



LEGACY

MILESTONES

Preparing for Adolescence

Milestone 3

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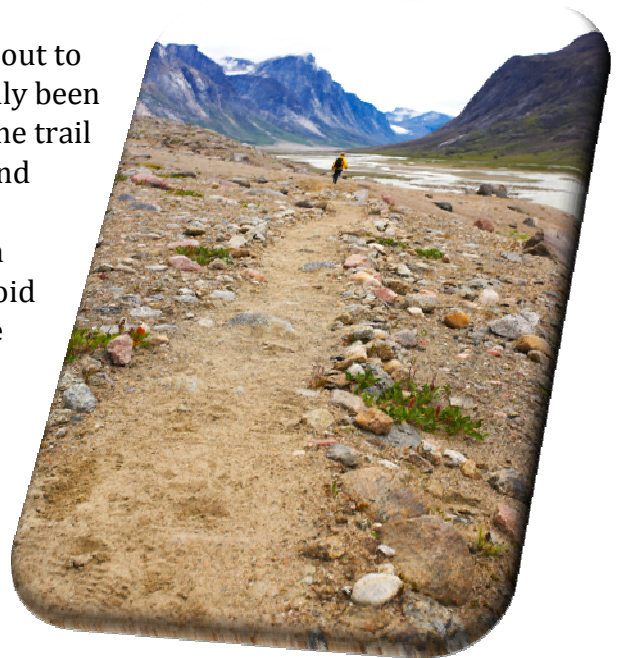
Milestone 3: Preparing for Adolescence

Notes:

A beginning Note: This Milestone prepares your children to walk through the remaining milestones they will enter throughout the rest of their teenage years (4,5,6). How you guide your child through this stage will determine the depth of challenge guiding your child through the remaining teenage years and the final three milestones.

Welcome to the great change. Your children are about to enter the journey to adulthood. There have certainly been rocks on the path they have traveled thus far, but the trail is about to get exceedingly more difficult, for you and them. Your child is about to begin climbing the mountain called adolescence. Guiding him through this process becomes essential to enable him to avoid the pitfalls and slopes that lead to destruction. The decisions your child will make through this time period can be life altering, positively or negatively.

Let's first begin to understand the issues.



The Quest for Identity

The adolescent years will challenge your child's identity to the very core of who she is. The question she may not verbalize but will continually ask through this process is, "Who am I?" Certain influences on her life are forcing her to ask this question repeatedly.

Influences:

- Hormones (physical changes)
- Peers
- Ignorance (of the changes she is experiencing around her)
- School, the education process
- Media (Body type, style, etc)
- Church
- Parents

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Each of these influences has a different effect on how our kids think about themselves. Try to think about these factors and how they influenced you when you went through adolescence. Think about how these influence you today.

Who am I?

Guiding your child through this question will impact the rest of his life. Encourage him to discover who he is. Begin by redirecting the question this way:

Whose am I?

☞ ***The Lord's – Psalm 139:1-18***

- God made you and knows you even better than you know yourself. He loves you intimately and as a child of His, your worth is limitless.
- Jeremiah 29:11 – God has great plans for your life.
- Genesis 1:27 – You are created in God's image.
- Romans 8:28-29 – God causes all things to work for good in your life – even the most difficult circumstances.

☞ ***Your family name...***

- Reassure your son or daughter that he or she will always be your child. Reassure her that your love will never cease for her. Love her unconditionally (1 Corinthians 13).
- The legacy of your last name will not be perfect. But as parents, you can define or redefine your family name by the love, grace and discipline you display to your children.

Mark 12:30 "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

When Jesus stated these words, he was responding to a question concerning the greatest commandment. This statement summarizes every aspect of humanity. We are commanded to love God with every part of us. Parents have a unique opportunity to influence their kids to view life from a God-centered perspective and not a self-centered view. Help your son or daughter understand his or her identity in terms of his or her relationship to God and love for Him.

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- **Heart** – Who are you on the inside? What are the things you care about emotionally and feel deeply about? What passions has God given you?
- **Soul** – What gifts has God given you?
- **Mind** – How has God wired your mind? Do you process through decisions or are you impulsive? Do you remember facts easily or is everything tied to a relational memory?
- **Strength** – What abilities has God given you? What do you enjoy putting your energy into doing (sports, acting, music, etc)?

As parents, we can lead our children to know God created them uniquely for His glory. It is building God-esteem in their lives instead of self-esteem.

Major Struggles during Adolescence:

- **Inferiority** – Most adolescents will experience a real sense of inferiority. This esteem issue may reach very deep into the life of your child. The vast majority of teenagers will go through phases feeling unloved, alone, and without any sort of community. He will feel that everyone else is better than he is and some will draw dangerously close to depression.
It is important to stay close to your kids during this time and help shepherd them to understand their worth designated first by God, then by you as a parent.
- **Conformity** - Another struggle most adolescents face is the need to conform to their peers. The group of friends they have during this time become very important to them. Clothes, accessories, hairstyle, jewelry, and so much more fall into this category. However, the more challenging aspects of this struggle center on beliefs, morality, and values. Some of your child's friends will not share the same values or beliefs that you have instilled in your son or daughter. It is so important to understand and guide your kids to understand the struggle that will ensue here.
- **Independence** – While most adolescents seek to conform to their peer group, they will often reach for independence from their parents and other authority figures. Most will challenge the pace of independence wishing for greater separation before they are ready to make important life decisions. Parents have a great responsibility to shepherd their children to begin making adult decisions within the safety of parental guidance and direction.
- **Meaning of Love** – Adolescents will begin to experience not only attraction for the opposite sex but feelings of love, infatuation, and a confusing mixture of the two. Feelings of extreme

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happiness and extreme rejection accompany this newfound adventure called “falling in love.” While each child progresses through this phase at different paces, every adolescent will begin this new adventure. Parents have a great task ahead helping their child identify what true love means according to Scripture. Feelings of attraction, infatuation and crushes will cloud their minds as adolescents attempt to define love and how to properly act on it.

Real Changes...

Boys and girls are growing into men and women. Expect the following to take place:

Physical

- Hormonal imbalances
- Pain associated with growing areas
- More tiredness than normal
- Increased appetites



Social

- A greater desire for belonging with a group of friends
- Greater need for the approval of others
- Increased attention to clothing styles, hair, hygiene, etc.

Emotional

- Insecurity as a result of physical changes
- Hormonal imbalance causing extreme highs and lows
- Deep commitments and passions developing

Spiritual

- Owning their own faith
- Asking more complex, abstract questions about God and their faith
- Greater desire to connect socially at church
- Increased ability to understand a relationship with God

How do I lead them?

1. Heart Connection – Developing Relational Capital

Your child is entering a new phase in his or her life. Your son or daughter will challenge your authority and begin rolling his or her eyes with increased regularity. Your heart connection is more important than ever.



What a heart connection is not...

- ✗ Purchasing gifts to solicit obedience
- ✗ Quality time vs. quantity time
- ✗ Telling them how to live while living a different way

A True Heart Connection

➔ *Demonstrating Life in Christ*

- The Biblical Role of a Man – Sons are watching to emulate and daughters are watching to marry
- The Biblical Role of a Woman – Daughters are watching to emulate and sons are watching to marry
- Emotional – How do you respond when angry, frustrated, when praised?
- Physical – What do you wear in public? How do you talk about other people? Do you live a healthy lifestyle?

➔ *Cultivating a Relationship*

- Date your sons and daughters.
- Build uninterrupted time into your schedule
- Listen, talk and relate.
- Capture the Family Table at dinner each night!

2. Faith Talks and God Moments

The primary way to lead your child through this process is to continue the intentional study of God's Word each week and capitalize on moments in between.



Faith Talks: Intentional times set aside each week for conversation around the Scripture. Faith Talks (Family Devotions) are the times where the entire family joins together to discuss God's Word and what it means for their lives. These intentional, set aside times will provide a real foundation of spiritual truth for your children. Faith Talks will also begin a lifelong conversation. Your child will be more likely to come to you about important issues and life questions instead of seeking peers or other adults. Building this bridge of trust is priceless.



God Moments are unplanned, spontaneous moments where God shows up in your child's life and you have an opportunity to capitalize on it. God Moments are often verbalized by your child because of the connection built by Faith Talks. These are teachable moments where you guide them through issues God has placed on his heart and mind.

3. Guide Your Child to Walk with God...(Spiritual Disciplines)

- **A Personal Relationship** – During the adolescent stage, most children will begin to grasp their relationship with God with an entirely new understanding. They will begin thinking and formulating personal beliefs and owning their faith. They will begin the process of transferring simple accepted truths to a growing, experiential relationship. It is important to help your child see that a relationship with God is doing or saying the right things. A relationship is also not abstaining from the wrong things. A relationship with God entails two-way honest communication and obedience to adjust his life to God's truth.
 - *Milestone 7: Life in Christ: Prayer, Scripture, Authentic Faith, Obedient Follower, Disciple Maker, Giving & Serving, Community*
- **A Daily Discipline** – Begin to help guide your adolescent to spend time with God each day. Begin simply by using an age-appropriate devotional and Bible. Help them see the importance of honest prayer and daily reading God's Word. You can't force this discipline, but you can stay involved and help them with appropriate nudges and encouragement.

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➤ **A Full Life Commitment (Sanctification)** – Guide your child to understand that the journey he is beginning is life-long. The Christian life is not one to be mastered or conquered but lived through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

4. Pray - Pray often and specifically for your children. Pray for their friends, teachers, future dating relationships and possible spouses.

5. Reinforce Their Identity - Help them remember whose they are: God's and Yours!

6. Set Good Ground Rules for Respect – Discipline can be increasingly difficult during adolescence. Spanking is obviously out of the question and they don't respond anymore to withholding dessert. But it is vital that an environment of respect and love maintain in your home during this time.

7. Discipline with Love, Patience, and Understanding - Discipline well but remember they are going through a total transformation. Their hormones are beyond their understanding. Adolescents will often not understand themselves through this type of change.

Campus Event: Fourth & Fifth Grade Winter Retreat

Each year, Kingsland's Children's Ministry takes fourth and fifth graders on a short retreat. They begin discussing the issues mentioned above and assist parents in equipping their sons and daughters to prepare for the coming years. This event is very important for your child to participate in if possible to come alongside discussions in your home.

Family Celebration: Road Trip

The Road Trip recommended for Milestone 3 can be one of the most impactful times in the life of your child. The main resource for this trip is a CD collection produced by Focus on the Family addressing the

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full scope of adolescence. The CD's are intended for the parents and child to hear together and discuss on their road trip to an exciting place. The trip can be as inexpensive or expensive as the parents prefer. The important ingredients are time away and fun. The CD's help bring up difficult and often misunderstood aspects of adolescents and address them in a comfortable format. Discussion fostered through this trip can continue for years to come.

Elements of a successful Road Trip:

- Time Away
- Uninterrupted Conversation
- Intentional Conversation
- Fun