburbanite kids moved to the country to do student ministry. We quickly learned that many of the issues children and students faced related directly or indirectly back to the health of their family. As we began to build a parent ministry, I got frustrated because parents did not want to do the hard work it would take to help their teenagers grow into the healthy Christ-followers God wanted them to be. “It must be the backwoods mentality of this place,” I thought to myself. So we began to beg God for a place of service in the city.

God heard our prayers and we moved to suburban Houston where we spent the next seven years with the same frustration. Parents did not want to do the hard work it takes to help their children become the Christ-followers they were created to be. Did I mention, while on our second tour of duty, we had two daughters? Hailey and Madelyn entered our world and suddenly what once was theory and a source of frustration was now becoming practice and an even bigger source of frustration.

One night, when my daughters were about ages 3 and 1, Angela said something to me that I will never forget. In fact, it changed my life forever. It cut me to the core, but it was more like surgery to remove cancer than a harmful slash. She said this. “You know, you are not willing to do the hard work it will take to help our girls be the Christ-followers God intended them to be, just like the parents you are always griping about. In fact, you’re so busy trying to motivate others that there is no time left for us.”

Ouch! I searched for some imperfection of hers that I could point out as a defense, but none came to me. She was absolutely correct. I had become the parent who did not have time to tell the next generation (Hailey and Madelyn) the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord so they would grow up and become young women who honored God. It was in that moment that I made the commitment to place time and energy on the intentional spiritual development of Hailey and Madelyn just like Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78 commands me to do.

Make no mistake. These two passages of Scripture are foundation stones. They are to be set in the context of your family and never moved. They are to be built upon. They are permanent. They are not about what the church should do. They are
CONVERSATION PIECE:

Before you start the next chapter, it is important that you stop and think and pray. Think about how things are today in your family. What do you do as a parent to practically apply these two foundation stones? How do you impress the things of God on your children? What do you do formally and informally to help your children develop spiritually? Do you need to face the brutal facts? Are you uninvolved in your child’s life spiritually? Is the extent of your involvement bringing them to church? Do you believe Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalm 78:1-8 apply directly to you as a parent?

As you wrestle with these questions, let me tell you a story about learning to throw your rock…
IV

THROW YOUR ROCK!

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead and he lay face down on the ground.
1 Samuel 17:48-49

You and I are in a battle. Not unlike the one David fought in a small valley while everyone watched. The Scripture tells us that a battle was brewing once again between the people of Israel and the Philistines. The Philistines occupied the land close to the Mediterranean. The Israelites lived in the mountains seeking the protection of higher ground and rocky hiding places.

Throughout the course of history these two people groups went toe to toe. They were just so very different. The Philistines were people of great size who worshiped foreign gods and lived as they pleased. Paganism was rampant among the Philistines. The Israelites were followers of Yahweh and obeyed His laws in some years and fell away in others as you read in Psalm 78.

These two groups radically opposed each other to the point of violent warfare. Whenever they would fight, the Philistines would travel east from the sea and the Israelites would journey
west from the mountains. They would almost always meet in the middle. They clashed at an important piece of ground in Israel called the Shephelah.

The Shephelah was and is some of the most fertile ground in the world. It was also a very strategic piece of land because passing through it was the Via Maris. This was the most important trade route of the day. It opened trade from west to east allowing travel from Egypt through Israel to Damascus. This was no ordinary piece of land. It has always been fought over, and according to Scripture, it will be until the end.

The Shephelah is also known as the place where worldviews collide. In those days it was the godly worldview of the Israelites clashing against the pagan worldview of the Philistines. This was where the battle for culture, values, and godliness took place through violent clashes resulting in death.

On one particular occasion, the Israelites and Philistines prepared to do battle again in the Shephelah. The Israelites camped on a hill called Azekah. The Philistines camped on a hill at Socoh called Ephes Dammim. Between the two camps ran a valley called Elah. If you stand on the hill at Azekah and look across the Valley of Elah to Ephes Dammim, you realize the Israelite camp and the Philistine camp were in plain site of each other.

Each day a Philistine champion named Goliath stepped out into the valley and mocked the Israelites as weak and insignificant. That is what opposing worldviews try to do to a biblical faith.

Goliath was over nine-feet tall according to the Scripture. For days he would step out into the valley and audibly challenge the Israelite camp. Goliath’s idea was simple. Let’s make this battle a one-on-one endeavor. Everyday he challenged the people of God to send a champion to fight him. If the Israelite champion killed him, all of the Philistine army would stand down and become servants of the people of Israel. If however, Goliath killed the Israelite champion, the people of Israel would become servants of the Philistines. Goliath issued this daunting challenge every day for forty days.

On hearing Goliath’s words, King Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. Interesting. King Saul, chosen by the elders of Israel because he was the tallest man in Israel (1 Samuel 9:2), was shaking in his boots. I would say he was shaking in his armor, but apparently he did not even have the courage or the faith to put it on. Never choose a king for his height. As a man tower-
ing at a whopping 5’8” on a good day, I like the way the rest of this story goes.

There was a shepherd from Bethlehem named David. He was the youngest son of Jesse. His brothers were at Azekah, dismayed and terrified along with all the other warriors of Israel. David was not there. He was just too young. He was still tending his father’s sheep.

One day Jesse asked his son, David, to deliver some bread and cheese to his brothers on the battle line. As always, David went in obedience. As he reached the battle line to greet his brothers, Goliath stepped out with his usual defiance. Again, when the army of Israel saw Goliath they all ran in great fear.

David asked a very poignant and probably humiliating question as he witnessed his older brothers and the armies of Israel turning and running back up the hill. “Who is the uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” Isn’t it odd that no one except the shepherd boy considered God capable in this situation to defeat the Philistine?

David’s oldest brother, Eliab, burned with anger partly because of his own lack of courage and partly because his little brother was embarrassing him. He interpreted David’s confidence in the Lord as conceit and wickedness. Sometimes people who exercise their faith are viewed by the rest as arrogant or intolerant of the feelings of others. Eliab demanded that David go back to the outskirts of Bethlehem and tend the sheep he had left with some substitute shepherd.

David however was relentless. He was simply wondering why no one would exercise the faith in God they so often boasted. I think it was because everyone from King Saul all the way down to the smallest peon in the Israelite army, believed Goliath was greater than God.

We are no different. We sometimes believe our own cultural obstacles are too big to be overcome. We think we can’t measure up against the prevalent mainstream thought of the day. We can’t stand against the pressure of what other parents allow their kids to do. We can’t be completely Christian in this affluent, competitive, tolerant culture. So as Christian parents, we cower. We give in. We join King Saul and the Israelites and we become dismayed and terrified in the battle for our kids and our culture until it is too late.

Not so with David the shepherd boy. He must have made

Sometimes people who exercise their faith are viewed by the rest as arrogant or intolerant of the feelings of others.
quite a fuss. David gained an audience with the King and convinced him to let him fight. Not bad for a shepherd too young to go to war. Saul put his best armor on David, but it was too big. It was of no use. It was cumbersome and a hindrance. Instead David went to a small creek and chose five smooth stones and, putting them in his shepherd's bag, he took his staff and his sling and approached Goliath. Get that! He did not wait on the giant, he pursued him.

The Bible tells us that when Goliath realized David was only a boy, he was angry and insulted. Goliath was so mad that he cursed by his gods. So here in the Shephelah, we have a show down. A giant who is cursing by his gods and a shepherd boy armed with a staff and a sling who is depending on his God. Quite a drama.

Goliath announced his plans were to give David's flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. Not pleasant coming from a well-armed man towering over nine-feet tall. In Goliath's view, David was just a boy with sticks and stones. In God's view, David was a King.

Let's check David's motive here. Was he in this battle for the free publicity? Was he doing it for some kind of material reward? Was he doing it for the personal glory? Was this a crafty political move by a very smart shepherd who originally came to bring his brothers lunch? No way! This was just a boy viewing his God as capable and acting in faith. Here is how the Scripture describes it. David said…

“This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.” 1 Samuel 17:46

What's the motive? So the whole world would learn, in the place where worldviews collide, that there is a God! So he threw his rock and he killed Goliath. And the dead bodies of the Philistine army were scattered along the road from Gath (Goliath’s hometown) to Ekron. And on that day, the whole world learned there is a God. And David was on his way to becoming a man after God’s own heart and the King of Israel.

When we view God as capable, we can act on our faith in the midst of terrible odds. We are in a battle. The battle is a fight to raise Christ-following children in a culture that values Christianity less and less with every passing moment. I must admit, sometimes I become dismayed and terrified. I think things like,”there is no way
I can raise daughters who are sexually moral before and after marriage in this culture.” Or, “they will never view Christ as the only way once they begin to think for themselves, because the whole rest of the world is telling them to be tolerant.” Weak, cowardly, and faithless! What kind of Christian parent is that? If I live like that, my daughters have no stone to anchor themselves to in this violent cultural wind.

I choose not to give in! We serve a God bigger than the pressure of the culture. We serve a God who promises that our children will follow Him if we train them up in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6). What is this American culture? Who are these Godless people who defy the people of the Living God? We serve the same God that David did. That gives me all the confidence I need.

When it comes to parenting our kids, Angela and I choose to throw our rock. I will intentionally help them embrace a biblical worldview by teaching it and modeling it for them. I will make this one of the top priorities of my life! I will make time for it. I will pursue the culture by instilling the truth of God’s Word into my kids. When they are young, my wife and I will make decisions that are counter-culture for the good of our kids. We will not cower to the pressure of other kids and their parents insisting that we should conform to the culture of the American suburb. In that way we will throw our rock. We will stand against the wind in the place where worldviews collide, and our girls will have two standing stones in their lives. They will find shelter there when they are young, anchors when they become teenagers, and foundation stones when they are adults no matter what circumstances are present as they grow—no matter what giant shows up! We have made this choice. The world will know there is a God starting with my kids!

What about you? It can be a scary proposition to cross the battle line into the Shephelah. How will you parent your children who live and breathe in the place where worldviews collide? How will you help them become the Christ-followers God intends for them to be? Here is my suggestion. Throw your rock! Throw your rock!

You know, David threw the rock at Goliath he had been practicing with for some time. He had already killed lions with a sling and a stone defending his sheep. When it came time for battle he used the weapons he had practiced with his entire life. He armed himself with his staff, a sling, and some ordinary stones.
Our battle is a little different. The book of Ephesians tells us that our battle is not against flesh and blood like Goliath. Instead, our battle is against “the rulers and authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12) Therefore, we are given some spiritual weapons with which to do battle. These weapons are listed in Ephesians 6:14-17. The only offensive weapon in the set is the sword of the spirit, which is the very Word of God.

Practice with the Word of God. Read it, study it, memorize it, pray it, live it. It is your sword. It is your rock. Invest it into your children like you are commanded in Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78. Expect the Word of God to be capable in every stage and circumstance of life. In that way, throw your rock. Practice throwing it every day and one day, when Goliath shows up, you will confidently know how to throw your rock…and so will your children.

In some way, I pray that the Holy Spirit has convinced and convicted you. I hope He has convinced you to become the primary faith trainer in the lives of your children. I hope He has convicted you if you are not. I hope He has convinced you to throw your rock as a Christian parent. I hope He has convinced you that He is more than capable to handle the spiritual development of your kids. He is simply asking you and me to be faithful like that shepherd boy who defied the odds. (But not really, God ensured his victory all along.)

I hope you’re thinking to yourself at this moment, “I want to throw my rock but I don’t know how.” I am glad you asked. The rest of this book is dedicated to leading you on a journey of becoming the primary faith trainer in the lives of your kids. You are not alone. There is a clear path on which to walk, milestones to celebrate, a community of believers who will mentor, support, and resource you, and a God who still rules the Shephelah—and suburban Houston for that matter.

If you are ready to throw your rock…read on! The wind is blowing but you can stand as a stone, immovable in the storm.

**CONVERSATION PIECE:**

What giants walk the “Shephelah” of your home and community? What scares you as you consider leading your kids spiritually? At what do you need to throw your rock?
It would be wise for us to train our children in the faith. In fact, Solomon, the son of David, quite possibly the wisest man who ever lived, tells us so in Proverbs 22:6. We have a problem with this verse though. You see, you and I know of situations where the parents did everything right, and when the child got older, they chose everything wrong. The child who became a man rebelled and lived for himself, bringing great personal calamity and great pain to his parents. Maybe you have experienced this. Maybe you know someone who has. In any case, even though we don’t admit it, we don’t fully trust this Scripture. We might even think it is a lie, if we are honest.

The truth is, we (pastors and teachers) have made an interpretation error for years as we have taught this verse. I have heard many pastors and teachers communicate this verse as a promise. This is where a solid understanding of the text is important. You see, Proverbs is wisdom literature. It is not promissory in nature. It is not a prophetic work. Instead it is a collection of wisdom principles. Understanding the genre helps us understand that Solomon
is conveying a general principle of wisdom. It is wise for us to train our kids in the way they should go. In the end they will have a plumb line in their life that will define them. Not a promise, but a wise principle. Not a prophetic utterance, but a general rule of thumb. Think I’m a heretic? Ask any good professor of biblical hermeneutics in the country, and they will tell you the same thing. For me, it explains the discrepancy between my experience and the wisdom of this verse. It allows me to overcome the subconscious excuse that says, “Look at their kids. It did not work for them.” It allows me to get on with the task at hand: training my children; trusting that it is wise for me to do so; knowing there will be good days and bad. But in the end wisdom says, my girls will walk in the way they should.

So how do we do that? How do we train our kids in the way they should go? How do we, as parents, invest the truth of God into their life so they love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength? How do we train them to practice their faith by loving their neighbor as they love themselves? Good questions.

**Step 1: Establish your bema stone.** What? What kind of crazy advice is that? Let me explain. In the time of Christ, the people of God worshiped in Synagogues. Synagogues were places of worship, spiritual instruction, and formal education. If you were to enter an ancient synagogue you would find a stone in the floor called a bema. From the bema, the Torah was read so the people could hear the Word of God, celebrate it, and adjust their lives to it. In our church today we call it a pulpit. It’s the place from which the Word of God is read and taught so that you can hear it, celebrate it, and adjust your life to it.

Lots of people have bema stones of sorts. Oprah has one. She mounts that stone at 4:00 p.m. every afternoon and influences the families of America. She preaches a gospel of universalism and humanism. People love it. Rosie has one. In fact she has just been given a brand new bema—a spot on The View. She will weigh in with Barbara Walters, and no doubt preach for the homosexual movement in America every morning at 10:00 a.m. And people will love it. Larry Flint and Hugh Hefner have bema stones from which they preach a gospel of degradation. They influence boys and men in their view of women, sex, and love. In fact, their pulpits sell more books than any other pulpit in America. As a dad of daughters, I pray that your boys avoid this bema stone in our culture. Every public school teacher and university professor in America has a
bema stone. From their place of authority they will preach an existential, humanistic gospel of tolerance...except toward Christianity. Would it not make sense for you also to have a bema stone in your child’s life: A pulpit of sorts from which to offer the truth of God so they can celebrate it and adjust their lives to it? We better have one, because everyone else does!

**Family Devotion**

The bema stone of Christian parenting is the family devotion. It is the place of permanence in your home where the family comes together to hear the truth, celebrate it, and adjust life to it. It’s not a real stone. I don’t have some rock in my house from which I stand and preach the Word of God while my wife makes our 6-year old and our 4-year old sit still. Believe me, I have tried it that way and it does not work.

It is however, a set-aside time each week to focus on a biblical truth in an age-appropriate, relational way. It happens in my living room on Tuesday nights. It lasts all of about 20 minutes. Remember, my kids are 6 and 4. It is intentional. It is our bema stone in their life. It will happen every week until they leave our home. It might not always be on Tuesday. We may have to adjust our schedule as they get older, but it will happen every week. Right now we are teaching them foundational truths. Things like the Ten Commandments and the Shema. When they are older, Angela and I will lead them to think about the hard questions the world asks, and teach them to contend for the faith. It will all happen, at least formally, in our family devotion. I expect our family devotion may be the place our kids experience salvation. Maybe not, but at least they have a place at home where they hear truth, celebrate it, and learn to adjust their lives to it.

So here is what it looks like at the Haynes house. Family devotion begins when you hear the music blaring. We let Hailey and Madelyn choose their favorite Christian CD to announce the beginning of our devotion. When you hear the music you know to drop what you are doing and hurry to the family room because the celebration has begun. I’ll let you in on a secret. This is the rowdiest time of the week at my house. We dance. We swing kids around, we sing, we do motions to the songs, and invariably I end up too out of breath to lead the devotion. I usually ask one of my children to open us in prayer, partly because I want them to learn to pray and partly because I need time to catch my breath.
This week I asked my kids to draw pictures of what God is like. It was interesting, and probably a test of our effectiveness, to see what they drew. Madelyn, our 4-year old, drew her best version of a lamb. I was impressed. I am glad she knows that God is like a lamb who came to take away the sins of the world. Hailey, our 6-year old, drew a shepherd complete with a staff and authentic head gear. She also drew a lion. She said that was because God is the strongest King. A lion, a lamb, and a shepherd. They have learned from the truth that flows from the bema stone in our living room.

Those pictures were perfect, but that night Angela and I wanted them to learn that God is good. We tore a piece of wax paper for every member of the family and put one drop of honey in the center of it. Then I said, “Do exactly what I do.” So, I took my little finger; held it in the air and waited for everyone to do the same. Then I dipped my little finger in my drop of honey and stuck it in my mouth. Everyone did the same. I said, “What does it taste like?” Hailey said “sweet and tingly” as she licked every bit of honey off the wax paper. Madelyn said “Goooooooood” and asked for more. We read Psalm 34:8, “Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.” And that was the message from our bema stone that night. The Lord is good. Elementary? Yes. But necessary in a world that teaches the God of Christianity is exclusive and inherently bad. We prayed and got ready for bed. All of that lasted maybe 20-30 minutes.

We started this when they were very young, so now it is just a way of life at our house. You may have the blessing of thinking and planning for this while your children are still very young. I hope so, because it will make the concept easier when they are older. If you have teenagers in your home and you have never done this in your life, you are in for a struggle initially. You still need to set up your bema—your family devotion as a place of permanence. Of course, family devotions for teenagers are going to look quite different from the one I just described. In a way, I am looking forward to those days at my house. I look forward to teaching my kids about the biblical roles of men and women, about biblical sexuality, about contending for the faith and separating truth from lies. I look forward to talking about living the Great Commission in our family devotion. I look forward to practicing the truth they learn in our home by leading them to be missional in life even as Christ was during his life on earth. I look forward to attending a church that resources me and equips me to lead age-appropriate family devotions. It won’t be perfect always. I know, I know. There will be attitude. There will be times they do not want to do family devotion.
There will be times they challenge the whole process. There will be times we fight about it. It will be hard. Of course it will. So throw your rock! As parents, we are responsible to train our children in the faith. That responsibility is not contingent on the choices, attitudes, or opinions of our children.

**As You Walk Along the Road…**

Certainly family devotions are not the end all for faith training. They are the beginning point. Family devotions are a launching pad for informal training. Informal training is the art of using truth learned at church or in family devotions as it practically applies in the every day circumstances of life. Informal training includes seizing teachable moments and capitalizing on relationship and conversation. Sometimes these moments are created, but mostly they are caught as life goes by.

Recently our family finished a series of devotions on the Ten commandments. In reality it took about 20 weeks to get through all ten of the commandments. Angela and I particularly enjoyed number five, “Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land God is giving you.” Our children are right in the stage of life where they are learning the basics of honoring their father and mother. Each time they were disobedient or spoke questionably to Angela or me we would take the opportunity to remind them of what they learned in family devotions about how to treat mom and dad. There were some great teachable moments.

On one occasion, Madelyn was screaming in her high pitched, 4-year old voice just for fun. The kind of squeal that could shatter windows and that makes dogs howl. I asked her to stop screaming. It was too late to be so loud. She did it again. I said, “Holy Cow! Stop that shrieking!” With that Madelyn reminded me of our family devotion on commandment number three, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.” Remember Daddy, we can’t say “Holy…” anything. Holy is a word for God only. Teachable moments work both ways.

The beauty of family devotion is that it gives you a solid platform from which to identify teachable moments and relay truth. You will be amazed at how many moments in life throughout the week will pertain to the truth discussed in family devotion.

Two nights ago Angela and I saw the movie *The Da Vinci Code* based on Dan Brown’s best seller. If you have been paying atten-
It would be excellent if their first encounter with Gnosticism and humanism, and all the other -isms took place in their living room instead of in some class of 100 with a pretentious professor claiming to know truth because he has a Ph.D. to the cultural buzz this book has created, you know that it is capturing the interest of many. It is a constant conversation point in every arena of life at the moment. There are some huge problems with the book, and consequently, the movie as they pertain to Christianity. As we were watching the movie I did my best to identify as many blatant contradictions of Scripture as I possibly could. I listened for Gnostic arguments and humanistic philosophies. Boy, this movie was full of them. As I watched, I wondered, how many of the students attending my church would be able to identify the blatant biblical contradictions, historical inaccuracies, and Gnostic philosophies. Why does it matter? Because on the university level, they will be bombarded with these philosophies and forced to deal with them in light of their Christianity.

What a great teachable moment for parents of teenagers! As your children become teenagers, they need to understand the biblical text and learn to contend for the faith. This is a great opportunity for parents to discuss in their family devotions, the relevant 21st century concepts of Gnosticism, secular humanism, and above all else, truth distortion. So, embrace the cultural buzz. Take them to the movie, identify the problems, and contend for the faith in your own living room. That is a very safe place for them to deal with the philosophies of the world. It would be excellent if their first encounter with Gnosticism and humanism, and all the other -isms took place in their living room instead of in some class of 100 with a pretentious professor claiming to know truth because he has a Ph.D. But that's just me. You decide.

**Overcoming Common Stumbling Blocks**

Believe me. I understand what is going on in your head right now because I have had these same thoughts. This is all great in theory, but how will this play out in my living room. You might be thinking, “It’s easy for you to come up with ideas and teach them in a relevant way. After all, you went to seminary.” Let me say this: Seminary in no way prepares you for training your kids spiritually. It really does not even equip you to pastor a church. So, whether you are teacher, business person, engineer, or pastor, we are all basically on a level playing field.

Let me identify several common stumbling blocks that we are all liable to trip over if we are not careful. The enemy does not want you to train your children spiritually. He will put these stumbling blocks in your path.
1. **We just don’t have enough time to prepare and consistently have a family devotion.**

The suburban family is a busy family. I don’t have to tell you. I don’t even have to give you any statistics to prove it. You believe me because you are living it. We want to be successful and we want our kids to have the best chance at success possible. To that end, often we spend every evening playing cabbie all over Houston so that our kids can have the opportunity to be the best. Add that on top of living in a very successful and very competitive school district, and life begins to fly by or maybe even spin out of control. A measure of this is good. It is why we moved here. But, life out of balance is a bad thing. If you do not have time to spend 30 minutes a week having a family devotion, life is out of balance. It may be time to slow down and prioritize. Remember, we have a biblical mandate to train our children. We must make time to do it. This may involve a hard decision or two.

Last year Angela and I began to feel the early tremors of suburban life in fast forward. Already we were feeling like the battle for family time was raging. As soon as Hailey started school, the race began. Opportunities for gymnastics, dance, cooking classes, cheerleading clinics, a plethora of birthday parties, plus all of our church responsibilities left us with some decisions to make. We basically decided to balance life so that we had enough time at home each week to play with our kids, eat dinner together, and have a consistent devotion. We chose to limit extracurricular activities, to guard our family devotion time, to make the dinner hour sacred, and to not attempt to do everything that is offered for our kids at church. It also means Angela and I had to learn to say no to some really good opportunities for us as individuals. At first these decisions did not seem radical. As we have lived with them, we have faced scrutiny and questions. These kinds of decisions are countercultural in suburban Houston. We still do many activities, but we certainly set boundaries to keep us from missing out on the best for all of the good. It is a matter of priority. Don’t trip on the stumbling block of busyness (Zephaniah 1:7a).

2. **I am not equipped or prepared to lead a family devotion for my family.**

Most of us feel this way when we jump into leading family devotions. At Kingsland we offer a two-hour seminar called *How to Lead a Family Devotion*. The course will equip you and prepare you
to lead age-appropriate devotions for your family with a relatively small amount of preparation. You can take the seminar in the context of our larger Parent Summit which occurs twice a year on a Saturday. We also offer the seminar on Wednesday evenings through the LifeBuilders ministry, and on our website, www.kingsland.org under “Legacy Milestones.” Or select “Family Devotions” to read more about leading a family devotion, and what age-appropriate resources are available to you.

3 I do not know what resources to use for my family devotions.

There are dozens of good resources out there to help you lead family devotions. At the end of this book, you will find a list of great resources to help you lead excellent family devotions that are age-appropriate for your kids. I have two favorite resources. The first is called the Family Night Tool Chest developed by the people at Focus on the Family. This system is excellent for training preschoolers through young adolescents. It can be purchased online at www.heritagebuilders.com or through Focus on the Family. A second resource to consider is The Baptist Catechism by John Piper. This is a collection of systematic questions designed to help your child learn and apply all of the major doctrines of the Bible. If you have a family devotion once a week, this provides two years of devotions for you. It is an excellent foundational tool for children from elementary age to high school. The Kingsland Student Ministry also produces a weekly family devotion based on the Bible Study from the previous Sunday. Visit the web at www.kingsland.org. Click on “Legacy Milestones,” and then “Resources.”

4 I do not know how to answer the difficult questions that my teenagers might ask.

This is a common fear. However, this is not a reason to avoid training your kids in the faith. At Kingsland we host Adult Bible Fellowships on Sunday morning designed to equip you with biblical truth for life. There are three tracks of Bible Study from which you can choose. One of those tracks is an integrated track using the curriculum Bible Study for Life produced by Lifeway Christian Resources. The word “integrated” indicates the adult Bible study and the student Bible study series are synchronized so that parents
and students are studying the same biblical topics every Sunday morning. Certainly age-appropriate illustrations and applications are used. However, adults should learn the answers to the difficult questions their students are asking before they ever get to family devotion. Within this track, family devotion ideas are offered so that you can lead a devotion based on what you and your student have already learned on Sunday morning. The Kingsland Student Ministry team produces a weekly family devotion based on the topic studied by students and parents during the previous Sunday’s Adult Bible Fellowship and Student Bible Fellowship. This empowers you to anticipate the difficult questions and equips you to answer them.

My kids are high school students and starting this now will be too difficult.

It will be difficult, but not impossible. You have heard the phrase “better late than never.” I think it applies here. Slow your high school students down enough to spend time together talking about God’s Word as it relates to life. Just make sure you relate it to their life. Get into their world. Study their culture. Find out what happens in the classroom, who their friends are, what their internet patterns are, and what their spiritual and emotional needs are. Use all of that information to create practical devotions that are useful to your student. Use the devotions created by the Student Ministry staff. They spend hours studying the student culture and even longer preparing to help parents lead family devotions. Find the KSM (Kingsland Student Ministry) resources at www.kingsland.org/legacymilestones/resources. They might gripe, they might complain, but they will thank you later.

CONVERSATION PIECE:

Before you move on to the next chapter, determine when your family devotion will take place each week. Sit with the family and explain the importance. Choose a time that is agreeable to everyone’s schedule. Set it in stone on the family calendar and stick to it.
VI

Walk the Path of Legacy Milestones

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”
Luke 2:52

Even Jesus grew through a process. Luke 2:52 indicates that He grew over time in favor with God and men. As time passed Jesus grew into His role as Savior of the World. He became the greatest teacher, leader and man that ever lived; partly because He was fully God, and partly because He grew spiritually, in a process, overtime.

I remember lying on the floor on a makeshift mattress in the hospital the night after my first daughter was born. It has been nearly 7 years since that night, but I remember it vividly. I was freezing in the hospital room. It was one of those hot, muggy nights in Clear Lake, Texas. The kind of night that causes the air-conditioner to fog up the windows in any building because it is so much cooler inside than it is outside.

Angela was out. For the first time in nine months she ate a meal that she could hold down and she was sleeping hard. I guess
a completely drug-free child birth takes it out of you. As she slept, I heard Hailey stirring from inside her hospital crib in our room. I remember thinking, “How do I help this little baby girl become the woman God has designed her to be?” That was the first time the spiritual responsibility of parenthood crossed my mind.

I remember realizing, in my half-comatose state, that I had no idea what to do. My solution at that moment was to head down the hall to the stash of nourishment in the refreshment area. Luckily they had sugar-free pudding cups, and I drowned my new daddy jitters in chocolate swirl. It sufficed for the moment.

Several months later I found myself standing with several other brand new parents. We were in front of the entire church making an incredible vow. I, whose solution to parenting was pudding, was promising to lead my child into a relationship with Christ and a way of life that would honor God. The problem was, I still had no idea what to do.

I began a quest, pudding in hand, to find a user-friendly pathway to walk with my daughters in order to lead them spiritually. I knew God charged me to be the primary developer of my own daughter’s faith. I just did not know how to be that catalyst for her. I was terribly unequipped.

I needed a simple, step-by-step approach to helping my child grow spiritually. I needed user friendly resources and practical tools. I was just like that person who has a job that requires the use of computers but has never used a computer before. The answer there is Computers for Dummies. I needed simple, practical assistance and a pathway of tangible steps that would allow me to grow in my ability to train my daughters in the faith. I needed a “Faith Training for Dummies” course.

In my search for practical help, I discovered a book called Spiritual Milestones by Jim and Janet Weidmann and J. Otis and Gail Ledbetter. This book was the answer to my prayers as a father. In a clear and concise manner, the Weidmanns and the Ledbetters laid out a proven plan for embracing natural spiritual milestones in a child’s life. The plan includes having devotions along the way that lead to the next milestone. It involves celebrating in a memorable way, each milestone that is surpassed. It makes sense. It is simple and user friendly. (You should go buy the book right now!)

The book identifies six milestones that build a pathway of spiritual legacy over time. As a father interested in training my kids, this was a gold mine. As a pastor commissioned to lead others to
become primary faith trainers in the lives of their children, this provoked much thought.

What if Kingsland embraced these 6 milestones and developed a spiritual formation process for children and students around those milestones? What if Kingsland expected parents to walk this path with their kids? What if Kingsland equipped parents with tools, resources, seminars, and events that assisted them in leading their children along the path of Legacy Milestones? Then maybe, just maybe, we could avoid the whole “pudding” parenting strategy. Then maybe we could not only tell parents to be primary faith trainers for their children, we could also show them how to do that very thing.

That is exactly what we are doing. We have decided to acknowledge God’s plan to develop fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ by using the family and the church in partnership. It was a beautiful plan from the beginning. I am not sure why churches ever moved away from it.

The Path of Legacy Milestones

I use the word “legacy” for a reason. Our ability as parents to lead our children spiritually along this path of milestones really will affect the spiritual legacy we hurl into the generations. The dictionary defines legacy as “something handed down from an ancestor or a predecessor or from the past.” This path is a practical and intentional way to hand down your faith in God to the next generation of Christ-followers in your family.

This user-friendly path is designed to be traveled one small step at a time. Looking at the entire path may be a little overwhelming, but understand, it takes a solid 18 years to walk the path in its entirety. Understanding the total journey is important. Being patient, flexible, and determined is a requirement.

Each milestone on the path is designed to celebrate a spiritual landmark in the life of a child. Parents must equip and lead their children to the next milestone. Therefore, parents need to learn how to guide their children along this path.

Practically, parents will use consistent family devotions to lead their children to the next milestone along the path. Between each milestone exists Core Competencies that must be learned and embraced by the child in order to move along the pathway. Parents will teach these core competencies to their children in a weekly
family devotion and by using teachable moments. When all has been taught and a child experiences a milestone, parents will celebrate this development in a memorable way.

Kingsland will teach parents how to lead age-appropriate family devotions that progress children in their faith development to the next milestone. Kingsland will partner with parents along the path by teaching the biblical core competencies to children and students using Sunday morning Bible Study and events designed to highlight these biblical core competencies. Kingsland will also host regular Parent Summits offering practical training around the milestone that is next in your child’s journey. We will provide up-to-date resources for each milestone so that you can easily inform yourself and prepare family devotions. Maybe most importantly, Kingsland will teach the Word to adults with excellence so that parents can pass a biblical understanding to the next generation.

We will work together to walk this path, but you are the primary faith trainer. We will lock arms with you, but you take the lead. God gave your children to you, including all the responsibility of leading them spiritually along the pathway. So what are the actual milestones?

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**MILESTONE I**

**PARENT & BABY DEDICATION**

*Staff Contact:* Barbara Brennan, Minister to Preschool

*Campus Event:* Parent & Baby Dedication in Worship

*Seminar:* First Steps (two-hour required seminar)

*Core Competency:* Parent as primary faith trainer

The first step on the legacy pathway is Parent & Baby Dedication. This is a seminar and a ceremony designed for parents who have children between birth and one year of age. Parents, through a two-hour required seminar, learn how to become the primary faith trainers for their children and accept the long-term responsibility.
MILESTONE II  ____________

SALVATION & BAPTISM

Staff Contact:  Vicki Hoyle, Minister to Children
Campus Event:  Baptism
Family Celebration:  Spiritual birthday party
Seminar:  How to Lead Your Child to Christ
Core Competencies:  Jesus, truth, sin, salvation, baptism

An important spiritual milestone in the life of every person is salvation and baptism. For the child growing up in a Christian home and in the context of a local church, a decision point is often reached between the ages of 7 and 11. This decision may also occur later in life. Between milestone I and milestone II, parents lead their children toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation. Parents can attend a seminar on campus that teaches the biblical truth about salvation and baptism. Parents are equipped and given resources at this seminar to lead family devotions at home which teach age-appropriate truths regarding salvation and baptism. Parents are also taught to celebrate this milestone by throwing a party at home commemorating the child’s spiritual birthday. Special guests include family, friends, and spiritual influences in the child’s life.

MILESTONE III  ____________

PREPARING FOR ADOLESCENCE

Staff Contact:  Vicki Hoyle, Minister to Children
Staff Contact:  Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor
Campus Event:  4th and 5th Grade Retreat
Family Celebration:  Road trip
Seminar:  Preparing for Adolescence: Parent Edition
Core Competencies:  Identity, spiritual growth, disciplines
It is so important to help children prepare spiritually, emotionally, and physically for adolescence. Between the ages of 10 and 12, parents should intentionally prepare their children for the teen years as a Christ-follower. In order to prepare to lead teens through this process, parents should attend a seminar at Kingsland called *Preparing for Adolescence: Parent Edition*. This seminar teaches parents the basics about helping changing kids navigate relevant issues such as physical changes, identity in Christ, and sex. In this seminar, parents will also learn how to use James Dobson’s CD series called *Preparing for Adolescence* in the course of a road trip designed for just you and your maturing child. Family Devotion resources are provided at the seminar to assist you in leading devotions that help your older child prepare for adolescence. Kingsland partners with parents by introducing the same issues from a biblical perspective as older elementary students attend church ministries designed for their growing faith and changing life. Specifically, the 4th and 5th Grade Retreat is purposed to address these issues with your child.

**MILESTONE IV**

**COMMITMENT TO PURITY**

**Staff Contact:** Patrick McCrory, *Student Pastor*

**Campus Event:** True Love Waits Commitment Ceremony

**Family Celebration:** Purity Ring Presentation

**Seminar:** Purity for Life

**Core Competencies:** Biblical purity, healthy friendships, identity in Christ, biblical sex

In our culture we must address sex from a biblical perspective early on in a student’s spiritual development. It is imperative that students learn the principles of biblical manhood and womanhood, relationships, and sex primarily from their parents. During the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade year, parents are encouraged to focus on these issues in family devotions. The Kingsland Student Ministry partners with parents by providing biblical and practical resources for those family devotions in the course of our parent seminar. The student ministry also partners with parents by teaching the importance of accountability, healthy friendships, and biblical standards of purity through Bible study and other ministry events. During the 8th
grade year, parents and students are encouraged to participate together in a True Love Waits weekend on our campus. Parents are encouraged to present their student with a purity ring as a symbol of the purity commitment.

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**MILESTONE V**

**RITE OF PASSAGE**

**Staff Contact:** Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor  
**Campus Event:** Rite of Passage Ceremony  
**Seminar:** Preparing My Student for Adulthood  
**Core Competencies:** Roles of men/women, spiritual gifts/service, catechism

The passing of a child into biblical adulthood is a significant process. Scripturally we are required to equip our children to become men and women of God. Age 16 is a significant time of freedom in our culture. Rite of passage is not about keys to the car; instead it is about becoming a man or a woman of God and never reverting back to childhood. Our seminar will equip you to lead your freshmen and sophomore students toward this significant milestone occurring around their 16th birthday. Issues such as spiritual gifts, the roles of men and women, spiritual disciplines, responsibility in the Kingdom, dealing with failure, and other biblical issues will be explored both in your family devotion and on campus at Kingsland. We teach parents to host a very special Rite of Passage Ceremony after the discipleship process leading to this milestone has been completed and the student enters her or his 16th year.
Between the ages of 16 and 18, parents must help their students develop practical and spiritual skills to leave home. During this phase, our seminar teaches parents to prepare their children for the world outside the nest. This can be a healthy time in the family journey if parents continue to keep the lines of communication open with their students. Issues such as basic apologetics, courtship and marriage, determining the will of God, life skills necessary for surviving away from home, and other biblical issues will be explored in family devotions and through the student ministry at Kingsland. As this final milestone is completed, we teach parents to write a spiritual blessing to be presented at the Senior Summit just before graduation. These important years of discipleship are our last chance to shape the faith of our children before they leave home. Using family devotions and teachable moments well in this stage is important. This is the final milestone in a journey that has taken 18 years to complete. It’s not the end of life as a parent. Instead, it is the beginning of a new journey, being the parent of an adult. Well done, good and faithful servant.

CONVERSATION PIECE:

It is now time to have a family talk. Take some time to determine where your kids are on the pathway of Legacy Milestones. Most likely, you are not starting at the very beginning. Just jump on the path where you are. What ages are your children and what are the corresponding milestones? What comes next for each of them? What seminars do you need to take in order to lead them toward the next milestone? Determine when the next Parent Summit is at Kingsland and take the seminars you need. Commit to the journey for the long haul. Contact the staff person related to your milestones for answers, resources, and suggestions. Go to www.kingsland.org and click on Legacy Milestones for more information.
VII

Charting Your Course

For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord,
plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you a hope and a future.
Jeremiah 29:11

It is comforting to know that the same God who guided
David’s rock into the forehead of the giant is the same God who
guides you and me as we lead our children down this path of Legacy
Milestones. It is reassuring to claim the truth of Scripture that God
has a plan for the future, and it is full of hope. I believe God wants
the very best for our children and he intends to use us to accom-
plish that plan.

By now you have probably gained a basic understanding of how
we, at Kingsland plan to equip you to lead your kids spiritually. You
have a general understanding of family devotions. You at least
understand there is a pathway of legacy milestones that you can fol-
low one milestone at a time. You know that your church is com-
mited to equipping you for that journey by teaching you the
Scriptures and providing practical seminars and resources to help
you along the way. You have decided to become a standing stone.
You have committed to throw your rock. You hear the wind blow-
ing and you are ready to stand strong. Now it is time to chart the
specific course for your family. Every family is at a unique place along the pathway of Legacy Milestones. Every family is in a unique place spiritually. Only you know where you are. Only from your current location can you chart your course. The following is a helpful checklist to assist you in charting your course.

THE CHECKLIST

In Order of Importance

☐ Determine when the next one-day Parent Summit is at Kingsland. They are offered twice a year. Register online at www.kingsland.org.

☐ Take the 2 Core Courses offered at every Parent Summit.
   1) “Understanding and Practicing Legacy Milestones”
   2) “How to Lead a Family Devotion”

* Core Courses are offered at every Parent Summit or once a semester on Wednesday evenings. Go to www.kingsland.org and click on Legacy Milestones for schedule and availability.

☐ Determine what milestones your children are heading toward in their spiritual development. Read the description and suggested ages associated with each milestone to help you chart your course.

☐ At the next Parent Summit, take the seminars associated with the milestones your children are growing toward. See milestone descriptions in Chapter 6 to identify the proper seminars.

☐ Purchase resources, available at the Legacy Resource Center on Kingsland’s campus, that are recommended for the milestone your child is working toward.

☐ Set aside one night a week and protect it for your family devotion.

☐ Use recommended resources to quickly create family devotions that will lead your family along the pathway of Legacy Milestones.

☐ Celebrate milestones when they are reached, as recommended in the parent seminar associated with each milestone. Feel free to be creative and add your own family twist to the celebrations. Then move forward toward the next milestone.
Legacy
MILESTONES
TRAINING YOUR CHILDREN SPIRITUALLY

MILESTONE I.
PARENT & BABY DEDICATION

MILESTONE II.
SALVATION & BAPTISM

MILESTONE III.
PREPARING FOR ADOLESCENCE

MILESTONE IV.
COMMITMENT TO PURITY

MILESTONE V.
RITE OF PASSAGE

MILESTONE VI.
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
Some Final Thoughts

This is a plan designed to partner the family and the church in the faith development of children and students. Admittedly, it’s not perfect. We will probably change some things along the way. You may find some things really useful and others suitable for the “T” file, if you know what I mean. That’s O.K. Since you are the primary faith trainer, you have the right to adjust, tweak, and customize these ideas to better fit your family. The pathway is not some random idea. It is built on a biblical foundation and makes room for the unique growth points of a child in American culture. It will work if you will be diligent to guide your children along the path to each milestone.

If you have not caught it yet, the Parent Summit hosted twice a year on campus at Kingsland is important. This is the place you will learn, discuss, and prepare for the coming milestones. You will need to attend this summit more than once. The Parent Summit will always offer every seminar necessary to walk the path of Legacy Milestones. If you need information, this is the best place to get it.

The coolest part of this whole thing is this: Your church is locking arms with you as you take the lead with your children. We pray that our investment in you as parents will pay off in the spiritual lives of your children. We pray that God will honor this attempt to give the greater part of discipleship back to parents as we, the church, move into an equipping and supportive role.

We have not forgotten the kids whose parents will never take the time to disciple their own children. We still have a preschool ministry, a children’s ministry, and a student ministry that, in my humble opinion, rock! Kids whose parents never lead a single devotion or celebrate a single milestone, will find discipleship on campus that leads them along the same pathway of milestones. There will be a difference though. Those children and students will miss out on having parents who intentionally helped them develop spiritually. As you know, God’s grace will be sufficient. These children will become the extended family of LifeGroup leaders, Sunday School teachers, and lots of other volunteer staff at Kingsland who are standing stones set in obvious places proclaiming the provision and plan of the Lord. We will not forget those kiddos.

Parents, my honest hope is that God will place a giant burden in your life for the spiritual life of your child. So much so, that you are compelled to do something about it. I hope you are driven to work at it and to learn more about being the best faith trainer to
your child or student possible. I hope that you try and succeed. I hope that when you fail, you get right back up and throw your rock. I hope you never feel alone because of the army of Christ-followers called Kingsland, standing behind you. Most of all, I hope that when your kids get married and have your grandchildren, they faith train their kids well because of your spiritual investment. You are embarking on a monumental journey that will impact the generations. Stand against the wind. Throw your rock. Be blessed as you watch God work in their lives.

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24
RESOURCES CATEGORIZED BY MILESTONE

MILESTONE I
PARENT & BABY DEDICATION

Staff Contact: Barbara Brennan, Minister to Preschool
Campus Event: Parent & Baby Dedication in Worship
   Seminar: First Steps (two-hour required seminar)
Core Competency: Parent as primary faith trainer

Insights and stories encourage fathers to connect with their children.
Ken Canfield is the President and founder of the National Center for Fathering.

Encouragement and practical tips, games, and activities that help nurture your baby’s physical, social, intellectual, and emotional development. Weekly devotions nurture mom as she depends more on God to meet the challenges of parenting.

What we should know about our preschoolers development, their nature, good health, discipline, and more through tough questions from an adolescent! This books addresses issues facing our children and families today.

Encouragement to prevent child-rearing troubles before they happen and keep our sanity as parents.

For those who seriously want to know how the brain and mind develop in the first five years.
Prayer has the most positive impact on our child.

*How to communicate with infants before they can speak; based on American Sign Language.*

*This book addresses going through the motions of being a dad vs. trying to be a better dad. Packed with creative ideas and encouragements for fathering.*

*Encouragement and counsel to help us become intentional about passing on our faith to our children gathered from parents and experts.*

*Common disciplinary problems most parents face and ideas for when you have absolutely no idea what to do!*

**Family Devotions:**

*100 easy devotions for ages seven and under. Includes experiments, puzzles, games, and “let’s pretend.”*

*Devotional teachings for babies through age five!*

*Very simple, well illustrated Bible stories for younger children.*

*Ideas for teaching kids biblical principles in a fun and active way (as a family).*

*Real life stories that discuss the biblical view of choices we make.*

MILESTONE II

SALVATION & BAPTISM

Staff Contact:
Vicki Hoyle, Minister to Children

Campus Event:
Baptism

Family Celebration:
Spiritual birthday party

Seminar:
How to Lead Your Child to Christ

Core Competencies:
Jesus, truth, sin, salvation, baptism

* Contains age-appropriate devotionals or devotional material for children


Equipping parents to provide their children with biblical precepts that will form a biblical worldview so they can think and act like Jesus.


Understanding the unique personality of your child.


Know the secret to making sure your child feels loved.

Dobson, Dr. James. The New Dare to Discipline. Focus on the Family, 1996.


Step-by-step approach for teaching children how to pray; laying a foundation of prayer that will last them for a lifetime.


Begin now to create your own strong, vibrant, enduring family as you learn biblical truths, skills, solutions and principles to apply to your personal situation.

Trent, John, Rick Osborne and Kurt Brunner, eds. Teaching Kids about God: An Age-By-Age Plan for Parents of Children from Birth to Age Twelve. Heritage Builders, 2003. Helps parents steer their child along the path of knowing, loving and living with God; offering age-appropriate milestones.


Freeman, Mary Susan, ed. Little Book Devotions. Brighton Books, 2004. 31 daily devotions in each book focusing on a particular topic, such as forgiveness.

Weidmann, Jim and Janet. Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children’s Spiritual Passages. Colorado Springs: Cook Communications, 2001. Special moments in your child’s life when your family’s biblical values are transferred from one generation to another in a way that leaves a lasting impression.


Bedtime Reading Bundle
Quiet time with God before bed.

Catechism. Bob Jones University Press.
KBC Children’s Office
Learning about God’s truth by question and answer; provides children a strong biblical foundation through knowing what they believe and why they believe it.
MILESTONE III

PREPARING FOR ADOLESCENCE

Staff Contact: Vicki Hoyle, Minister to Children
Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor
Campus Event: 4th and 5th Grade Retreat
Family Celebration: Road trip
Seminar: Preparing for Adolescence: Parent Edition
Core Competencies: Identity, spiritual growth, disciplines

For mothers; raising a godly daughter in an ungodly world.

Why boys are the way they are, how to understand their emotional & physical development, and how to best motivate them into becoming godly men.

How to survive the coming years of change.

Gain the practical understanding & encouragement you need to feel confident in your ability to handle discipline in a positive way; includes adolescence.

A father’s role in guiding his son to authentic manhood.

Motivate your kids to pursue true love and prepare for a successful marriage.

Encouraging girls to become all they’re meant to be; practical advice and biblical insights. (Les & Leslie Parrott)
Infancy – adolescence; building a Christian understanding of sex, abstinence & inoculating your child against destructive moral messages.

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**MILESTONE IV**

**COMMITMENT TO PURITY**

**Staff Contact:** Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor  
**Campus Event:** True Love Waits Commitment Ceremony  
**Family Celebration:** Purity Ring Presentation  
**Seminar:** True Love Waits: Parent Edition  
**Core Competencies:** Biblical purity, healthy friendships, identity in Christ, biblical sex

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**Milestone Resources**


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**Family Devotion Resources**


Bundschuh, Rick. *Surviving Middle School.* Zondervan Publishers, 2005  
*There is no Scripture referenced, but a supplement can be easily added to make this a very relevant resource!*

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Essential Connection Magazine. Lifeway Church Resources.

Life Groups Bible Study. Kingsland Baptist Church Student Ministry.

MILESTONE V
RITE OF PASSAGE

Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor
Campus Event: Rite of Passage Ceremony
Seminar: Preparing My Student for Adulthood
Core Competencies: Roles of men/women, spiritual gifts/service, catechism

Milestone Resources


www.desiringgod.org

Piper, John. What’s the Difference? Desiring God.
www.desiringgod.org


Family Devotion Resources


Essential Connection Magazine. Lifeway Church Resources.
MILESTONE VI
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Student Pastor
Campus Event: Senior Summit
Family Celebration: Written blessing
Seminar: Preparing My Student to Leave Home
Core Competencies: Apologetics, courtship/marriage, God’s will, life skills

Milestone Resources


Towner, Dick and John Tofilon. Good Sense Budget Course. Zondervan.


Family Devotion Resources

Essential Connection Magazine. Lifeway Church Resources.

Life Groups Bible Study. Kingsland Student Ministry.

Other Resources

KINGSLAND AREA MINISTRY TEAM

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Fax  281.492.7515

www.kingsland.org
Main Question: How can I lead others to remember spiritual victories because of God’s work in their lives?

What is a memorial?

One of the definitions Webster’s online dictionary gives is:

Something that keeps remembrance alive

Read Joshua 4:1-24 together with memorial in mind

Focal verse: Joshua 4:24

In the memorial described in this passage of scripture, what memory were the Israelites trying to keep alive?

Creative Element:

Activity:

Brainstorm as a family a time in your lives when you saw God’s mighty hand help you achieve a spiritual victory (beginning Family Devos, God providing something for your family just when you needed it, etc.). Then build a memorial to put in your house somewhere to remember what the Lord has done. You can use stone or some other object. Own this as a family. This can serve as a great reminder for each of you and as a tool to share with others about God’s power and faithfulness.

What do you think is significant about the waters of the Jordan returning to flood stage as the priests touched dry land (v. 17-18)?

This is an incredible picture of God’s faithfulness and power.

What spiritual victories do you have in your own life that God can use to help others?

Prayer: Faithful and powerful God, we choose this day to keep remembrance of you alive in our family. We celebrate that times we have seen spiritual victory because of you. Help each one of us to see how our spiritual victories can be used to encourage, challenge, and lead others. We ask that you would give us opportunities this week to share with others. We also plead with you Lord to keep this memorial alive in our family so that we may remember the great things you have done. By Your grace and mercy, may it impact the coming generations. In Jesus Name, Amen.
APPENDIX G

Resources Categorized by Milestones

**Milestone #1: Parent/Baby Dedication**
Staff Contact: Barbara Brennan, Minister to Preschool
Campus Event: Parent/Baby Dedication in worship
Seminar: *First Steps* (2 hour required seminar)
Core Competency: Parent as Primary Faith Trainer

**365 Things Every New Mom Should Know.** Linda Danis (*Harvest House Publishers*)
Encouragement and practical tips, games, and activities that help nurture your baby’s physical, social, intellectual, and emotional development. Weekly devotions nurture mom as she depends more on God to meet the challenges of parenting.

**What’s Going On In There?.** Lise Eliot, Ph.D. (*Bantam Books*)
For those who seriously want to know how the brain and mind develop in the first five years.

**The Heart of a Father.** Ken Canfield, Ph.D (*Northfield Publishing*)
Insights and stories encourage fathers to connect with their children. Ken Canfield is the President and founder of the National Center for Fathering.

**What KIDS need Most in a Dad.** Tim Hansel (*Baker Book House*)
This book addresses going through the motions of being a Dad vs. how to be a better Dad. Packed with creative ideas and encouragements for fathering.

**Sign with your Baby.** Dr. Joseph Garcia (*Sign2Me*)
How to communicate with infants before they can speak, based on American Sign Language.

**Spiritual Growth of Children.** John Trent, Ph.D., Rick Osborne, Kurt Bruner (*Tyndale House Publishers*)
Encouragement and counsel to help us become intentional about passing on our faith to our children gathered from parents and experts.

**Complete Marriage and Famly Reference Guide.** Dr. James Dobson (*Tyndale House Publishers*)
What should we know about our Preschoolers development, their nature, good health, discipline, and more through tough questions from an adolescent! This books addresses issues facing our children and families today.

**Creative Correction.** Lisa Welchel (*Tyndale House Publishers*)
Common disciplinary problems most parents face and ideas for when you have absolutely no idea what to do!

**Parenting Isn’t For Cowards.** Dr. James Dobson (*Multnomah Publishers*)
Encouragement to prevent child-rearing troubles before they happen and keeping our sanity as parents.

**When Mothers Pray.** Cheri Fuller (*Multnomah Publishers*)
Prayer as the most positive impact on our child.
Family Devotions:

**Bedtime Blessings.** John Trent, Ph.D (Tyndale House Publishers)
100 easy devotions for ages 7 & under. Includes experiments, puzzles, games, and “let’s pretend”

**Little Visits 1-2-3.** Mary Manz Simon (Concordia Publishing)
Devotion teachings for babies through age 5!

**Bible Devotions for Bedtime.** Daniel Partner (Barbour Publishing)
Very simple, well illustrated Bible Stories for younger children.

**Family Nights Tool Chest.** Jim Weidmann & Kurt Bruner
Ideas for teaching kids Biblical principles in a fun and active way as a family.

**Little Visits With God.** Allan Jahsmann & Martin Simon (Concordia Publishing)
Real life stories that discuss Biblical View of choices we make.

**Day by Day Devotions.** Karyn Henley (Tyndale House Publishers)

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**Milestone #2: Salvation & Baptism**
Staff Contact: Vicki Hoyle, Minister to Children
Campus Event: Baptism
Family Celebration: Spiritual Birthday Party
Seminar: How to Lead Your Child to Christ
Core Competencies: Jesus, truth, sin, salvation, baptism

*Contains age appropriate devotionals or devotional material for children

**Now That I’m a Christian**
William E. Young; Convention Press
A book for children who are new Christians to be used at home with guidance and encouragement of a parent or other adult

**Spiritual MILESTONES**
Jim & Janet Weidmann, J.Otis & Gail Ledbetter
Focus on the Family Heritage Builders
Special moments in your child’s life when your family’s biblical values are transferred from one generation to another in a way that leaves a lasting memory.

**Parents’ Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children**
John Trent, Ph.D., Rick Osborne, Kurt Bruner general editors
Focus on the Family; Heritage Builders
Encouragement and counsel to help us become intentional about passing on our faith to our children gathered from parents and experts

**Teaching Kids About God**
John Trent, Ph.D.
Rick Osborne, Kurt Bruner general editors
Focus on the Family; Heritage Builders
Helps parents steer their child along the path of knowing, loving and living with God offering age-appropriate milestones.

**Teaching Your Child How to PRAY**
Rick Osborne
Focus on the Family; Heritage Builders
Step-by-step approach for working with children teaching them how to pray; laying a foundation of prayer that will last them for a lifetime.

**Family Nights Tool Chest**
Jim Weidmann & Martin Simon
Concordia Publishing
*Family devotions for teaching kids biblical principles in fun and active ways.*

**Bedtime Reading Bundle** *
Quiet Time with God before Bed

**Little Book Devotions** *
Brighton Books
*31 daily devotions that focus on a particular topic such as forgiveness.*

**Catechism** *
Bob Jones University Press; KBC children’s office
*Learning about God’s truth by question and answer; provides children a strong Biblical foundation in knowing what they believe and why they believe it.*

**Sons of Virtue** *
By Lance Witt; [www.royalambassadors.org](http://www.royalambassadors.org)
*Turning father’s hearts towards their sons; instilling godly character in boys; on missions lifestyle.*

**11 Reasons Families Succeed**
Richard and Rita Tate; Hensley Publishing
*Begin now to create your own strong, vibrant, enduring family as you learn Biblical truths, skills, solutions and principles to apply to your personal situation.*

**Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions**
George Barna
*Equip parents to provide their children with biblical precepts that will form a Biblical worldview so they can think and act like Jesus.*

**The Five Love Languages of Children**
Gary Chapman, Ph.D.; Ross Campbell, MD
*Know the secret to making sure your child feels loved*

**Different Children, Different Needs**
Dr. Charles F. Boyd with Robert A Rohm, Ph.D.
*Understanding the unique personality of your child*

**The New Strong-Willed Child**
Dr. James Dobson; Focus on the Family

**The New Dare to Discipline**
Dr. James Dobson; Focus on the Family

**Milestone #3: Preparing for Adolescence**
Staff Contact: Vicki Hoyle, Minister to Children
Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Minister to Students
Campus Event: 4th and 5th Grade Retreat
Family Celebration: Road Trip
Seminar: Preparing for Adolescence: Parent Edition
Core Competencies: identity, spiritual growth, disciplines

**Preparing for Adolescence  Family CD Pack**
Dr. James Dobson  Focus on the Family  
*How to survive the coming years of change*

**Your Child  DVD Parenting Seminar**
Dr. James Dobson Home Edition  
12 Sessions in 3 DVD’s  
*Gain practical understanding & encouragement you need to feel confident in your ability to handle discipline in a positive way; includes adolescence.*

**Your Girl**
Vicki Courtney: Broadman & Holman Publishers: *For mothers; Raising a godly daughter in an ungodly world.*

**Growing Strong Daughters**
Lisa Graham McMinn  Baker Books  
*Encouraging girls to become all they’re meant to be; practical advice and Biblical insights (Les & Leslie Parrott)*

**Raising a Modern-Day Knight**
Robert Lewis  Tyndale House; Focus on the Family  
*A father’s role in guiding his son to authentic manhood.*

**Bringing Up Boys**
Parenting Video; 4 DVD’s Parenting Guide  Focus on the Family  
*Why boys are the way they are; how to understand their emotional & physical development and how to best motivate them into becoming godly men.*

**How & When to Tell Your Kids About Sex**
Stanton L. & Brenna B. Jones  Focus on the Family  
*Infancy – adolescence; building a Christian understanding of sex, abstinence & inoculating your child against destructive moral messages.*

**Teaching True Love to a Sex-at-13 Generation**
Eric & Leslie Ludy  Focus on the Family  
*Motivate your kids to peruse true love & prepare for a successful marriage.*

**Milestone #4: Commitment to Purity**
Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Minister to Students  
Campus Event: True Love Waits Commitment Ceremony  
Family Celebration: Purity Ring Presentation  
Seminar: True Love Waits: Parent Edition  
Core Competencies: Biblical purity, health friendships, identity in Christ, Biblical sex

**Milestone Resources**

**Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Mentoring of Teens** - Joe White & Jim Weidmann

**Lead Your Teen to a Lifelong Faith** - Joe White & Jim Weidmann
Your Girl - Raising a Godly Daughter in an Ungodly World - Vicki Courtney

True Love Waits - Home Edition - Patrick McCrory

Going Out without Freaking Out - Tim Baker

Family Devotion Resources

LifeGroups Bible Study - Kingsland Student Ministry

Essential Connection (Periodical Magazine) – LifeWay

Surviving Middle School - Rick Bundschuh (There is no Scripture referenced, but a supplement can be easily added to make this a very relevant resource!)

The One Year Mini for Students - Gilbert Beers, Ron Beers

Milestone #5: Rite of Passage
Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory
Family Celebration: Rite of Passage Ceremony
Seminar: Preparing My Student for Adulthood
Core Competencies: Roles of men/women, spiritual gifts/service, catechism

Milestone Resources

Raising a Modern Day Knight - Robert Lewis

Growing Stong Daughters – McMinn

Celebration of Discipline – Foster

A Baptist Catechism - Piper

What's the Difference – Piper

Spiritual Milestones (Rites of Passage) Section - Weidmann

Family Devotion Resources

LifeGroups Bible Study - Kingsland Student Ministry

Enjoy the Silence - Maggie and Duffy Robbins

Group Magazine (Periodical Magazine) - Talk Starters: Ministries and Media

Essential Connection (Periodical Magazine) – LifeWay

Can You Handle the Truth? 50 In-Your-Face Devotions for Teens - Phil Chalmers

A Baptist Catechism - Piper

Milestone #6: High School Graduation
Staff Contact: Patrick McCrory, Minister to Students
Campus Event: Senior Summit  
Family Celebration: The Written Blessing  
Seminar: Preparing My Student to Leave Home  
Core Competencies: Apologetics, Courtship/Marriage, God’s will, lifeskills

Milestone Resources

The Ever Loving Truth - Voddie Baucham
A Father's Guide to Blessing His Children - David Michael
Case for Creator - Lee Stroebel
The Blessing - John Trent & Gary Smalley
How to Stay Christian in College - J. Budziszewski
Good Sense Money Management

Family Devotion Resources

LifeGroups Bible Study - Kingsland Student Ministry
Essential Connection (Periodical Magazine) – LifeWay
The Ever Loving Truth Workbook - Voddie Baucham
The Heart of Worship Devotional - Matt Redman

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